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Drug Addiction

The Wake-up Call of Our Times

by
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*Life requires of all of us
That we fulfill our task:
Coming from love,
To live with love.
Drug addicts are burning torches;
A warning to a society,
without love.
Do they burn in vain?*

ENCOUNTERS

Benjamin

His mother brought him to therapy for drug abuse. He was seventeen and had been using hashish regularly for the past two years. He came willingly. He was interested in what the counselor had to offer. At first Benjamin told of his positive experiences with drugs. Yes, hashish gave him a lot; he felt enriched. He was so intelligent that he could handle the stuff sensibly and creatively. You could keep all the psycho-babble about drugs, he only wanted to know something about the physical effects.

After listening to a long list of possible negative physical effects that could occur later, he politely thanked the counselor. Yeah, all right, he wanted to think about it; he would have to investigate more on his own.

When asked if he planned to give up hashish, he reacted with charming indignation. "No. The stuff gives me too much. I do not want to willingly give it up. Why should I?" The counselor said that Benjamin could come back anytime if he had burning questions or was really in trouble. He said a friendly thank-you. The leave-taking was courteous, non-committal, smooth, nice.

Marcus

After an intense discussion between high school students and a drug counselor about drugs and the fascination drugs call forth, a teacher asked this question: "What kind of defining experience must a young person have in order to stop taking drugs?" The counselor told the following story:

A German youth named Victor Frank had been inhumanly treated, abused, and tortured. He could only hang on to his will to live by distancing himself from the bad experience. He turned his consciousness to his beloved students

in the auditorium and reported to them, as if it was happening in the moment, what was taking place right then. At his lowest point, when he was totally powerless, he experienced the human will for freedom: "My own ego alone is what defines me and not something on the outside. There is something in me, and in every person, that cannot be humiliated, insulted, injured, or snuffed-out."

Marcus, age seventeen had lived a life permeated with drug experiences, came up after the discussion: "I had a defining experience. I learned what it means to want freedom." Silence followed, then: "I know there are consequences!"

Tobias

He is seventeen years old and has been taking drugs for the past four years. During the week he is unwilling to go to school or take any interest in life. The weekend is a permanent party with ecstasy, speed, or cocaine. His parents and teachers pressured him to come to a counseling session. He sat down and was silent. After endless minutes, his question: "Do you know how ecstasy works?"

"Yes."

There was tortuous silence again. Then he went away without a word.

Six months later a telephone call: "This is Tobias. Do you remember our conversation? That gave me a total surprise that you didn't totally lecture me back then; I had to decide for myself. I'm not out yet completely, but I've stopped doing the hard stuff."

DRUGS — WHAT DO THEY HAVE TO DO WITH US?

Drug consumption: There is probably no other modern phenomena that is discussed with such controversy. The polarization of positions into "for" and "against" means that most of our contemporaries fall into two groups.

The distinguishing characteristics of one position are complete rejection and judgment based upon inflexible, fixed assumptions. The other position is thoughtless acceptance under the assumption that all modern phenomena in existence must also be good simply because they exist. Even though these two positions are polar opposites, they do have two essential aspects in common. Both of them avoid confrontation with the phenomenon, and neither leads to knowledge or understanding.

The drug problem will not be solved as long as we do not comprehend why drugs have such a strong influence on the human soul in our time and where their powers of temptation lie.

I cannot hope to give complete answers to these complex questions in this short article. It should simply serve to contribute to our knowledge of the drug phenomenon by bringing up various aspects and questions around these areas: human development, drug consumption, practiced therapies, and preventative education.

We should reflect on what parts the times and we, as contemporaries, play in today's drug consumption. Only when we experience our own inner shock of realization can we develop viewpoints that lead us further; viewpoints that occur only through individual confrontation with ourselves and that can lead to a new level of consciousness. Away from every polarization is a willingness to understand.

The short sketches of encounters presented herein should give an indication of how individual and multi-layered are the states of soul of youthful drug abusers. If we wish to take their gesture of escape seriously, then we must also use an individual, multi-layered approach when interacting with them. If this article encourages us to do that, then it has fulfilled its purpose.

