

Notes and Comments

Edited by Joseph Jeppson

LSD FOR LDS?

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Psychedelics or hallucinogenic drugs have been used in natural forms for at least 3,000 years. Due to the recent discovery of LSD by Dr. Albert Hofmann, and to some extent to the sensational press reports concerning the effects of the drug, ministers, divinity students, movie stars, housewives, high school and college students, as well as psychologists, medical doctors, and addicts, have taken psychedelics in the past several years. Reaction to the drugs by those adventuresome enough to take a "trip" (a psychedelic experience), as well as by those hearing and reading of others' experiences, has been intense. Those of the beat generation find in the use of LSD something which finally "turns them on." Many persons see in the psychedelics the possibility of opening up new avenues of awareness heretofore unavailable to mankind. Timothy Leary, a leader of a group called IFIF (International Federation for Internal Freedom), suggests a new commandment: "Thou shalt not prevent thy fellow human being from changing his consciousness if by doing so he does not create harm or danger to others."¹ Some have suggested the use of LSD to solve world ideological differences.

¹ Richard Alpert and Sidney Cohen, *LSD* (New York: New American Library, 1966), p. 21.

On the other hand, there are those who are very disturbed at the apparent widespread use of psychedelic drugs, the irresponsibility of those involved, the potential danger of mental disturbance to the individual user and the implications of a society of "acidheads."

What is LSD?

To put LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) into more of an historical perspective let us look back some years to the various uses to which many drugs have been put. It is a truism that for most of us life is hard and cruel, at least some of the time. Today much distress is less on a physical basis (starvation, pestilence, etc.) than on an intellectual or spiritual basis. In the Orient the use of opium as an escape from the realities of an oppressive existence is well chronicled in literature. The use of coca leaves in South America to relieve suffering in the high altitudes is almost as well documented. Alcohol in diverse forms and derivations is found in practically every society; it is possibly the oldest tranquilizer in use today. Our ancestor Noah caused some trouble when he "imbibed too freely" and slept naked in a drunken stupor. For certain Indian groups in Mexico, as well as in the sacraments of the Native American Church, the use of psychedelics in the form of certain mushrooms has taken on religious significance. The Spanish conquistadores outlawed the rites of the sacred mushroom in Mexico, but this did not stop the practice. It continued on with Roman Catholic symbolism made part of the ceremony. Christ replaced the thunderbird as the object of worship in the ritual. Many things have been used over many years by many people to mitigate life's blows. And, perhaps, today's distress is more one of alienation than of abject poverty.

Some have felt that "St. Anthony's fire" was none other than the effects of eating rye contaminated with ergot, a fungus. Two gross effects were noted in this ergotism: gangrene of the extremities (with all the fiery pain that St. Anthony is reported to have suffered) and convulsions. From this historic chemical, ergonovine, an alkaloid drug useful in obstetrics, is derived. Further chemical treatment of this alkaloid results in LSD. (We are assured it takes more than a knowledge of high school chemistry to effect this synthesis.)

In 1943, Dr. Albert Hofmann, of Basel, Switzerland, was working with lysergic acid and its derivatives. Inadvertently he ingested some of the chemical. "In the afternoon of 16 April 1943 when I was working on this problem, I was seized by a peculiar sensation of vertigo and restlessness. Objects, as well as my associates in the lab, appeared to undergo optical changes. I was unable to concentrate on my work. In a dream-like state I left for home where an irresistible urge to lie down overcame me. I drew the curtains and immediately fell into a peculiar state similar to a drunkenness, characterized by an exaggerated imagination. With my eyes closed, fantastic pictures of extraordinary plasticity and intensive color seemed to surge towards me. After two hours this state gradually wore off."²

Dr. Hofmann's experience occurred when he ingested 250 micrograms ($\frac{1}{4}$ of a milligram). This is now known to be an heroic dose. It has been

²L. Goodman and A. Gilman, *Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 205.

calculated that 2 pounds of LSD is adequate to give every man, woman, and child in greater New York a "trip." The drug is colorless and tasteless. It can be put into a cube of sugar and so administered. A handkerchief can be impregnated with a solution of LSD and then cut in appropriate sizes for chewing by users. It can be taken in a beverage such as coffee or with vodka (which is considered to be a readily available preservative for the chemical).

