

This fanzine from Dave Van Arnam rides free with Andy Porter's SF WEEKLY, when we make the proper scheduling. When we don't, you get several issues at once. (It might be mentioned that FD's 191 thru 194 shd be considered one continuing essay.)

FIRST DRAFT #194

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Currently exercising the Media is the problem of completely documenting the disintegration of the hippie concept. The Media is convinced that the hippie 'movement' is dying or dead, and for the most part the Media is (are?) contented, to say the least, that this is so.

But is it so?

I don't know. I'm not a hippie. But I have a sneaking feeling that the Media are wrong again.

What do the hippies represent that everyone's so exercised about them, one way and another? Psychedelic drugs, to liberate the spirit from ego games; that seems to be it in a nutshell. Points to be considered in relation to this are that, rather amazingly as far as I'm concerned, a lot of people have gone through this psychedelic dropout scene and have come out the other side -- not, however, to sell out, although when they get to the other side they usually turn around and say "you don't need the drugs; it's all in your mind and you can do it yourself." Prime example: the Beatles, who went thru pot and LSD, allowed LSD to do whatever it does, allowed LSD in this case to transform both their music and their life structure -- and are now zeroing in on Hindu mysticism. I.e., the psychedelics, from the mature hippie point of view (let's not argue the word 'hippie' right now, huh? There's real and there's phony, and right now I'm talking about real), seem to be primarily useful to make the initial breakthru; after that, one goes on to other things.

There are, perhaps, hippies-in-process and hippies-beyond, tho that does not strike me as neatly phrased.

When in-process, we have Hashbury and the East Village, where hippies attempt a dropped-out life of love, joy, and rapt religious contemplation. But with more and more people progressing beyond (wherever that is, and I have enough trouble trying to grasp the in-process concepts), there has been a shift in emphasis. Partly as a result of this, it has appeared that the whole scene is dying on its feet (wretched metaphor).

And the Media love this. Not only the Media, for that matter -- the VILLAGE VOICE, juiceless voice of people left over from about two stages of progress in the past, has been positively gleeful that the Love Generation, the Flower Children, are, to quasiquote them, "learning that love isn't enough, that you've got to fight back, that flowers aren't the answer to police clubs," etc. The same cheerless glee infuses an article in the current NATION by some tired old activist psychologist, who says, among other things, "...the main fact of hippie life is that the prescription is not feasible." New Left activists seem positively venomous in their delight that the hippies are being "forced to face up to the realities," according to New Left activist definitions of

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reality (which shd tell you something right there...). The call once more goes out for violence and destruction, and only sneers are left for those odd folk who polished the badges of the peace officers arresting them, washed sanitation trucks, stuck flowers in MP rifle-barrels. It seems that the New Left thinks the hippies invented nonviolence, and that nonviolence is wrong.

Of course the conservatives have been gleeing also; NATIONAL REVIEW ran an article on hippies a few months ago telling us with no-nonsense vigor that the hippies are simply heretics, since they believe in love, peace, freedom, un-hung-up sex, etc.

Alan W. Watts, in his recent paperback titled THE BOOK ON THE TABOO AGAINST KNOWING WHO YOU ARE, has, without specifically stating the fact, shown in simple manner the basic nature of the Eastern mystic concepts toward which most serious hippie thought seems to trend. Now, long-term readers of FIRST DRAFT are well aware that my attitude towards religion is, well, atheistic. I hold neither with Western activist theologies such as Christianity, which has caused far too much unnecessary suffering, nor with the Eastern contemplative religious philosophies that have produced the epic miseries of the East (since mysticism transcends any ordinary perception of reality, the ordinary perception of reality called hunger is rendered unimportant; hence, India is in a constant state of semi-starvation).

What I think the hippies may be getting at is a kind of fusion between the best of the East -- Thou-art-God, everything is God, everything is holy, true, and beautiful, as a rough first approximation -- and the best of the West -- not our technology of death but our technology of life. (If the hippies ever start seriously claiming that all technology is evil, or some such baloney, they're going to lose me fast; where wd the SERGEANT PEPPER album be without technology? For that matter, where wd our stereo fm and radio be, without which for a civilized person life wd be a lot less colorful.)

This is a question apart from all the scurryings-about of the Media and the New Left and the New Right. This is a philosophical question that perhaps has never been posed before as a contemporary possibility.

If you follow the Underground Press Syndicate in any of its avatars (i.e. the Boston AVATAR, the EVO here, the L.A. FREE PRESS, OPEN CITY, The BARB, YARROW STALKS, etc.) you will have found that the hippies/free men/whathaveyou are marvelously unconcerned with the reports of their demise. What you or I or "They" might think of the hippies is irrelevant. They are proceeding along their own lines. They are growing more responsible (i.e. they are alerting the underground about the dangers of methedrine -- SPEED KILLS articles, ads, posters -- and about health matters, VD, hepatitis, etc.). They are forming tribes, moving to the country, growing their own food (thus, by the way, obviating the criticism that they are only parasitical).

They consider that American -- and Western -- culture is a lie. And every time they open a paper (say, the NEW YORK TIMES...) they see more proofs of it. They don't seem so much interested in destroying this culture, however, so much as transforming it -- which is the main difference between them and the far-left agitators who are so upset by the hippies. And along the way (and see again Watts' THE BOOK ON THE TABOO AGAINST KNOWING WHO YOU ARE) they seem to be finding some answers that make a new kind of sense. We shall see. They're certainly a hell of a lot more appealing than Peking-based hoodlumism. □□ Hoping you are the sane...