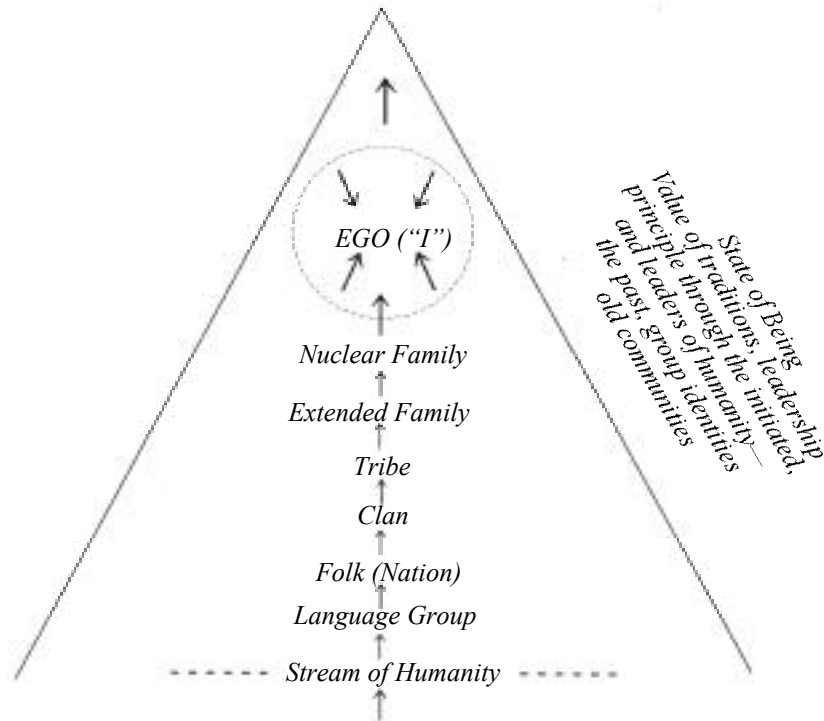
THE SITUATION TODAY

Development of Humanity

Drug abuse runs throughout history. Why is it that today it has become such a huge problem? What makes the difference between our times and previous eras?

In earlier times people experienced themselves as members of a community that gave them support and security. They identified with the community and felt responsible for it. The further back we go in history, the larger the communities were in which individuals felt themselves to be protected. In the very earliest times souls incarnated into the entire stream of humanity and that gave them their secure identities and futures. A little later, it was language that offered this security. Wherever the individual's language was spoken one felt spiritually at home. Next was identification with one's own people, later with the clan or tribe, and finally into the family group. Here, for awhile, there was the extended family, but now we are left with just the nuclear family unit. And, today, even this identification rarely endures much past childhood.

The following drawing should make clear this development of human identification:



Hallmarks of Our Times

The narrowing at the top of the triangle illustrates the situation of humanity today: increasingly, isolated and lonely people stand only for themselves and represent only their own individualities (egos) without any social connection. The traditional forces carried over from the past are exhausted; they have hardly any strength. Today the individualities meet each other exposed and unprotected. So, it is understandable that our particular era is, for the time being, full of egoism, lust for power, and self-assertion.¹

The horror of the many wars upon our earth that are broadcast uncensored by the media; the increase of unscrupulousness made clear by the permanently-occurring corporate and political scandals; the growth of people's willingness to commit violence, even in children; the tendency to follow en-masse illustrated by international trends, fashion slogans, musical directions, and so forth; manipulation by the media, especially television; the looming threat of a loss of outside reality due to electronic advances such as computers, high-tech gadgets, and cyberspace; the Internet with its pallet of synthetic, experiential worlds that is standing on the threshold of conquering the nursery; the threatening loss of inner reality by constant, frightening, increasing substance abuse—these are all significant hallmarks of our time.

Separation from Others

Let us consider what kind of interpersonal relationship is characteristic in the present day. We are forced to recognize that our relationship to our fellow human beings has gotten out of balance. One hears the term “social nosedive.” There are fewer taboos. Other people are seen only as objects with which to fulfill one’s own desires and needs. Self-realization and the highest possible gain are often given equal value.

A fundamental separation from fellow human beings is not the only experience. The separation from one’s self is the most painful effect of this stage of humanity’s development.

Separation from Self

The far-reaching loss of connection to our own physical bodies, brought about by our technical, media-saturated environment, robs us of our trust in the physical sphere that surrounds us.² Children are especially endangered. They are chauffeured in the car more often than they move under their own power. This takes away the natural learning process of movement that occurs during a child’s tireless experiences of falling and standing again. This has been replaced by “child-safe arrangements” that prevent falling and therefore do not allow for any development of the will or for a relationship to nature, the elements of life like earth, water, air, and fire. Children are not given any room for experience. Immunizations take away the experience of overcoming many childhood diseases, thus removing an important tool for helping a child individually take hold of his or her inherited physical body. The heavily consequential interventions in our relationship to our own bodies (and, with that, our environment) result in a fundamental weakening of our perceptual and sense abilities.