Why the attraction to LSD experience?

One way to look at why individuals seek the psychedelic experience is in terms of personal construct theory.³ In the context of this theory, the basic reason for anyone taking LSD is as an experiment. It is seen as an experiment through which the individual anticipates a greater extension and definition of his psychological system. It is a way in which the individual aims to enhance his mental constructs to allow greater understanding, prediction, and control of the events to which he addresses himself. The specific experiments being conducted by the LSD participants are varied and unique. One person may take a "trip" because he feels he has experienced most of life's ordinary offerings and that through his familiarity they have become meaningless. Anticipating the possible construction of a new or revised meaning to existence he embarks upon a new adventure, a "trip" with LSD. Another may feel life so chaotic that attempts to order it are fruitless. For this person LSD may be an experimental escape from a futile rather than a humdrum existence. Out of the LSD experience, but in terms of his personal constructs, the individual seeks to extend and define himself in various ways to give more meaning to life, to be "turned on," to be "in the know," to be considered courageous, or rebellious, or conforming, or lost, or a million other reasons which only an analysis of the personal constructs of the person could reveal.

Study of those with adverse reactions (severe anxiety, depression, hallucinations or paranoid reactions) has suggested that the person with already loosened construction, that is, the person who has difficulty in making accurate predictions about his world, is most likely, through the added disorienting and loosening caused by the LSD experience, to be "triggered" into a full-blown psychotic reaction. From this one can infer that many of those drawn to the LSD experience shouldn't "travel." At present not enough research has been done to predict who will suffer an adverse reaction. The disorienting effect to the point of psychopathology with prolonged use of LSD is attested to by several authorities.⁴

What are the effects of this drug?

There are few effects that can be measured objectively. The subject's eyes are dilated and there seems to be an increased alertness. All the rest of the effects are psychological and subjective. For example, the mood changes (now crying — now laughing), the euphoria, the distortions and hallucinations, the auditory hallucinations (rarely), and the confusion of thought

³ George Kelly, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (New York: Norton, 1955).

⁴ M. Fink, et al., quoted in *Journal of American Medical Association*, CXCVIII (1966), 658.

processes — all are reported by the user. And, interestingly, the user knows these are hallucinations, that these are drug-related, while a psychotic person cannot make this distinction. The LSD effects are related to those of mescaline (from the mescal button), peyote (a cactus used by certain American Indians in religious rites), Sominex (popularly advertised on TV to induce sleep), morning glory seeds, and even nutmeg.

Of interest in talking about LSD is the frequent use of superlatives (either pro or con) in referring to the experience, e.g., "It permits you to see, more clearly than our perishing mortal eye can see, vistas beyond the horizons of this life, to travel backwards and forwards in time, to enter other planes of existence, even . . . to know God."⁵ It is no wonder that, with such an extravagant metaphysical appeal as this, many will seek "wisdom in a pill."

While some have described their "trips" in ecstatic terms, there are those whose "visions" were less than beautiful and "mind expanding." "I kept a journal while on the drugs. Later I read it and it was horrible. People were tearing each other apart. Also, I felt I was reading the worst pornography I had ever read."⁶

It is obvious that such a potent drug can be a valuable tool for investigation of the workings of the mind. At first, it was thought by some that here was a tool which could produce schizophrenia at will. But these hopes have not been realized. For reasons not germane to our discussion this model LSD psychosis has been shown not to be schizophrenia. However, the investigation of the use of LSD with noncommunicative psychotics, in patients terminally ill with cancer, in alcoholics, etc., has been rewarding and deserves further study. But it is for carefully trained scientists under carefully controlled conditions and not for a "lark" or a "trip."

