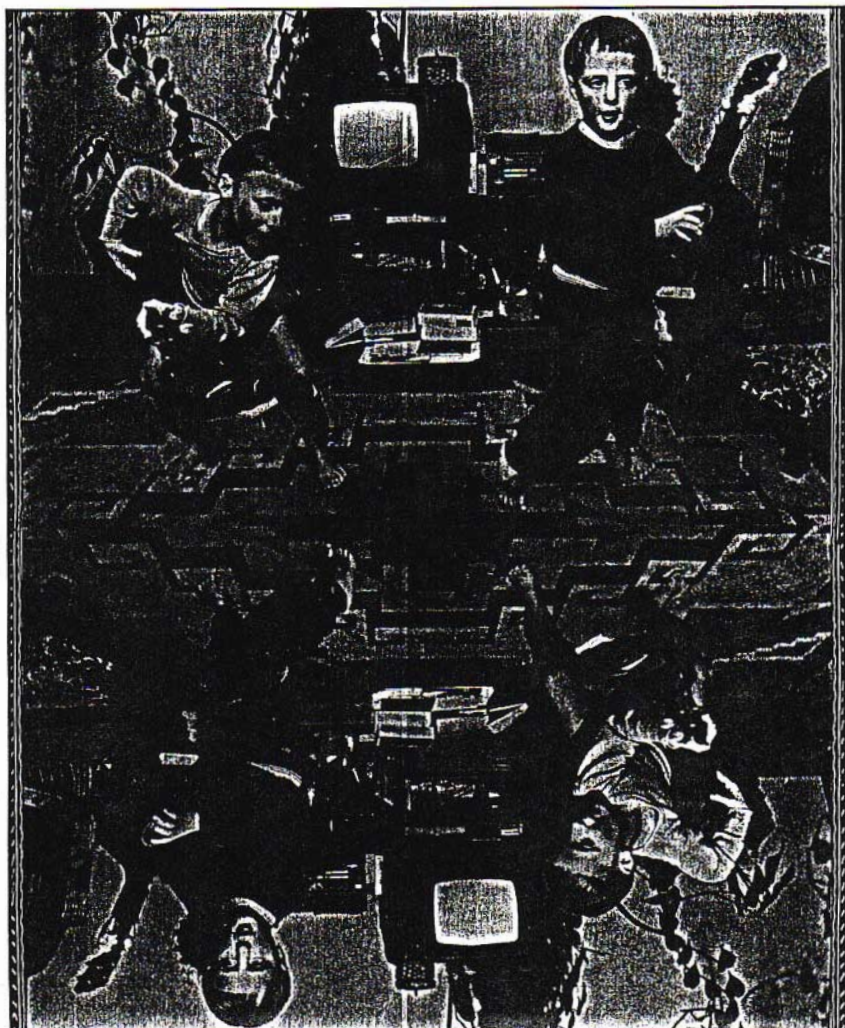


FRONTIERS

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 William Burroughs
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 Timothy Leary
 Michael Nesmith
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 Jello Biafra
 Tarantula
 Venom
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 Lucina Magie
 Paul Kantner
 Megadeth
 Joan Halifax
 Diananda Galas
 Skye Savan
 Fringe Science
 The Rev. J.F.K.
 and even more!



MDMA: SAFE AS ICE CREAM?

Jeremy Tarcher Interviewed

Jeremy Tarcher is publisher of Tarcher Books, a company which specializes in new age books. Among these are the handful of psychedelic oriented books which were selected for mass-market distribution in the early eighties: including Dr. Albert Hofmann's LSD My Problem Child and Tim Leary's autobiography Flashbacks. We met Jeremy at his luxuriant Beverly Hills home where we interviewed him. His wife, Shari Lewis, of television fame, could be heard practicing voice in another room. Jeremy impressed us as a truly gentle person.

Jeremy Tarcher: We have now a discussion about this extraordinary substance (MDMA) and you will hear about it on the news, not day in and day out, but certainly weekly or monthly for many months to come. And it seems to me that the media is taking, at first at any rate, an objective position - certainly far more objective than the DEA is taking. Whether someone emerges as a spokesperson for the potential uses of brain chemicals, I don't know. And let me not put only psychoactive drugs in that classification but also drugs that will increase aggression as a psychological tool, drugs that will diminish aggression, drugs that will help memory. There are lots and lots of things coming and a more sophisticated person might say they are already upon us. We are now going to open this up for discussion within our society. I think that is very good. But the government's initial success in scheduling this, and making anybody who testifies on behalf of MDMA testifying for what they have made criminal, is certainly a form of intimidation.

Nobody has shown there is any emergency of any kind. The government has yet to put forward a single meaningful statistic. Now, it may be that I haven't read all the information and the DEA has a better case than they have made. But I doubt it because I have heard them make their case and it seems objectively pretty weak.