Loss of natural habits is a complaint heard more and more. People no longer know how to sensibly educate and arrange their lives according to natural rhythms and spans of time.

The importance of having a daily rhythm is being increasingly ignored. In many families there is no longer even the daily recurring point of contact that is known as a meal together. The qualities specifically experienced in the mornings or evenings no longer have a place in our daily lives. Our appointment-filled days equalize the hours of the day so that we only evaluate them according to their suitability for getting things done. Even the yearly rhythms through the seasons and festivals are becoming increasingly lost. Stores stocking pumpkins in September and chocolate bunnies in February are only symptomatic of this loss. Children experience less and less often the range of excitement of the whole process: preparation time, celebration, and calm aftermath of festival celebration. Festivals and rituals are disappearing and with them the experiences of time and social togetherness in which children can feel themselves warmly embedded.

Loss of connection to our own life forces through hectic, non-rhythmic lifestyles robs us of our trust in the times and its qualities, resulting in experiential poverty.

Loss of the relationship of ourselves to our own soul forces through deficiencies in enthusiasm, sympathy, and love robs us of our trust in interpersonal relationships.

Already in early childhood a storytelling mother is often replaced by a tape or CD, and connections that could potentially produce and solve conflicts are reduced to a minimum. Television is a main culprit in this scenario, (In Germany children under six years of age view, on average, two to three hours of television per day), and cyberspace and the Internet are responsible for an enormous rise in media consumption by children. A survey was taken in the USA of suicide candidates under age eighteen who halted their suicide attempt and it shows just how endangered young people are when they experience little or no supporting, emotional relationships. In answer to the question about what persuaded them to not go through with the suicide, most of them replied that it was remembering someone with whom they had a deep relationship.

If such a relationship does not exist, life loses its meaning. The resulting attitudes of soul are: non-committal attitude, relativism, arbitrariness to the point of becoming weary of life.

Loss of one's relationship to one's own ego ("I") through the loss of identity robs us of our trust in the power of the spirit. When there is no more contact with one's own inner being, a person becomes susceptible to manipulation and open to forceful access from the outside.

Children and youth do not yet have mastery over their own ego forces. Therefore, they experience the negative effects of this loss when there are no adults who can exemplify this very important spiritual orientation.

This loss is certainly a significant cause of the increasing influence of trends. If someone perceives his own self as a ball bouncing around according to the whims of outside forces, then he must necessarily lose his trust in destiny, development, and the future. Biographical crises, burnout syndrome, and acts of escapism into addiction of all kinds are all general signs of an experienced loss of meaning in one's life.

So, an extreme characterization of our modern contemporaries would be that they stand in life as prisoners within themselves, weakened in their sense perceptions, experientially poor, non-committal, and increasingly spiritually disoriented. We can probably all recognize tendencies to these in ourselves.

The more strongly developed these antisocial characteristics become, the more difficult our living together with others will become. Communities which do not strive for social growth are quickly paralyzed within outdated forms.³

Let us look at three typical community forms to illustrate this point:

In a *dogmatic community* the opinions of one individual or a small group rule. The group or individual exercises power and authority over all other members because it is believed that they have true knowledge.

A *sectarian group* is defined by its fear of insignificance and its own weaknesses. Elitist structures are created and strictly followed. Members stick together against perceived enemies in the outside world and their objective is to isolate themselves from it.

In a *compromising group* there is a predominant fear of their own judgments, of clear, basic principles. Everything possible is done to avoid conflict, to conserve energy, and to have pleasant experiences.

These community forms that are stamped with fear and power have one thing in common: true, human encounter is not possible. Instead of interacting openly with each other in a spirit of freedom, individuals try to exercise power over others or renounce themselves. In any case, the tragic result is prevention of ego (“I”) development.

Having been pushed into a corner in so many ways, people today are increasingly motivated by a desire for freedom and expansion. The pivotal, determining issue is *how* a person goes about fulfilling this desire.

Gestures of Addiction

If the path to achieving that desire is characterized by an increasing compulsion to stifle discomfort, conflict, and emptiness in the wake of outside stimulation—no matter what kind—by replacing them with something comfortable and richly pleasant, without the desire to put in any effort, then the path can lead to addiction. Let us examine ourselves in all honesty. I think we can all recognize a tendency to this within ourselves. Every time we sit in front of the television, every time we take pleasure in sweets, or in criticism of others, every time we overwork ourselves, these are all avoidance behaviors. If we do not determine for ourselves, with the active participation of our “I,” the way out of today’s typically narrow way of life and its pressures, we are on our way to becoming influenced, manipulated, and collectivized from the outside.

