Aldous Huxley on Self-Transcendence

The Epilog of *The Devils of Loudun*

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**Introduction**

Aldous Huxley writes here about self-transcendence and the various methods used in its pursuit. He expresses opinions about the use of drugs which might surprise many readers, until it is realized that they were written before his first experiences with psychedelic drugs: the following is the Epilogue to *The Devils of Loudun*, published in 1953. Very soon thereafter, Huxley was to take the psychedelic drug mescaline under the guidance of the Canadian psychiatrist and researcher Humphrey Osmond. In 1954 and in light of his first psychedelic experiences, Huxley published *The Doors of Perception* which represented a complete metamorphosis in his thinking about the use of drugs for self-transcendence and personal growth. Such complete reversals of thinking on the basis of evidence are, unfortunately, far too rare among professionals of any kind, and the comparison of what is written here with *The Doors of Perception* should provide an important lesson to the many researchers and politicians who have since denounced psychedelic drugs as a "scourge of humanity": in the following piece we hear some of the very same ignorant pronouncements about drugs still echoed today by those having the least direct knowledge of the properties or potential of psychedelic drugs to assist humanity to find a more satisfying and ecological mode of existence.

— *Peter Webster*

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Without an understanding of man's deep-seated urge to self-transcendence, of his very natural reluctance to take the hard, ascending way, and his search for some bogus liberation either below or to one side of his personality, we cannot hope to make sense of our own particular period of history or indeed of history in general, of life as it was lived in the past and as it is lived today. For this reason I propose to discuss some of the more common Grace-substitutes, into
which and by means of which men and women have tried to escape from the tormenting consciousness of being merely themselves.

In France there is now one retailer of alcohol to every hundred inhabitants, more or less. In the United States there are probably at least a million desperate alcoholics, besides a much larger number of very heavy drinkers whose disease has not yet become mortal. Regarding the consumption of intoxicants in the past we have no precise or statistical knowledge. In Western Europe, among the Celts and Teutons, and throughout medieval and early modern times, the individual intake of alcohol was probably even greater than it is today. On the many occasions when we drink tea, or coffee, or soda pop, our ancestors refreshed themselves with wine, beer, mead and, in later centuries, with gin, brandy and usquebaugh. The regular drinking of water was a penance imposed on wrongdoers, or accepted by the religious, along with occasional vegetarianism, as a very severe mortification. Not to drink an intoxicant was an eccentricity sufficiently remarkable to call for comment and the using of a more or less disparaging nickname. Hence such patronymics as the Italian Bevilacqua, the French Boileau and the English Drinkwater.

Alcohol is but one of the many drugs employed by human beings as avenues of escape from the insulated self. Of the natural narcotics, stimulants and hallucinators there is, I believe, not a single one whose properties have not been known from time immemorial. Modern research has given us a host of brand new synthetics; but in regard to the natural poisons it has merely developed better methods of extracting, concentrating and recombining those already known. From poppy to curare, from Andean coca to Indian hemp and Siberian agaric, every plant or bush or fungus capable, when ingested, of stupefying or exciting or evoking visions, has long since been discovered and systematically employed. The fact is strangely significant; for it seems to prove that, always and everywhere, human beings have felt the radical inadequacy of their personal existence, the misery of being their insulated selves and not something else, something wider, something in Wordsworthian phrase, "far more deeply interfused." Exploring the world around him, primitive man evidently "tried all things and held fast to that which was good." For the purpose of self-preservation the good is every edible fruit and leaf, every wholesome seed, root and nut. But in another context—the context of self-dissatisfaction and the urge to self-transcendence—the good is everything in nature by means of which the quality of individual consciousness can be changed. Such drug-induced changes may be manifestly for the worse, may be at the price of present discomfort and future addiction, degeneration and premature death. All this is of no moment. What matters is the awareness, if only for an hour or two, if only for a few minutes, of being someone or, more often, something other than the insulated self. "I live, yet not I, but wine or opium or peyotl or hashish liveth in me." To go beyond the limits of the insulated ego is such a liberation that, even when self-transcendence is through nausea into frenzy, through cramps into hallucinations and coma, the drug induced experience has been regarded by primitives and even by the highly civilized as intrinsically divine. Ecstasy through intoxication is still an essential part of the religion of many African, South American and Polynesian peoples. It was once, as the surviving documents clearly prove, a no less essential part of the religion of the Celts, the Teutons, the Greeks, the peoples of the Middle East and the Aryan conquerors of India. It is not merely that "beer does more than Milton can to justify God's ways to man." Beer is the god. Among the Celts, Sabazios was the divine name given to the felt alienation of being dead drunk on ale. Further to the south, Dionysos was, among other things, the supernatural objectification of the psychophysical effects of too much wine. In Vedic mythology, Indra was the god of that now unidentifiable drug called soma.
The Epilog of The Devils of Loudun

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Hero, slayer of dragons, he was the magnified projection upon heaven of the strange and glorious otherness experienced by the intoxicated. Made one with the drug, he becomes, as Soma-Indra, the source of immortality, the mediator between the human and the divine.

