

Kill, Leary, Kill

LSD Guru at State

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The *Michigan State News* ran a front-page headline this summer, "Find No MSU Students Using LSD, Dope," and an article this fall quoting the director of the University Health Center on "Dr. O'Leary," the man who was deceiving the nation on the dangers of psychedelic drugs. Things may not be as bad at MSU as this makes them seem, but it was into an atmosphere not terribly knowledgeable about psychedelics that Timothy Leary descended November 17, to speak before an audience of more than 4,000 MSU students and faculty on "LSD: Man, God and Law."

Most of the audience had probably had little or no contact with the tools of Leary's trade, and the questions turned in on slips of paper handed out by the ushers indicated little more than a *Life* magazine knowledge of the subject. (The most frequently asked:

"How can I legally obtain LSD and take it in a responsible situation?" Leary evaded the question the next day at his press conference, and talked about the dangers of modern life and the loss of spiritual training as a value in this country.)

In view of the relatively uninitiated nature of his MSU audience, it seems quite significant that Leary was honored with a standing ovation, and found himself praising his student government hosts for their open-mindedness about psychedelics. It was almost simultaneous proof of Leary's thesis as presented in his speech and later at a reception and press conference: that we are on the threshold of a new spiritual age, whose sacraments will be LSD and marijuana and whose disciples will be (or are) the young, the creative and the socially alienated of today. Condescendingly (I have to believe) bearing a "Kill Bubba, Kill" button on his lapel opposite a silver American Indian talisman, Leary began by talking about prayer: Only those out of their minds can pray." With LSD he and his colleagues are "catapulted out of our minds down strange evolutionary tissue corridors, out of the twentieth century.-

He identified his profession ("one of the most ancient in human history") as that of shaman, guru, alchemist, sorcerer. "We seek to reaffirm the divinity of the human being, we seek to get man out of the manacles of his mind," to help him find the "revelation that is within his own body."

This is undoubtedly not the way the audience would have described Leary beforehand, but more unfamiliar ideas (or so I assume; Michigan State isn't a Berkeley, full of social dropouts, after all) were to come. Leary spent a good part of his speech describing the conditions, necessary for a spiritual transformation of society and identifying those conditions in American life today. His four requirements are a spiritual need and hunger, a new sacrament on which to base a new religion, a new metaphor with which to define and preach the new religion, and a political situation ripe for spiritual revision.

On the first requirement, little need be said. The "insane asylum" of American society is "so static, so stabilized, so robotized that life is being lost." The real insanity and pathology of our culture is "what has been done to consciousness."

Our society is unaware of its heritage, its two billion years of evolution. "They rolled you off the Detroit assembly line perfect—a Buddha, with all potentialities," and have spent the years from birth to now narrowing us down, with the best of misguided intentions. It is time to expand the potentialities.

The new sacrament, of course, is the psychedelic drugs, the new “visible, tangible method of finding grace.” “A new sacrament imperils the old regime,” Leary said, and is always opposed by the establishment. This has been the case through history. The only difference today is that the new sacraments are chemical in nature, because we know now that “consciousness is a biochemical phenomenon.”

“How can it be surprising that the next sacrament is chemical? Ours is a completely chemical society.”

The new religious chemistry, Leary said, will allow us to use various chemicals to seek or expand the several levels of our consciousnesses. This all hints at the new metaphor of religion in science, the third requirement for a new spiritual age. Unlike the religious leaders of the past, today “we use the metaphor from which our new sacrament springs, the language of science.”

The levels of consciousness so basic to Leary’s explanation of the psychedelic experience are explained in the scientific metaphor: the two normal levels, stupor (the level of sleep or intoxication with alcohol, barbiturates, etc.) the symbol awareness (what most people consider normal, visible reality), as well as the several levels of psychedelic consciousness: sensory (the level achieved by marijuana or low-dose LSD, in which the senses are “polished”), somatic (achieved by moderate doses of LSD, giving the effect of “spinning through your own body”), and cellular (heavy doses of LSD, with which you “flip beyond your body, and confront terrains and vistas and energy levels which you’ve never seen”). Departing from the explanation of a fourth “pre-cellular” level given in published interviews, Leary extended the third “cellular” level to include an awareness of the “recorded memories in our cells,” the point at which one becomes aware of “reality” as simply “one particular chessboard” among an infinity of possible realities.

In order to discover this you have to climb out of the sticky black molasses of the chessboard that we’re all caught in that we call normal reality.

So much for the metaphor of science. Of the fourth requirement for spiritual change, the right political climate, Leary said, The time to emerge, the time to come above ground, is when the sickness of the society is so obvious that large segments of the society are dealing themselves out.” It does not take a psychedelic prophet to note that our society’s out-groups have grown so extensive that the time is “almost ideal for the new breakthrough.”

Referring to the cyclical view of history and spiritual change with which he views himself and his work, Leary said, “Exactly at the point when society is so, monolithic that you can’t move, is when the big surge comes from underground.”

Sound like something we all live and know well today? Perhaps that is why Leary spent the remainder of his speech assuring his neophyte audience that the place to find divinity, indeed to find God, is within, free from the laws of man which can only govern external affairs. (Thus the title of the speech, which was in danger of being forgotten.)

Each individual is his own God, and “the gateways to Eden are the sensors.” “I can create any universe I want within my own nervous system,” and only the individual can control what enters his senses. “Anything else is profanation,” of which there is no shortage today. The inner mind is “the last frontier of freedom,” Leary said, “guard it carefully.”

And then, an optimistic conclusion. “Our side always wins,” he said, “the young generation always wins new rights for itself within 15 or 20 years when it grows up and takes over society. “Can’t any generation catch on that the cycle continues? Can your generation catch on?”

“You’re going to see in your lifetime the LSD orthodoxy, the LSD sacrament,” Leary said. And “you’ll probably hear my name invoked to put down the next generation of visionaries. Don’t let it happen.”

Then, a standing ovation, and a lot of people filing out of the Auditorium to the accompaniment of speeches from the Orange Power vigil in Bessey Hall across the street.

That night, Leary spoke to a couple of dozen student government types and a few others (I felt like a sore thumb, no kidding) in a reception and, I understand, got smashed in a very orthodox way drinking beer at a bar outside East Lansing. The next morning, his press conference was attended by fewer than ten student government, *State News* and *Paper* people, as well as by one radio station, whose two representatives left early. The news media in Lansing, again providing simultaneous proof of Leary’s contentions, seemed to be all but ignoring his presence in their territory.

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