A hallmark of our era is that this applies to everyone:

“Decide for yourself or someone else will do it for you!”

THE FASCINATION WITH DRUGS

Effects of Drugs

A yearning for certain kinds of experiences drives ever more and ever younger people to take drugs. The fact that through these drug-induced experiences a person is being manipulated and consumed appears to make no impression on the drug user.⁴

The following is a short overview of recreational drugs, how they work and what kinds of experiences they cause. Basically, the effects can occur because the drugs release life forces from human organs. This process takes the form of experiencing perceptions of color, form, and sound.

The various drug substances are divided into three groups according to their effect on the body organ areas:

Drugs which predominantly assault the *life forces of thinking in the head area* are known as amphetamines. *Cocaine* is in this group. The life forces thus released are experienced as activation of thought, stimulus of thought, all the way to explosion of thought.

Drugs which predominantly rob the *life forces in the middle, rhythmic organ region* are the hallucinogens. *LSD* and *hashish* are the most well-known in this group. Activation and stimulation of the feeling life is experienced, the illusion of a warm connection with others and the world.

Drugs which predominantly attack the *life forces in the metabolic-limb system* belong to a group known as opiates. *Heroin* is this group's best-known representative. Forces released out of this area are experienced as will stimulants, as the illusion of an intensive power of the will.

Every drug has its method of attack on the life-force organism. Wherever these forces of life-function are working unconsciously, they become bound to the drug substance with its intake, causing a process of excarnation that, in turn, causes a so-called spiritual experience. However, the experience takes its course forcefully. It is not an experience achieved in freedom.

Drugs in Earlier Times

In earlier cultural epochs drugs were not taken for purposes of the individual but rather given by initiates and priests to people after years of preparation, only to those who had proven themselves to be morally strong enough to work through the effects of the drug in such a way that they could receive spiritual insights that could then be imparted to their tribe or nation. Intention and attitude about consuming drugs were completely different than is the case today. Today, drugs are taken mainly for individual pleasure, and consumed in this way, they can impart only the illusion of spirituality. A drug addict cannot handle his or her experiences independently and consciously. A person is, more or less, very much at the mercy of the drug.⁵

For this reason we have drug *problems*. At this point, instead of “I” activity unfolding, it is only the effect of the drug.

In our children’s world the ever-present availability of drugs is on the increase. What the attraction is can be made clear by statements from drug addicts themselves.

Motive for Taking Drugs

When asked about their motives for taking drugs, users often speak of reaching their goals for desired experiences, or recapturing those experiences, as the case may be. The experiences they describe can be summarized into four areas:

1. An intensive, fulfilled experience of another reality
2. Warmth, comfort, acceptance, and transparency in relationships⁶
3. Meaningfulness of one’s own activities, protection while looking through to one’s own motives in life
4. Religious experience, the spiritual dimension of existence

All four areas have this characteristic in common: they are all only illusory experiences because they are forced by the effects of a drug and are not achieved through individual effort. That which is desired is experienced only in a state of being “high” without the slightest relationship to reality.

It can be seen from the motives for drug use where deficits in the biographies of children and youth have occurred, but also where unconscious visions of life have yet to find the possibility of becoming reality.

ANTHROPOSOPHICAL THERAPIES FOR DRUG ADDICTION

Recaptured Experiences of Reality

Anthroposophical therapy centers have developed a concept for healing from the knowledge that many addicts have had a lack of deep experiences, feelings of warmth, and meaning in their lives. The task of the various phases of therapy is to replace the desired, passive, fake experiences from drugs with true, reality-infused experiences. The development of the therapy phases came about through the insight that the experiences sought by addicts are characteristic of the first three seven-year phases of childhood and youth.

In the *first seven-year phase*, healthy development of individuality requires a lively contention with one’s own physical self. Sense activities, which are more body-oriented, should be encouraged and promoted so that the natural desire for imitation within a child is given enough healthy, real examples worthy of imitation. Sensibly modeled activities and daily rhythm

are especially significant during this time of physical development. These phenomena affect the organs and bodily functions even in their formation. That is how the will of a child is trained in a healthy way.