In this latter connection, it is well to mention that experience has shown that the uncontrolled, irresponsible administration of LSD has been productive of severe complications. While no lethal dose has been known, there have been several deaths of people on "trips." One person, in an ecstatic moment of delusion that gravity had no effect on him, threw himself out of an upper-story window to a sudden death. Another "traveler" was restrained by friends from throwing himself in front of a subway train. Another took the drug just once, only to come into the university health clinic several days later complaining of hallucinations and acute panic. It took several weeks of hospitalization and psychotherapy to restore his equilibrium.

In 1965, a case of adverse LSD reaction at the University of California at Los Angeles neuropsychiatric institute was rare. In 1966, such cases represented twelve per cent of the patient load. Similar increases have been reported in other parts of the country.

What are the similarities of LSD experience and religious experience?

At the turn of the century William James reported, "I know more than one person who is persuaded that in the nitrous oxide trance we have a genuine metaphysical experience." He himself reports the achievement of an

⁵ D. L. Farnsworth, quoted in *Journal of American Medical Association*, CLXXXV (1963), 878.

⁶ Ibid.

experience of oneness, with all contrasted species being soaked up and absorbed into one being.⁷

Aldous Huxley, Alan Watts, Timothy Leary, and many others report mystical experiences of religious significance through the use of LSD. The sincerity of some of the reports of the religious aspects of LSD is questioned by a reporter to a recent conference on LSD in San Francisco: ". . . It was indicated by Timothy Leary that the resort to religious symbolism in LSD discussions was largely done to overcome middle class resistance to the drug, his feeling apparently being that no one could object to anything that was set against a religious background."⁸

A study, reported in the *Psychodelic Review*, showed that when volunteer divinity students were given psilocybin in a three hour private devotional service, nine out of ten reported a religious mystical experience as rated by independent judges. Only one of the reported experiences of the ten students in the control group was rated as a religious mystical experience.⁹

It appears that the mental ruminations and thought patterns present in any one psychedelic experience seem to depend on the personal mental constructs or expectancies one brings to the setting. These constructs also influence perceptions during the LSD sessions. For example, Sidney Cohen comments on studies where he and his assistant deliberately altered their attitudes toward the subjects. When the experimenters were friendly the subjects reported seeing ". . . beautiful patterns of warm reds and yellows and felt quite euphoric. When my co-worker and I went over in the corner and whispered, many of them became suspicious, the colors they saw turned toward pasty green or dark purple, even our faces became threatening and diabolical."¹⁰ Those anticipating a religious experience may unconsciously promote a religious context, as well as interpret the experience in terms of religious significance. The interpretations and conclusions drawn from the events of the "trip" are thus perceived and structured in terms of one's personal mental constructs which have been built up through a myriad of previous experiences and interpretations. The key to whether or not the LSD experience is a religious experience rests, perhaps, with the expectancies and interpretations of the experience.

For the Latter-day Saint there may be an exception. The prime religious experience expected of the adherents to the Church is the gaining of a testimony of the truthfulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This experience is described as a feeling of surety or certainty of the validity of the Gospel. If this state of certainty is construed to be such from the events of a feeling state inherent in one's emotional experiences, then the LSD experience and the testimony experience are quite similar. On the other hand, if the testimonial source is transcendental to oneself, if it is from the Holy Ghost, then the two experiences are vastly different. Of course, God could use the LSD

⁷ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: New American Library, 1958), p. 298.

⁸ Caspar Weinberger, "The Law and the Psychodelic Experience," *The Advocate* (Monterey, California, Dec. 1966), p. 8.

⁹ Timothy Leary, "The Religious Experience: Its Production and Interpretation," *Psychodelic Review*, III (1964), 325-326.

¹⁰ Richard Alpert and Sidney Cohen, op. cit., p. 30.

experience as a means of revelation. This, however, would be an unusual departure from the traditional revelatory avenues and, besides that, carries with it certain untoward results.

Why not use LSD as a vehicle for a type of religious experience?

