

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL, DRUGS, AND TOBACCO

Through the Western Wisdom Teachings, related to us by Max Heindel, we are taught that this life is one of many in which man as a Virgin Spirit prepares himself for the part that he is to assume in the cosmic drama as a co-worker with God. Many lifetimes have been spent preparing ourselves for the level of consciousness we now occupy, and our continued progress depends upon the use we make of our present physical bodies in their relationship to the growth of our spiritual vehicles.

A weak body cannot maintain the higher vibration which accompanies any spiritual growth, and it is only through spiritual growth that the present generation can prepare itself for the coming Aquarian Age. Since our next embodiments may take place during this Age, it is necessary that we make this preparation or we will be unable to compete with beings incarnating on the new higher level, since they will have prepared themselves for this coming event. Failure, in this life, could mean that we will incarnate in the next as members of a lower race group.

Many factors are involved in spiritual development. This discourse will be limited to the discussion of those whose continued use is detrimental to the upward progress of the individual, namely: alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Their importance lies in the fact that they may impede or even reverse the evolution of the individual. Volumes have been written about the effects these substances have upon the physical body, and articles appear daily in newspapers and periodicals warning of the problems which may result from their continued use. It is the purpose of this writing, however, to point out the spiritual implications which must be considered after all aspects of the physical have been studied.

We learn in the Western Wisdom Teachings that the desire body and the mind are in the early stages of evolutionary development. Our growth depends upon the work that we do to gain control of these important vehicles. The use of any substance which weakens our control of these bodies prevents us from exercising the needed discipline to learn the lessons for which we incarnated at this time -- lessons which must be learned if we are to continue our upward progress. This means that we must put forth every effort to gain control of the desire body and the mind.

Throughout the descent of the human Spirit into matter, substances were introduced into the diet of man to enable him to proceed to the next and successive steps in his evolution. Alcohol was one of these substances. Prior to the fifth, or Aryan, Epoch of the Earth's revolution, man retained some of the spiritual sight that was his heritage as an evolving Spirit, and so he was aware of his spiritual being. Up to this time water had been used as the principle beverage; now it became necessary for man to lose his spiritual sight so that he would be unable to have an awareness of his spiritual existence. Only in this way would he be able to conquer the physical world and learn the lessons of the matter-oriented individual. To fulfill this part of man's destiny, "Bacchus," a God of Wine, appeared, and under his sway even the most advanced nations forgot that they were also subjects of a higher life. Later, we are told, Christ Jesus turned water into wine, which at this time was being used by evolving humanity. Christ Jesus Himself was a much more highly evolved being and did not need to learn the lessons which were so necessary for evolving humanity. He did not need the wine, and there is no place in the Bible where it states that Jesus drank the wine.

It is now time for man to start on the upward path of evolution and move toward the Christ Consciousness -- which is to say, to develop his lost spiritual sight. Since alcohol was used to enable man to forget his higher self, no one who feeds the body with alcoholic liquor (the product of fermentation and decay) can ever know anything about the spiritual realms.

The coming Aquarian Age will demand that man have knowledge of the higher self, and anyone who does not prepare for future incarnations by attempting to develop spiritual insight will be unable to cope with the higher man incarnating at that time and will have taken a step backward in evolution. All forms of alcohol must, therefore, be eliminated from the diet of those who wish to continue on the upward spiral. Anyone today who is fortunate enough to have gained occasional insights of the spiritual world jeopardizes the level of being he has attained by work in previous incarnations with the continued use of alcohol and will arrive in the Aquarian Age unable to occupy the place he has worked so hard for in past ages.

The use of drugs takes its place as a companion of alcohol when the spiritual development of man is considered. Exploring the widespread use of drugs in society today, we find that the need for their use revolves around three factors: 1) the relief of pain; 2) boredom; and 3) the hope of experiencing spiritual revelation. In the Cosmo-Conception, Max Heindel tells us that the purpose of life is not happiness but experience. In our struggle for what we consider to be the best of the material side of life, we let our desires lead us into paths of pleasure, ease, and comfort. Thus we often fail to fulfill the purpose of our existence, namely, to gain experience.