The second seven-year phase is the phase of lively development of feeling. Adult examples play a definitive role in this. It is now important that children learn to orient themselves to the adult world of feeling that has been formed. Additionally, a child should be encouraged to enliven those senses that bring him or her in contact with the outside world. At this age children need an orderly and beautiful environment. The world must become a space for experience, full of promise. The possibility of bonding to one's environment through one's feelings, to feel accepted and loved, is critical for a child of this age. Only in this way can a child find orientation and develop a healthy feeling life.

In the *third seven-year phase*, young people need a lively contention with the spirit. Their intense and often dramatic contentions with the sensory world must now orientate on ideals and love of the truth. Young people must deeply experience the difference between truth and error, reality and illusion. It should include increasing areas of responsibility in which they can interact with their environment.⁷ They must be allowed to make mistakes. At the same time, it is now that they need suggestions, stimulation, and experience through the world and their fellow human beings. Enthusiasm and engagement have a quickening effect on their spiritual abilities, just as resignation and negativity have a paralyzing effect. During this time, adults are especially challenged to constantly exemplify an ever-renewing process of uplifting encouragement and to offer young people areas of activity that can enhance their knowledge and social skills.

So, we see how the human ego ("I") develops within loving activity, soul activity, and spiritual activity in the first three seven-year periods of life. As yet bound to these areas of activity, the ego is not yet able to freely confront the world as an "I-individuality." This becomes possible only when the "I"-activities reach their first point of completion sometime between the ages of eighteen to twenty-one years. With that in mind we can understand that every premature confrontation robs energy from the actual "I"-activity. This can lead to the "I"-force not being available later in its completeness for use in facing the outside world.

The different phases of drug addiction therapy try to take the patients through a recovery of the first three seven-year stages of life in such a way that they can balance out the deficiencies of experience in their development which, among others things, led them into addiction.

For years Anthroposophical therapeutic centers have worked to bring these challenges into reality. The therapeutic path is made clear when we see how the therapists co-experience the process within a community of patients. The basic form this therapy takes has four stages:

1. *During the first stage*, the therapist must take a warm interest in the patient with this internally-stimulating question: Who are you? The point here is to understand the patient in his or her being as well the affliction.

2. *In the second stage*, by showing perceptivity and dedication, the therapist creates a bond that will allow him or her to accompany the patient, both internally and externally, through the steps of healing, largely disregarding his or her own personal desires. That means that the therapist frees himself or herself from all preconceived notions of how the patient is or should be, and concentrates completely on perceiving reality, with loving attention to the smallest detail.

3. *The third stage* is accompanying the patient in a meaningful way through the crises that are necessary to the healing process. A quick fix for a crisis, reinforcing sympathy, or knowing consolation cannot be of help during this process. The patient must get through the low point of a crisis alone if he or she is to be helped to a true, internal turning point. To know that there is a loving guide by one's side, sharing the adversity, is by itself a meaningful help to the patient. At this stage of therapy the patient is led through painful discussions of his or her biography. The point of these discussions is to seek out and recognize the reason for a patient's egress. Now the patient should experience a desire to search independently and actively for his or her entire, individual task in life. Striving for one's own life's motive balances the ego-deactivating effects of drugs.

Individual Life-Motives

If a life-motive is found with the help of an active ego in the last stages of therapy, then he or she will be able to continue his or her life at a level that is more suited to his or her being than was possible within the gesture of addiction. If a patient can develop his or her "I"-force to this point, then it must be carefully tended and every temptation quickly met by an alert consciousness. If this consciousness is allowed to be dimmed for even one moment, there is immediate danger of backsliding into addiction. This rule is as rigorous as the effects of the drugs themselves.⁸

4. *The fourth stage* requires the utmost selflessness from the therapist in that he or she loosens the bond that has been created according to the degree of growing independence of the patient in order to allow the former drug addict to reach a new level of connection to the world, one that he or she can now enter into with a sense of personal responsibility and newly-gained or regained self-confidence.

New Forms of Community

For the recovering drug addict, this is a path to finding one's self. For the therapist, it is a path of selfless dedication to the patient. The therapist

must find the needed strength by constantly striving to overcome selfish desires and egoistic feelings. Each success at overcoming these desires and feelings gives new energy for the task. One person alone is not capable of confronting himself and his weaknesses, as well as the demons of addictive substances. To reach a successful outcome, this fight must only be taken on by a community in which individuals draw their strength from the same source. For this reason, at regular intervals, in these therapeutic communities, work is done on gaining a deeper understanding of drug addiction through comprehensive research. Together, the therapists make an effort to tap into the necessary spiritual resources of knowledge. If individual, spiritual exercises are practiced in order to achieve the fulfillment of the community's task, then the strength and help required to overcome drug addiction in a way that is appropriate for our time will be gained.