Probably the most significant reason for not adopting the practice of taking LSD for religious experience, is that the avenues for religious experience are already defined and available for earnest seekers of these experiences without the inclusion of drugs as stimuli. If the Lord wished to use this means of religious awakening, He would no doubt make his will known through traditional revelatory avenues. For "toughminded" Latter-day Saints this reason is necessary and sufficient for not involving oneself with LSD for metaphysical purposes. The "tender-minded" however may like further dialogue. Widespread debasement of LSD practices makes any person or group who uses LSD or condones its use immediately suspect. Laws in some states prevent use of psychedelics except for members of the Native American Church who legally use peyote as a religious sacrament. There is evidence that those most attracted to the use of the psychedelics are often venturesome to the point of irresponsibility. Such adherents without discipline, often seeking only the consequences of the here and now, would introduce such dissident elements within the Church as to radically change or destroy it.

The use of LSD even in a structured setting with selected participants and knowledgeable "guides" does not guarantee satisfactory results for all participants. As already mentioned, many experiences would be heavenly, some would no doubt be hellish, and others nauseous. At present, there is no way of knowing beforehand the direction the stream of consciousness may take in the untrammelled state of psychedelic experience.

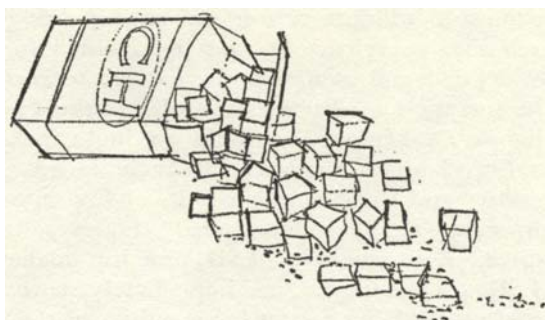
In discussing drugs which can affect the mind, either by clouding consciousness or otherwise altering it, Mormons have an acute interest. We are reminded of the verse, "In consequence of evils and designs that do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days. . . ."¹¹ This has a poignancy today when so many are seeking "wisdom in a pill." In this context, a quote from Brigham Young is of interest, wherein he says, "The constitution that a person has should be nourished and cherished; and whenever we take anything into the system to force and stimulate it beyond its natural capacity, it shortens life." This statement made in 1859, in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, has a modern sound to it.

It should be of more than passing interest to note that Sigmund Freud was averse to taking drugs. While suffering much pain in his later years, due to advancing incurable cancer, he would at the most occasionally take a dose of aspirin. "I prefer to think in torment than not to be able to think clearly," he once told Stefan Zweig.

In conclusion, although the psychedelic experience may be construed as having religious significance, we believe that there are other satisfactory avenues for religious experience outside of the drug approach. Most authorities do not favor the use of LSD without close scientific supervision. Some of the initial hopes for LSD as a psychotomimetic agent have not turned out

¹¹ *Doctrine and Covenants*: 89:4.

as anticipated. Even so, most authorities agree to the vast and almost unexplored potential of the psychedelics toward the unlocking and understanding of higher mental processes, including metaphysical experience, if used in a controlled experimental setting.



HOW TO BE A MORMON SCHOLAR

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While I have never hoped to qualify as a Mormon scholar, after reading three issues of *Dialogue* it dawned on me that to become one of this select group wasn't really hard at all, if you follow just two simple rules.

The first rule is to employ the word "milieu" at the earliest possible moment in your article, then sprinkle it in throughout the remainder of the piece. Of course it goes without question that you never will use a simple word when a big one can be made to fit, for instance, "historiography" rather than "history," but the key word is "milieu." This is sort of a password among the clan, and its use lets them know immediately that you are one of the boys.

The second rule, if you would take your place among this brainy milieu, is that you must somehow or other drag into your piece a reference to Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* and lambast its inaccuracy. As item after item in the three issues contrived to do this, I was as puzzled as when, a few years back, I attended a writers' conference in the Deep South. The first lecture I attended was a scholarly discussion of the historiography of the Southern novel. Suddenly in the middle of it the speaker paused, took a sip of water, and then launched into a furious tirade about damn Yankees and the Republican party. This was greeted by wild applause, after which the speaker took another sip of water and resumed his discourse on the Southern novel. As one speaker after another over a period of a week somehow contrived to denounce Yankees and Republicans during discussions of the short story, the fact article, poetry, biography and other aspects of the writing craft, I finally realized that this was an obligatory type of regional