When we abuse our bodies we incur pain, Nature's way of telling us that misuse has gone far enough and that it is time to reverse the conditions which have resulted in our discomfort. Many of us ignore Nature's warning and, preferring the comfortable way out, resort to the use of drugs. The tragedy is that, being unwilling to make an honest attempt to search for and correct the causes, we do not stop here. We accept the temporary relief afforded and permit our bodies to build up a greater accumulation of toxins. Thus we create a condition which requires more frequent use of drugs until we are forced into action by a highly toxic and drug-oriented vehicle, one which has little chance of making spiritual growth in this life. It requires a pure and wholesome physical body and mind to give our spiritual vehicle the discipline needed as a preparation for the work ahead. Only the individual himself can bring about the conditions which will assure him of continued growth. He must, therefore, refrain from the use of drugs or any other substance which will interfere with the work of the brain.

Our society today is afflicted by a self-imposed condition called boredom, which has become one of man's problems as he attempts to fulfill the destiny of this incarnation. The use of tranquilizers, sleeping pills, and pep pills has developed into a way of life for a large group of the human family. This use could be eliminated if the individual involved would endeavor to live as a contributing member of society. Instead of wallowing in his own self-pity, he must open his heart to his fellow men and seek to find the peace he wants in the service of mankind. On a simple level coffee and tea, used as beverages, are examples of drugs since they produce a mild effect on the emotions. At higher levels, the barbiturates (sedatives) and the amphetamines (stimulants) produce a more potent effect. That these affect the central nervous system is well established. Unlike animals, which are governed by Group Spirits, and therefore react to drugs in a similar manner, man is individualized and there is no way of ascertaining for certain the side effects on the body. These may be minor or serious, depending upon the level of one's spiritual development. We can be certain, however, that in every instance the effect will be to slow or retard present and future spiritual growth.

Drugs such as marijuana, heroin, and LSD, used especially by the younger generation to produce a so-called "high" or "trip," are by far the most dangerous. To understand why the young person is susceptible to the use of these mind-boggling drugs, it is necessary to understand that he recently may have acquired the desire body (at about age 14) or the mind body (at about the age 21). This is a time for him to determine the limits of his ability and to see how far he can challenge the status quo. Many young people are willing to test the limits of their adaptability. Others desire spiritual revelation, which they believe can be induced by the use of drugs. At this critical period in the life of the individual, he often lacks the confidence and warmth of an elder companion, one who can guide him through this trying time. For too many of today's youth it is a time of trial and error, a period of blind growth. Drugs offer a way out, but as time will reveal, it will be the wrong way. Being hallucinatory, they do not bring about the desired results; instead, they put the aspirant in danger of being controlled by undesirable spirits, of undermining the physical body, and of exposing himself to extremely harmful effects on his spiritual bodies. Any damage to these vehicles may require many lifetimes to restore them to the adaptability they originally had. This means a decided setback in evolution. A person, therefore, who made much progress in former embodiments could lose the value of previous hard work by seriously affecting the present life instruments.

The third member of the trio is tobacco, a complex mixture of gases, liquids, and solid particles. Not only do we find many chemical compounds in tobacco but also many more are created by the burning of the substance. Any of these can produce harmful effects upon the body; together they can spell disaster. As with our previous discussions, our concern is not only the effects upon the physical body but also upon the spiritual bodies. Our evolution as spiritual beings depends upon the acquisition of the Golden Wedding Garment, which is constituted from the development of the higher ethers. No progress can be made on these ethers unless we raise the vibrations of our dense physical bodies, and this can only be accomplished by maintaining as pure

a body as our present development will permit. No athlete or any other person requiring a deft vehicle for excellence in his work should do anything that he knows to be injurious to the body and the mind. For the person who elects to follow the spiritual path, the need for abstinence is much greater, since every faculty of the brain is needed to learn control of the mind. No one with a muddled brain can hope to achieve any lasting success regardless of the effort he exerts to raise his level of consciousness. Not only should the seeker abstain from the use of tobacco, but also he must try to avoid, if possible, areas which smokers habituate, since non-smokers are exposed to the many compounds which are produced by the burning substance as well as the material exhaled by the smoker.

In summary, let us reiterate that, as incarnate beings, we should be concerned with the development of the instruments of the Ego, namely: the dense physical body, the vital body, the desire body and the mind. The quality and condition of these instruments will determine how much or how little the Ego can accomplish in its work of gathering experience in the school of life. Alcohol, drugs, and tobacco have a harmful effect on these vehicles to the extent that the spiritual growth of the individual and his progress in evolution can be seriously retarded by their use.