PREVENTION – A QUESTION OF EDUCATION

Knowledge about the reasons for drug addiction is not only fundamentally helpful for therapy, it is also helpful in preventative education. The modern phenomenon of drug addiction is a warning appeal to us to create education that can prevent our children and youth from derailing into addiction.⁹

Just how important the composition of the first three seven-year-periods is can be clearly seen in the overview sketched above. When we are successful in appropriately challenging our children so that all of their inherent abilities can really fully unfold at each age level, then they will have at their disposal the will-forces that they need for our present time. When we help our children through this time in their lives when they are most easily influenced by paying attention to the conditions they require for their development, helping them achieve inner security and form a solid foundation for their lives, then we give them the opportunities to realize their own life-motivations.

As educators, we must ask questions that shed light on the laws of development associated with the three seven-year-periods:

Have we designed the lives of our children in such a way that they can develop an indestructible relationship to reality, one which later can stand against every temptation to lose themselves in a world of illusion, whether through television, or, especially in the future, through cyberspace? Are we making it possible for our children to be meaningfully and creatively active in an environment worthy of imitation? Are we creating and maintaining enough room for them to freely exercise their imaginations, for instance through appropriate furnishings in children's rooms and toys that stimulate the imagination?

With our own enthusiasm are we awakening in our children a love for other people and their surroundings from which they learn to develop strength to overcome selfishness, resulting in the warm experiences of giving and receiving? From our concentration on what is essential and in our enthusiasm for our actions, can young people today develop trust in life which makes a future possible for them? Are we able to cope with their questions about death, life after death, and threshold experiences? Where do we stand with these questions and experiences that characterize our millennium?

If we try living with these questions in the educational sphere, we can strengthen the souls of our children and youth so that they are able to contend with their times without losing themselves. The questions that have arisen in regard to drug addiction can lead us, as educators, to a conscious, preventative pedagogy.

We cannot dismiss the fact that drugs are a major issue of our era. It is therefore no longer possible to protect our children from coming in contact with addictive substances. Nicotine and alcohol, for instance, are offered to them from all sides, and not only through advertising. Even hashish is often already in the picture in the sixth or seventh grade. Even good upbringing and education will not prevent drug use in every case. Just how impossible that is can be seen when one considers how individual all the numerous causes are for someone to get involved with drugs. Besides the young people who do not take drugs in spite of a significant lack of pedagogical attention, there are just as many who do take drugs even though they have had a careful, sensible upbringing and education.¹⁰

Therefore, the goal of education can be only to strengthen the will of our children and youth so that they have the capability of clearly differentiating between illusion and reality; that they are strong enough to say no to drugs. Then, even if an encounter with drugs takes place, they will soon recognize that it has to do with forced spiritual experiences over which they have no individual influence. If such forced experiences awaken in them the desire to actively strive for their own spiritual experiences without the aid of outside stimuli, then education has fulfilled a poignant task.¹¹

TASKS FOR OUR TIMES

In earlier times the human ego was embedded in a group consciousness. Now it stands naked and alone, freed from every group norm but, at the same time, abandoned by every form of group protection. This “I”-experience, as tentative as it may be, is connected with experiences of loneliness crisis. It is a stage of development that should be welcomed as a necessary transition, even with all of its darkness and pain. If this process is

not lived through with a certain amount of acceptance of suffering, then there is the temptation to avoid it with narcotics. However, in that case, expansion of consciousness based upon the distress of this I-experience takes place in an area that lies outside independence and ego-awareness of the individual. Ron Dunselman hit the mark with his characterization of this experience in the title of his book about drugs, *An Stelle des Ich (In Place of the Ego)*.

Gestures of avoidance that come out of the loneliness and narrowness of this developmental situation can be accompanied in other ways than drug use:

In the realm of consciousness, media consumption also contributes to an apparent expansion of consciousness when it is connected with the illusion of being informed on a world-wide scale, co-experiencing the destinies of others, and bringing life to where one is sitting by pressing a button.

