

DRUG ADDICTION

The search for identity — "Who am I, and What is the purpose of purpose of my being?" — has almost become a fetish among young people of our present generation. One late teenager, put it thus: "I want to find out what I am, how I can understand myself and solve my own problems."

The direction taken in finding the solution and the means of obtaining it unfortunately have led to drugs. Reality is not a pre-requisite — hallucination to be their vehicle. An existence that takes one out of self, transporting the mind into nebular surroundings, strikes the fancy of the seeker. This fantasy and thrust into the unreal, has taken hold in sweeping proportions on college and university campuses.

Drug addiction is a habit. The worst and one of the most dangerous of all bad habits, it ruins the physical, mental and emotional health of an individual. It knows no limits. It respects no race, education, age or sex. Worse than a pestilence, it strikes anyone who is not careful enough to avoid being touched by it.

As the term implies, drug addiction is an uncontrollable and constant yearning for drugs. The drug addict is one who has used narcotic drugs long enough to become so dependent on them that he can no longer function normally without them. Because drugs change the chemistry of the user's body, the addict must have a periodic supply. When he does not get his stock, he becomes painfully sick.

Not all drugs lead to addiction. Many of them serve useful purposes in medicine. The danger in drugs, even the most harmless ones, lies in their abuse.

Addictive drugs are those which are habit-forming. They come in various forms, shapes and sizes. Some are tablets, some look like weeds, others are in liquid form. They are classified into two categories: the "soft" and the "hard" drugs. Soft drugs include the most common starter, marijuana (also called pot, weed, and reefer), pep pills, sleeping tablets and tranquilizers. Hard drugs include heroin, opium and morphine.

The sugar cube with a few drops of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), once thought of as a fad, is now known to be destructive of brain cells and devastating to genes and chromosomes. A research team of the U.S. Naval Center released the startling information that a microgram, this is an infinitesimal measure — one millionth of a gram. Think of a standard drop of blood as containing 330,000,000 cells, two of these cells will weigh a microgram.

Whole blood when put in a bottle and allowed to grow, then is contaminated with a few drops of LSD, reveals a startling result. A high-powered microscope shows that all the genes and chromosomes are shattered. Medical scientists report that only two other conditions destroy genes and chromosomes: 1) over-exposure to radiation 2) leukemia in the blood. The startling disclosures have triggered a new interest in LSD research and teams have discovered that the acid affects judgment,

changes the concept of time and height, and creates an alarming conviction that under the influence of drug one can fly. A compassionate sense of being Godlike, with super-human powers to stop speeding cars, and to perform the Godlike feats, often motivates the victim.

Meet George, a college sophomore. He became an addict in the most innocent way. His addiction started when he suffered from a very bad cough sometime ago. To cure it, his mother gave him cough syrup which contained codeine, a medically useful but habit-forming drug.

After a difficult period trying to get rid of it, he was cured of his cough, but his craving for the cough syrup stayed. He found it nice to drink, although it made him feel a little drowsy. As time progressed, he took more of it. Later, through a friend, he discovered amarijuana cigarettes, which gave him almost the same feeling as the cough syrup. Still later, he tried "yellow jackets" and "red devils" — barbituates which derive their nicknames from their color. Much later, he took to injecting heroin into his vein. He had been doing it for four months when he was caught stealing for the first time.

By this time he had lost all interest in school. He had become an entirely different person — thinner, quarrelsome, dirty. After his first arrest, he was withdrawn from drugs and stayed "clean" for about a month. Then the vicious cycle started all over again — addiction, arrest, withdrawal, etc.

This is the picture of a drug addict. It is a pitiful picture, which multiplies a hundredfold in our country daily. Worse, most of the victims are young. It is estimated that about 50 % of students in the Greater Manila area are taking soft drugs. In Tondo alone there are about 3,000 addicts composed mainly of young adults and adolescents. In Cebu there is reportedly an increasing number of cases.

Because drug addiction is an expensive habit, the addict often has to steal to satisfy his need for drugs. Instead of harnessing his intelligence to learn lessons that will prepare him for a meaningful, productive life, he uses it to think only of ways to feed his habit. Drug addiction at the rate it is increasing, will rob society of half the talents and energies which will be available in the future. Manpower will eventually be reduced to half.

The alarmed authorities, fear not only of the present but also of the future. And to curb the spread of drug addiction, four government agencies — The National Bureau of Investigation, the Justice Department, the Police Commission, and the Department of Education — are now waging a relentless drive against smugglers and peddlers of narcotics. A massive education campaign against the dangers of drug abuse has been undertaken by civic and education leaders. The SoAn 105 classes under Mrs. Josephine Pelaez and the 14th Student Government co-sponsored a symposium on Drug Addiction last September 26, 1970 at the multi-media lecture room.

The authorities are more interested in wiping out the cause rather than the effect. Atty. Leonardo Gonzales, chief of the NBI Narcotics Division says: "The point is not to let anyone start on drugs. Once he does, there is no easy road back."

A THREAT TO THE YOUTH

by Jude T. Bontol