In modern times beer and the other toxic short cuts to self-transcendence are no longer officially worshipped as gods. Theory has undergone a change, but not practice; for in practice millions upon millions of civilized men and women continue to pay their devotions, not to the liberating and transfiguring Spirit, but to alcohol, to hashish, to opium and its derivatives, to the barbiturates, and the other synthetic additions to the age-old catalogue of poisons capable of causing self-transcendence. In every case, of course, what seems a god is actually a devil, what seems a liberation is in fact an enslavement. The self-transcendence is invariably downward into the less than human, the lower than personal.

Like intoxication, elementary sexuality, indulged in for its own sake and divorced from love, was once a god, worshipped not only as the principle of fecundity, but as a manifestation of the radical Otherness immanent in every human being. In theory, elementary sexuality has long since ceased to be a god. But in practice it can still boast of a countless host of sectaries.

There is an elementary sexuality which is innocent, and there is an elementary sexuality which is morally and aesthetically squalid. D. H. Lawrence has written very beautifully of the first; Jean Genet, with horrifying power and in copious detail, of the second. The sexuality of Eden and the sexuality of the sewer—both of them have power to carry the individual beyond the limits of his or her insulated self. But the second and (one would sadly guess) the commoner variety takes those who indulge in it to a lower level of subhumanity, evokes the consciousness, and leaves the memory, of a completer alienation, than does the first. Hence, for all those who feel the urge to escape from their imprisoning identity, the perennial attraction of debauchery and of such strange equivalents of debauchery as have been described in the course of this narrative.

In most civilized communities public opinion condemns debauchery and drug addiction as being ethnically wrong. And to moral disapproval is added fiscal discouragement and legal repression. Alcohol is heavily taxed, the sale of narcotics is everywhere prohibited and certain sexual practices are treated as crimes. But when we pass from drug-taking and elementary sexuality to the third main avenue of downward self-transcendence, we find, on the part of moralists and legislators, a very different and much more indulgent attitude. This seems all the more surprising since crowd-delirium, as we may call it, is more immediately dangerous to social order, more dramatically a menace to that thin crust of decency, reasonableness and mutual tolerance which constitutes a civilization, than either drink or debauchery. True, a generalized and long-continued habit of overindulgence in sexuality may result, as J. D. Unwin has argued,* (J. D. Unwin, Sex and Culture, London, 1934), in lowering the energy level of an entire society, thereby rendering it incapable of reaching or maintaining a high degree of civilization. Similarly drug addiction, if sufficiently widespread may lower the military, economic and political efficiency of the society in which it prevails. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries raw alcohol was the secret weapon of the European slave traders; heroin, in the twentieth, of the Japanese militarists. Dead drunk, the Negro was an easy prey. As for the Chinese drug addict, he could be relied upon to make no trouble for his conquerors. But these cases are exceptional. When left to itself, a society generally manages to come to terms with its favorite poison. The drug is a parasite on the body politic, but a parasite which its host (to speak metaphorically) has strength and sense enough to keep under control. And the same applies to sexuality. No society which based its sexual practices upon the theories of the Marquis de Sade could possibly survive; and in fact no society has ever come near to doing such a thing. Even
the most easygoing of the Polynesian paradises have their rules and regulations, their
categorical imperatives and commandments. Against excessive sexuality, as against excessive
drug-taking, societies seem to be able to protect themselves with some degree of success.
Their defense against crowd-delirium and its often disastrous consequences is, in all too many
cases, far less adequate. The professional moralists who inveigh against drunkenness are
strangely silent about the equally disgusting vice of herd-intoxication—of downward
self-transcendence into subhumanity by the process of getting together in a mob.
"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." In the
midst of two or three hundred, the divine presence becomes more problematical. And when the
numbers run into the thousands, or tens of thousands, the likelihood of God being there, in the
consciousness of each individual, declines almost to the vanishing point. For such is the nature
of an excited crowd (and every crowd is automatically self-exciting) that, where two or three
thousand are gathered together, there is an absence not merely of deity, but even of common
humanity. The fact of being one of a multitude delivers a man from his consciousness of being
an insulated self and carries him down into a less than personal realm, where there are no
responsibilities, no right or wrong, no need for thought or judgment or discrimination —only a
strong vague sense of togetherness, only a shared excitement, a collective alienation. And the
alienation is at once more prolonged and less exhausting than that induced by debauchery; the
morning after less depressing than that which follows self-poisoning by alcohol or morphine.
Moreover, the crowd-delirium can be indulged in, not merely without a bad conscience, but
actually, in many cases, with a positive glow of conscious virtue. For, so far from condemning
the practice of downward self-transcendence through herd-intoxication, the leaders of church
and state have actively encouraged the practice whenever it could be used for the furtherance
of their own ends. Individually and in the co-ordinated and purposive groups which constitute a
healthy society, men and women display a certain capacity for rational thought and free choice
in the light of ethical principles. Herded into mobs, the same men and women behave as though
they possessed neither reason nor free will. Crowd-intoxication reduces them to a condition of
infrapersonal and antisocial irresponsibility. Drugged by the mysterious poison which every
excited herd secretes, they fall into a state of heightened suggestibility, resembling that which
follows an injection of sodium amytal or the induction, by whatever means, of a light hypnotic
trance. While in this state they will believe any nonsense that may be bawled at them, will act
upon any command or exhortation, however senseless, mad or criminal. To men and women
under the influence of herd-poison, "whatever I say three times is true"—and whatever I say
three hundred times is Revelation, is the directly inspired Word of God. That is why men in
authority—the priests and the rulers of peoples—have never unequivocally proclaimed the
immorality of this form of downward self-transcendence. True, crowd-delirium evoked by
members of the opposition and in the name of heretical principles has everywhere been
denounced by those in power. But crowd- delirium aroused by government agents,
crowd-delirium in the name of orthodoxy, is an entirely different matter. In all cases where it can
be made to serve the interests of the men controlling church and state, downward
self-transcendence by means of herd-intoxication is treated as something legitimate, and even
highly desirable. Pilgrimages and political rallies, corybantic revivals and patriotic
parades—these things are ethically right so long as they are our pilgrimages, our rallies, our
revivals and
our
parades. The fact that most of those who take part in these affairs are temporarily dehumanized
by herd-poison is of no account in comparison with the fact that their dehumanization may be used to consolidate the religious and political powers that be.