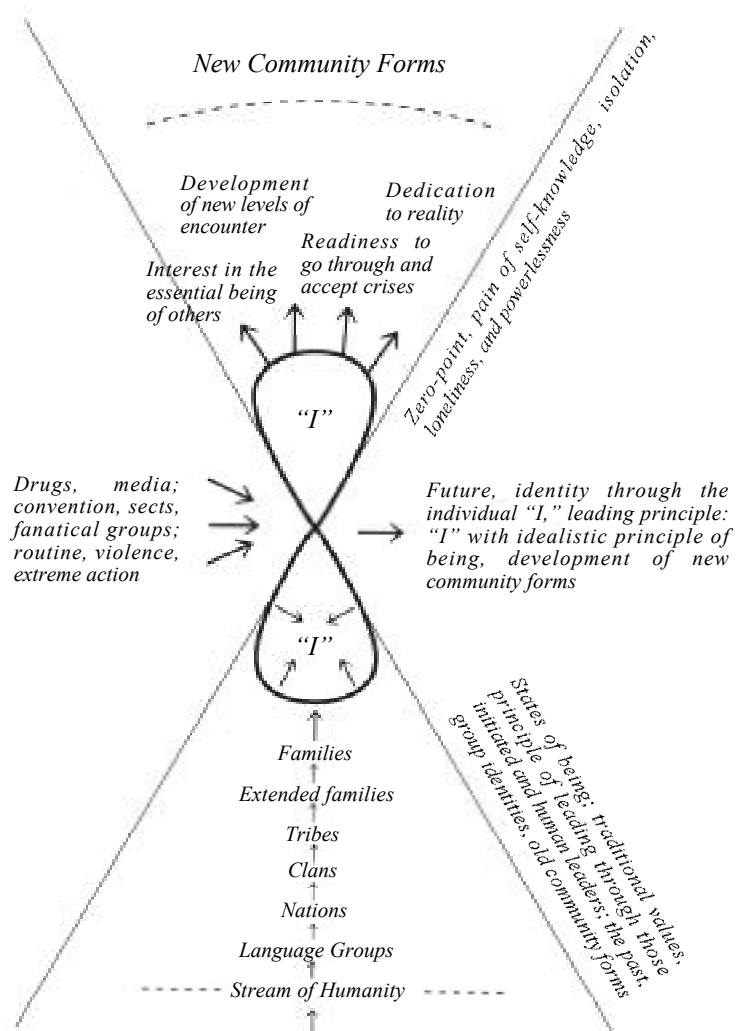
In the realm of feeling, gestures of avoidance take place when release from loneliness is sought in communities where every responsibility of the individual "I" is given over to others. It is a hallmark of sects and other fanatical groups. However, the same gesture appears anywhere that interpersonal encounters take place without benefit of the "I"-forces.

In the realm of action, constrictions can be avoided through violence and acts of destruction which can also be directed at one's own person. The expansion thus experienced is not ego-determined, but rather has only a paralyzing effect on the "I"-forces.

How can the constriction of our current stage of development, which is so painfully experienced by us all with its loneliness, its fears, and its feelings of powerlessness, be expanded in a way that makes use of our I-forces? The courage to stand fast in the face of this zero-point experience and to not try to evade it is the prerequisite for further development. Only when we are ready to give up old securities and supports and make it through the associated feelings of powerlessness can we create room for new beginnings; only in this way can we choose directions that are not determined by the past.

If the ego can achieve new spiritual impulses this way, then the old ego-fixation can be dropped. Guided by this new impulse, the "I" can now consciously and actively open itself to the world and our fellow human beings.

The self-limited experience of self shown in the lower triangle, which is necessary but one-sided, stands vis-a-vis an expansion shown in the upper triangle that allows for the ego to have a new and unselfish connection to others and to the world. It is, however, not a stage that can be achieved in a single try. It is a living process of swinging back and forth between the two poles of the lower and upper triangles which are filled with antisocial and social forces.



If we do not gain the ability to hold-up through meaningful dying-processes at the soul-spiritual level in the face of dissolving, old conditions, drugs will always prove to have the stronger attraction. Then these dying-processes will not be gone through at the soul-spiritual level through era-appropriate zero-point experiences, but rather will take place in the realm of the physical. In the physical, drugs are destructive to the life-forces in the body, which is how they transmit the illusory experience of reaching beyond and going further.

CONCLUSION

What drugs offer, even though it is illusion, through the experience of relaxation, release, warmth, feeling of well-being, connection to everyone and everything, love for all, must become our social task.¹² It is this experiential quality; in a lively process of encounter with its resolution of conflicts and overcoming of selfishness, that should be made possible. This could be a life-filled counter-balance to the destruction and death processes of drugs. Let us understand the consumption of drugs by our children and youth as an appeal to us adults. Exemplifying a striving for meaning in our lives and finding joy in our being can cause the fascination of drugs to pale in comparison.

