

Hippies—the new aristocracy?

Hank Malone

“A lot of us have been smokin’ reefers and layin’ broads in the bushes at Belle Isle for the last twenty years...and nobody ever called that a Love-In.”

—anonymous

Greaser and Frat Rocker and Mod Lower-middle class versus upper-middle-class America.

The struggle for the supremacy of class values among the recent Young. Both begin more or less together, as Screemies. It is the Mod who characteristically veers off to become the Teeny-Bopper and eventually the Hippie.

Soon the Greaser becomes too much for the Hippie (example of self-conscious Hippie-vulgarity: “Greasers can go kiss off ‘cause they drink liquor”). From our view, too much of the Hippie ethic ends up unconsciously in the Acid-filled bath tub with Cotton Mather, Joe McCarthy, and the candle-stick maker.

Alas, of such matters we seldom have a public dialogue, for the psychedically-Zoot-suited species of Hippie is usually very busy with his Unidentified Flying Object, and his Liquid-Enlightened Monologues.

Hippie-consciousness, from an important vantage point, is rigidly dominated by class-consciousness, an ugly reality to ponder among Lovers. Consciousness-expanding mysteriously excludes a penetration of the attitudes of the 3/4 of the world’s population presently starving.

In the hands of the bored and affluent Hippies, Love too often becomes just another tepid four-letter word, a selfish rationale for all manner of neurotic indulgence. Giving away jelly beans and flowers to the Squares seems to us very strange and Victorian, like handing out uplifting moral tracts and baskets of rotten apples to the poor.

What a weird notion they have devised: Love needs LSD.

Hippies have lots of the world’s money lurking around somewhere in their father’s pocket. From an economic point of view they are the Bad Guys, the Playboys, the Squanderers. Fidel and Fanon would have most of them put before a firing squad.

Unlike their ostensive progenitors (the Bohemians and the Beats) the Hippies shudder to identify with the working classes, the underprivileged, or the attitudes of the underdeveloped nations. The Hippie is first and foremost (perhaps unwittingly) a species of Aristocrat. His politics are conveniently metaphysical until someone rudely “hits him up side his head,” then he becomes “deeply involved” in absurd court cases ad nauseum.

The Hippie has his private Club, Handmaidens, his Health Food menu, his Bank, his Music, his Books, and his Drop-Out Up-Turned Nose. Sir Hippie conveniently eschews the world; tunes in, turns on, and drops out into his armchair next to George Pierrot and the membership of the Bourse.

Hippies are given a good deal of remarkably favorable publicity, and actually seem to make it; in the long run, with Mom and Dad. They are treated by society at large, quite appropriately, as psychological toys. Obviously they are no real threat—they are good consumers (since “money means nothing”), they don’t crowd the job market, and they are not political activists except in the most uncanny use of the term.

Instead, Hippies seem to be creating an overly simplistic Brave New World of psychic class-consciousness, e.g. my trip was better than yours, ergo I’m closer to “God,” ergo I’m better than you.

Parenthetically, I've yet to meet one of the highly stylized species of Hippie who can tell me anything about his best trip, anything vaguely lucid or enlightening about "God," the universe, or himself. Too often it is the same old dreary record, something like listening to a Watch Tower pamphlet being read aloud.

The Hippie's search for an expatriate (yet American) upper-middle-class life style (which the whole movement is all about) has become increasingly painful to watch, increasingly stylized and dull. The fashionable Hippies have already become an American platitude.

Maynard the Hippie will surely have his own television show in the fall.

In far too many ways this sometimes-admirable class-conscious search for new values is rigidly Prussian in style, rather than sympathetic and Mediterranean. The movement seems to have fallen to its knees. The renaissance has aborted. The corpus has become a hoax.

The kids coming in regularly from the suburbs would profit far more as human beings if they studied the ways of man's humanity to man, represented more by curiosity, courage, and craftsmanship than by conformity to commercialized youth sub-cultures. Love needs genuine autonomy. Love doesn't seem to give a damn for tole pipes and a music that moves at the threshold of pain.

Man descends from something monkey-like and playful, from some creature inexhaustibly inquisitive and frequently hostile. Hippies seem to have created, against all the complex laws of human nature, a bee-hive culture; an over-stretched honeycomb of covert attitudes populated by glassy-eyed inarticulate converts.

It seems that no beehive of freak-outs and tunnel-vision should ever contain for more than a silly-season or two the trundling whimsies and missions of the human spirit.

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