

October 4, 1966

Mr. Thomas Buckley
New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Buckley:

The favorable presentation of Dr. Leary's program in the New York Times of October 2, 1966, does a major disservice to the community. LSD has been a research instrument for many years, and even when offered to volunteers (before 1962-3) was generally not accepted for a second session. Since Drs. Leary and Huxley painted the LSD experience in a most enthusiastic light, and since the press (including the New York Times) has reported these ill-conceived pronouncements most favorably, the abuse of LSD has become extensive. Thus, your favorable advertisement will enhance the movement, despite the small suggestion of danger which you have hidden in parentheses in the 6th paragraph of the essay.

The statement "(LSD has in some cases triggered long-term psychotic reactions among borderline schizophrenics, and the possibility of permanent mental derangement and depression among ostensibly normal users remains a major concern)" is too weak a statement and is incomplete. The "triggering" of psychosis in borderline schizophrenics is probably, but recent reports suggest that the schizophrenic is not the most vulnerable. Indeed, schizophrenics are often tolerant of large doses of the drug. The most susceptible subjects may be those with cyclothymic tendencies - i.e., highly emotional, vacillating between extremes of elation and depression. Prolonged LSD reactions have been observed in precisely such individuals.

Mr. Buckley

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Unfortunately, in man's psychosocial development, adolescence is the stage of development when emotional controls are under-developed and emotional outbursts common. It is precisely at such a time when it is most difficult to control the response to exogenous toxins (e.g., LSD).

Continued favorable reporting of LSD abuse by the press does the nation a disservice. Such advertising, combined by mild admonitions, can lead to abuse of LSD and increasing tragedies. One would hope that Dr. Leary's exploits would be reported less fully and a more direct statement of the dangers would be included, and not within parentheses.

Incidentally, it is difficult for a scientist to express his anxieties, since he is trained to state his conclusions in scientific journals within the limits of the observations. Prophets, soothsayers, and charlatans have no such limitations, and may make more lurid copy. Enclosed is a copy of a report from my laboratory which will appear in a forthcoming issue of the Archives of General Psychiatry. The conclusions are stated hesitantly. But, our impressions are that LSD in adolescence is a dangerous drug and its dangers should be as definitely stated in the lay press as the spiritual benefits are described.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry

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