Help for young people in finding their orientation can grow out of real, human encounters. What an adult *thinks* or *feels* does not reach a young person's deep, inner self, but only that which an adult *does*; what he or she *really is*. Such an encounter can leave a young person feeling obligated to peel off the habitual, non-committal attitude and wake up to independent responsibility.

In order to make this kind of encounter possible, conventions and routines must be overcome again and again. Young people must be made to understand by observing adults how they strive, and try, how they fail and suffer, and how they then courageously step into new learning.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Rudolf Steiner made it clear that, in our era, human encounters would become increasingly more difficult.¹³ A birth of new soul qualities, with all the pain that it entails, must be experienced.

If we, as adults, can bring ourselves to overcome our own limitations and reach out to young people, if we can bring ourselves to self-confrontation, then we have achieved a real step on the threshold to the spiritual. Then young people can "test us out" on a soul-spiritual level with confidence because something will be there for them to find.

Only when the spiritual dimension of human beings is recognized as a reality and this aspect is brought into the confrontation with drugs will it be possible to reach beyond the mere treatment of symptoms. The outer gesture of avoidance that is drug consumption will then become an innermost call for knowledge and support one's being.

Awakening others to this task is the goal of this article. It should not be considered a handbook for the practical treatment of drug addicts, but rather as presenting certain viewpoints for thought-filled contention with drugs that have come about from years of practical experience with drug counseling.

Let us summarize the task of our time as the task of ego development that is inseparably connected to its shadow, the tendency to addiction. We

must summon all our strength and direct it toward self-education, education, and therapy in order to make it possible for our children to become individual human beings. The future is possible only if the younger generation can realize its inner task.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ It applies to our present time that the people's egos (I) stand before each other without protection. No one describes the phase of human development taking place in our time without pointing out that this interaction between human egos in an unprotected way is something totally new that has come into human development. (Rudolf Steiner: Complete Works 217; October 14, 1922)
- ² Taken from a graduation speech given by a nineteen-year-old German student in 1995: The "Age of Me" is proclaimed with cymbals and trumpets. One could also say: Self-criticism is put in its grave. I tolerate the rubbish in myself. In some cases, gone especially far, one's own mistakes are no longer seen. I project the garbage of my soul onto others in order to appear all the more impeccable and to sooth my conscience.
- ³ Those powers that have accompanied human beings unconsciously throughout their development so that humanity could move forward are now nearly exhausted. By the middle of the twentieth century, approximately, they will be completely gone. New power from the depths of the soul must be called forth. And, a person must come to recognize how he or she is connected to the roots of spiritual life in the depths of his or her soul. (Rudolf Steiner: Complete Works 194, December 14, 1919)
- ⁴ Benjamin (see "Encounters" at beginning): "Stop smoking weed? No, I get too much out of it!" (Age seventeen; smoking hashish for two years)
- ⁵ Maria: "Life sucks and it's a lie. But with drugs, it lies a lot better!" (Age eighteen; takes hashish and ecstasy)
- ⁶ Moni: "I would not give up for anything that feeling of being totally accepted; of being loved by everyone and everything; from the wall, the ceiling, the lamp. You totally melt into everything!" (Age sixteen, regular ecstasy user for the past year)

- ⁷ Tobias (see “Encounter” at beginning): “That gave me a kick that you didn’t totally lecture me back then. I had to decide for myself.” (Age seventeen, trying to stop taking drugs after four years)
- ⁸ Michael: “The drug is a lie. Every lie jerks me into the abyss again.” (Age sixteen, after four years of drug use. He died at age eighteen.)
- ⁹ Rudolf Steiner: “Everyone knows that, at the present time, there are an extraordinarily high number of broken people who cannot cope with their lives. They cannot look back upon experiences they should have had in their education, in their childhoods. Certain forces can be developed only during childhood and then one can cope with life.” (Complete Works 193, September 14, 1919)
- ¹⁰ Karin: “Nothing in the world could have stopped me from taking heroin. I needed it!” (Successful drug therapy after spending six years in the heroin scene. Today she is a biodynamic farmer.)
- ¹¹ Marcus: (See “Encounters” at the beginning) “I learned what it means to want freedom. I know there are consequences!” (Age seventeen; constant hashish smoker who has decided to quit)
- ¹² Felicitas Vogt: “Through illusion, drugs promise what we have not achieved in social reality.”
- ¹³ Rudolf Steiner: “It will become more and more difficult for people to bring themselves into a right relationship with another because this requires the use of inner development and challenges them to inner activity.” (Complete Works 168, October 10, 1916)