

# Huxley, Hoffer and Osmond

## Psychedelic Originators

Dale Ovshinsky

Recently, I had a discussion with Dr. Abram Hoffer and Dr. Humphrey Osmond on drugs that tend to mimic psychoses. These two doctors are among the leading researchers on the mind and how chemicals effect it. Dr. Hoffer is Director of the Psychiatric Institute. Dr. Osmond, by the way, coined the currently popular word 'psychedelic', meaning mind-effecting.

Dr. Hoffer stated that any psychedelic drug (LSD, mescaline, marijuana, for example) can be dangerous when not taken under a doctor's care, since unpredictable reactions can occur. Only a trained doctor can possibly control such unusual symptoms. In the innocent year of 1953 (innocent in that the harmful effects of these drugs were not yet known), the eminent Aldous Huxley, with the assistance of his good friend, Dr. Osmond, took four tenths of a gram of mescaline and found the drug experience for him to be quite enlightening in a deeply mystical way, foreign to most of the thoughts to which he was accustomed. He was so moved by the unusual experience that he wrote the well known book, *The Doors of Perception* in which he describes his intense feelings and insights while he was under the drug.

It would be unrealistic and unwise for the mass of people to use these psychedelic drugs since the drugs are unpredictable. Some people who use marijuana report that when they have taken it frequently they may begin to feel sensations similar to those the drug produces, even when they are off it. One should remember how dangerous it can be for people to give themselves substances that can imitate a psychosis. Even drugs like Benzedrine or Dexedrine have potential danger in long term use since they too may instigate a psychotic syndrome.

One of the main causes for college students and intellectual's strong interest in these drugs was Aldous Huxley's brilliant descriptions of the psychedelic drugs' effects on the mind in books such as *Heaven and Hell* and *The Doors of Perception*. It is quite natural for young people to be curious about these chemicals, yet there are sad times when curiosity does indeed kill the cat.

# fifth Estate

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