

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

Anti-Copyright



Antonin Artaud
Opium Traffic
1925

Retrieved on 9/10/2021 from <https://www.conjunctions.com/online/article/antonin-artaud-01-16-1998>

First appeared in 1925 in *La Révolution Surréaliste* Commonly titled "General Security: The Liquidation of *Opium*"

Translated by Richard Grossman

usa.anarchistlibraries.net

Opium Traffic

Antonin Artaud

1925

It is my intention to respond with sincerity, so that once and for all we shall no longer be assaulted with warnings about the so-called danger of drugs.

My point of view is clearly antisocial.

There is only one logical rationale for an attack on opium use: that its personal enjoyment will somehow infect the quaking innocents of society.

This argument is false.

We are born corrupted in body and spirit; we are congenitally fucked up. By eliminating opium, one doesn't eliminate the criminal impulse, the malignancies of body and soul, the propensity to despair, the wailing cretin, the pox-ridden infant, nor the progressive crumbling of the instincts. One doesn't change the fact that there are individuals destined to be poisoned: poisoned by morphine, poisoned by reading, poisoned by isolation, poisoned by masturbation, poisoned by uninhibited fucking, poisoned by the weakness rooted in the soul, poisoned by booze, poisoned by hemp, poisoned by sociopathy. There are incurable, crude spirits that will never be part of society, but if you remove their tools of folly, they will create ten thousand new ones. They will create tools that are subtle, fu-

rious, cruel, and *desperate*. Human nature is antisocial to its very depths. It is only by a usurpation of power that the bureaucratic social organism can combat the natural tendencies of the individual.

So let us abandon the lost. We have better ways of occupying our time than to attempt their rehabilitation, an effort that is at once useless, odious, and dangerous.

Inasmuch as we shall never be able to identify and eliminate the causes of despair in humanity, we have no right to prevent a man from cleansing himself of sorrow. For it would then be necessary to suppress his hidden compulsions, his special tendency to search for a means, to believe in fact that a means exists, which will deliver him from besetting evil.

Moreover, those who are lost were essentially lost to begin with, and all notions of moral rehabilitation are worthless: there is an inner fatality, an incontrovertible incurability in suicide, crime, idiocy, and madness; there is an invincible cuckoldry to the human character, and a permanent debasement. The human spirit is by nature castrated.

Aphasia, ataxia, syphilitic meningitis, theft, and usurpation. Hell is of this world, and there are men, the unfortunate escapees of hell, who are eternally destined to reenact their escape. But enough of this garbage.

Man is miserable; the soul is weak; and there are creatures who, regardless of circumstances, will be damned, always. The means that further their damnation are of little importance, and in any case are none of society's business.

For there is sufficient demonstration of the fact that society is incapable of constructive action. It is wasting its time, and it is only becoming further entrenched in its own stupidity. Its actions are always harmful.

For those willing to face the truth, one need look no farther than the United States and its excesses of madness: beer laced with ether, black-market liquor laced with coke, drunkenness

as a cancer of society. In short, the natural law of the forbidden fruit.

It's the same thing with opium.

So far, the anti-drug laws have only benefited the medical, journalistic, and literary pimps, who have built reputations of shit founded on a righteous indignation leveled against this inoffensive sect of dope-fiends (inoffensive simply because they are insignificant and marginal), this minority that's damned by their minds, their souls, and their disease.

How prettily knotted is the umbilical cord of pimp morality. Since plopping out of Mommy, they have never sinned! These are the apostles, the descendants of priests. One can only wonder at the source of such indignation, how much money they've pocketed as a result of it, and what other goodies they've raked in on the side.

But this is hardly the point.

Truth to tell, this furor over drugs and drug laws 1) is powerless in the face of the absolute need to consume drugs which, whether satisfied or not, is innate to the soul, and would drive the addict to engage in antisocial behaviors, *even if drugs never had existed*; 2) actually aggravates the need for drugs, changing unacceptable public behavior into a secret vice; and 3) increases the sum total of drug sickness, which is the most significant and dangerous point.

Because, unfortunately for this sickness, the cure will always exist.

All the laws, restrictions and public relations gestures against narcotics, assuming their success, will only succeed in depriving the most destitute elements of humanity—who have inalienable rights—of medicine for their pains, of a nourishment more splendid than bread, and of an ultimate method of resurrection.

Better plague than morphine, the medical profession howls, better hell than life! These imbeciles pretend that it's necessary to let the addict stew in his own sickness. In such pronounce-

ments, the boors give themselves free reign on behalf of the common good.

Commit suicide, hopeless ones! Tortured in mind and body, you shall lose all hope! There is no more comfort in the world. The world dines on your putrid flesh!

And you, gifted madmen, spastics, cancer infected, brain-swollen chronic cases, you are misunderstood. There is something in you that no doctor can ever understand, and it is this fact in and of itself that renders you august, pure, and marvelous. You stand outside life, you stand above life, you have an illness which no ordinary person can ever understand, you exceed the normal level, and that's why you mess people up, because you poison their silences and dissolve their artificial sanity. Your irrepressible forms of suffering don't fit within known categories, are inexpressible in any known terms: recurring pain that cannot be grasped, incurable pain hovering outside thought, pain of neither body nor soul, *but a pain that resembles both*. And me, I share this pain, and I ask you, Who dares to measure our relief? We who live at the very root of knowledge and clarity, as a result of our desires and our insistence on suffering; we whose pain travels through our souls in search of secret places of calm, in search of a mental balance forged in evil, where others only seek for good. We're not crazy. We are fantastic doctors. We know the soul's dosages, its sensibilities, its marrows, its thoughts. Leave us in peace. Leave us to our illness, we ask nothing else of men. We ask only for a respite from suffering. We have evaluated our own lives, we understand the restrictions we have placed on ourselves and others, we understand the enforced flaccidities of life, the renunciations, the paralysis of subtle functions that our disease imposes on us daily. We are not quite ready for suicide.

In the meantime, fuck off.