Of the 50 or 60 people I know who have taken MDMA, everyone agrees that its effects diminish over time on a fairly heavily declining basis. It seems to me an abuse-proof drug to the degree that you can take more and more of it and you are going to get less and less out of it. Now you can kill yourself with this, but in some ways it is easier to abuse ice cream than MDMA. Now, you know Schedule I says that the substance has no medical use and a high abuse potential. I would claim that ice cream has no medical use and a higher abusability factor than MDMA.

The problem with the things that happened in the 70s with LSD, excesses of enthusiasm, the proselytizing for universal use... we don't need that. And if those who are concerned about drugs don't learn from the past, we will find ourselves repeating the problems of the people who were the leaders of those movements 15 years ago.

We have to do better this time than we did last time. What happened last time was perhaps inevitable, given the fact that it was the first experience in modern history where drugs played the part that they did in our culture, and the counterculture was stunningly successful in changing this country. I think all of us who live in America today are the inheritors of a certain kind of invisible wealth that was bestowed upon us by the heroes of that time. But 1985 is not 1965. We have a different political scene. We have had 20 years of change in this country. And we are going to see significant social benefits from the use of drugs of this kind. We are going to have to take a different approach to proselytizing for them, other than manning the barricades or saying, "Just put a little of this in the soup at the Kremlin and the world is going to be hunky dory."



We need to campaign for the expansion of human consciousness rather than for drugs.

Altered states is still the subject that we would all do better to focus on. The drugs are only a very convenient and pretty mechanically certain means of altering consciousness. It is, in fact, not the drugs but the altered consciousness that is the important issue. If the three of us were able, by chanting an appropriate group of words or by going through a certain exercise, to alter our consciousness to the degree that an LSD tab can, I dare say we wouldn't bother with the LSD, which is just what we use in order to get from here to there.

Analogous to hardware. That's right, and getting to there is the important thing, because what we find there that is attractive to us, is a broadened perspective, a deeper understanding of ourselves and other people, humor, creativity, many things which we all really enjoy and have fun with. So we need to campaign for the expansion of human consciousness rather than for drugs. Now, drugs are a means of doing that... a semi-reliable means.

If there were a broadly available means other than drugs to get the benefit of altered consciousness, I would say, give up any thought of further drug usage. It is like if you want to be in New York and you're in California, you grab a jet, or a train, or whatever means of transportation you prefer, and you are there. If you could shut your eyes and be there that would be the most convenient and the cheapest and best way.

The thing about drugs is that, for instance, when you smoke DMT, you get to a place you can't get to by any

other means. It is totally other. Drugs, meditations, shamanic drumming are all different accesses, but there is no absolute correlation between a non-drug state and a drug induced state. To a great extent, we are talking about really different experiences. That is what Terence McKenna talks about with the tryptamines. The idea that there is actually a specific, separate carrier or messenger in there. Now eventually it might be possible to make chemical changes in your body that would release the tryptamines. F.M.Esfandiary was talking about surgical implants, that these are going to be the wave of the future. That and electrical stimulation. So there are many possibilities.

I am by no means a sufficient enough connoisseur of different states of drug consciousness to contradict you or agree with you. I do know that for thousands of years, without drugs, sagas in all religions, ordinary peoples throughout the world, have reached states of mystical consciousness. And in modern times, perhaps tens of millions of people have had those experiences through the use of certain psychoactive substances. I am not sure that drugs like ketamine, for example, produce states of consciousness that are anything other than wild trips, or that we are near to understanding what those states are about, or whether they are about anything at all!

Sideshow.
Sideshow.

Some people take drugs and get apparently nothing out of it. NOTHING! I HAVE NO IDEA HOW THAT HAPPENS TO THEM!

A lot of it is the context in which it is brought into the culture. In the 60s, people were expecting to have spiritual experiences, or whatnot, with LSD. Therefore, they did. In the late 70s, many kids had never heard anything at all indicating that LSD might be a positive way of finding out about your psychology or contacting something spiritual. So they take it like they would coke or anything else. And they just have giggles. They have never been introduced to any other context in which to experience it.

We human beings really have not mastered normal consciousness yet. I am not sure we are fully prepared for extended consciousness. We are at the point where a semi-rational discussion can be held about drugs and culture. I think we ought to take advantage of it and, also, be open to the legitimate fears of people who have never had the positive experiences that we have had, and have been overwhelmed by the negativity that the media has, by and large, shoved down on them, and who are frightened about what the drugs might hold in store for our society and for them as individuals. You have to respect that fear, recognize that it is a reasonable thing for somebody to have, and deal with it not as if they are the enemy, but as if they are friends who need to be given some additional information, and shown by our behavior and by our reasonableness that drugs do not make us into steely-eyed revolutionaries willing to tear everything down in order to get our way.

On some occasions I have spoken with business associates and others about LSD. I have said, "If you think well of me afterwards, I would like you to think perhaps a little better about some of the drugs that I have talked about which have helped me to become the person I am, the person you supposedly like and think well of."

The high frontier is really a high consciousness frontier. Drugs are one way of crossing that border. There are others. To the degree that we can acknowledge that and promote those others, we make the road more attractive.