

EDITORIAL

In the spring of 1965 a young man brought to the editorial office of *The Psychedelic Review*, then located on a country estate in Millbrook, N.Y., a bag of dried mushrooms which he had picked in the municipal park of one of the major cities of the North West. His investigations had shown that this mushroom, whose botanical identity was not yet exactly determined, grew very plentifully all over the Northwestern parts of the United States; and that it was hallucinogenic. An experiment on the part of one of the editors readily confirmed this finding. One can only guess at the number of species of fungi or other plants that have psychedelic properties. The handful of mushroom guidebooks available in this mycophobic culture give no indication: being concerned only with categorizing these astonishing plants as "edible" or not, they will in most cases go by taste. But pleasing taste is no reliable index to psychedelic potency, as every peyote or morning-glory consumer knows.

The point of this story is not merely that our environment contains potentially dozens of psychically active plants and foods. For when we asked the enthusiastic mycophile to write up his results for publication in the *Review*, he declined, on the grounds that this would draw the attention of the law-enforcement agencies to this plant, and would make it difficult to obtain. Similarly, another friend of ours was unwilling to publish a one-step synthesis of dimethyltryptamine he had developed, for fear that the starting product would be made inaccessible, as happened in the case of morning-glory seeds, to a certain extent.

Like the medieval alchemists, the psychedelic chemists and botanists of today are forced by the peculiar conditions of their times to pursue their science underground, and to veil their results in the language of allegory. When the alchemists talked of the transformation of coarse substances into fine, of metal into gold, they were talking, in fact, about the chemical transformation of substances which are only one or two steps removed from a psychically active form, and that the enzymes required for these steps also exist in the body. What the alchemists were searching for was an effective way of transmuting body chemicals into psychedelic form. Perhaps this can be done internally, by someone who really understands the workings of his own chemical factory. This is the program of Guardjief. Get to know your own machinery. Manu-

facture your own chemical fuel for a permanently higher state of consciousness. Perhaps certain catalysts, introduced into the system from the outside, will aid the process of transforming our heavy-hypnotic consciousness into spiritual gold.

But why cannot this work be carried out openly? Are we really entering another Dark Age? Who has the right to decide what you put in your own body? The FDA, in a statement released to the press on December 18, 1965, proposed that the Commissioner may determine that a drug had a "potential for abuse" if "individuals are taking the drug on their own initiative rather than on the basis of medical advice from a practitioner," a ruling of questionable legality.

The FDA has now issued a ruling explicitly specifying which drugs come under the restrictions of the new Drug Abuse Control Law. The possession of LSD, DMT, mescaline, peyote and psilocybin thus becomes a federal offense.

Meanwhile, according to estimates published recently in the *Nation* (Marvin B. Freedman and Harvey Powelson, *Nation*, Jan. 31, 1966), "the proportion of college students who experiment with pot or LSD may run as high as 10%" and "the number of drug takers is growing."

Freedman and Powelson propose that "the reason why several hundreds of the brightest and most aware of American youth are attracted to the psychedelic experience" is they "are examining the values of the Western world and are finding them wanting. There is an upsurge of interest in introspection and the life of the emotions."

This withdrawal of interest from externals towards the exploration and mastery of the internal is of course precisely the development that alarms lawmakers the most. No form of rebellion is more threatening to the "power-possessing beings of the moment" than internal detachment.

The process of social change that are occurring around us are likely to be enormously heightened and accelerated by psychedelics. The college students and high school students who are taking LSD now are going to be deans and legislators tomorrow. Phenomena and concepts which we now struggle with and resist are going to be taken for granted by the next generation.

Perhaps we are entering a more inward phase of the cycle. After almost two centuries of unrestricted technological muscle-building and exploitation we are beginning to look into the mysterious and ill-understood processes going on within us, attempting to guide and direct our unruly and willful energies into constructive and protective channels.