When crowd-delirium is exploited for the benefit of governments and orthodox churches, the exploiters are always very careful not to allow the intoxication to go too far. The ruling minorities make use of their subjects’ craving for downward self-transcendence in order, first, to amuse and distract them and, second, to get them into a subpersonal state of heightened suggestibility. Religious and political ceremonials are welcomed by the masses as opportunities for getting drunk on herd-poison, and by their rulers as opportunities for planting suggestions in minds which have momentarily ceased to be capable of reason or free will.

The final symptom of herd-intoxication is a maniacal violence. Instances of crowd-delirium culminating in gratuitous destructiveness, in ferocious self-mutilation, in fratricidal savagery without purpose and against the elementary interests of all concerned, are to be met with on almost every page of the anthropologists’ textbooks and—a little less frequently, but still with dismal regularity—in the histories of even the most highly civilized peoples. Except when they wish to liquidate an unpopular minority the official representatives of state and church are chary of evoking a frenzy which they cannot be sure of controlling. No such scruples restrain the revolutionary leader, who hates the status quo and has only one wish—to create a chaos on which, when he comes to power, he may impose a new kind of order. When the revolutionary exploits men’s urge to downward self-transcendence, he exploits it to the frantic and demoniac limit. To men and women sick of being their insulated selves and weary of the responsibilities which go with membership in a purposive human group, he offers exciting opportunities for "getting away from it all" in parades and demonstrations and public meetings. The organs of the body politic are purposive groups. A crowd is the social equivalent of a cancer. The poison it secretes depersonalizes its constituent members to the point where they start to behave with a savage violence, of which, in their normal state, they would be completely incapable. The revolutionary encourages his followers to manifest this last and worst symptom of herd-intoxication and then proceeds to direct their frenzy against his enemies, the holders of political, economic and religious power.

In the course of the last forty years the techniques for exploiting man’s urge toward this most dangerous form of downward self-transcendence have reached a pitch of perfection unmatched in all of history. To begin with, there are more people to the square mile than ever before, and the means of transporting vast herds of them from considerable distances, and of concentrating them in a single building or arena, are much more efficient than in the past. Meanwhile, new and previously undreamed-of devices for exciting mobs have been invented. There is the radio, which has enormously extended the range of the demagogue’s raucous yelling. There is the loudspeaker, amplifying and indefinitely reduplicating the heady music of class-hatred and militant nationalism. There is the camera (of which it was once naively said that “it cannot lie”) and its offspring, the movies and television; these three have made the objectification of tendentious phantasy absurdly easy. And finally there is that greatest of our social inventions, free, compulsory education. Everyone now knows how to read and everyone consequently is at the mercy of the propagandists, governmental or commercial, who own the pulp factories, the linotype machines and the rotary presses. Assemble a mob of men and women previously conditioned by a daily reading of newspapers; treat them to amplified band music, bright lights, and the oratory of a demagogue who (as demagogues always are) is simultaneously the exploiter and the victim of herd-intoxication, and in next to no time you can reduce them to a state of almost mindless subhumanity. Never before have so few been in a position to make
fools, maniacs or criminals of so many.

In Communist Russia, in Fascist Italy, in Nazi Germany, the exploiters of humanity's fatal taste for herd-poison have followed an identical course. When in revolutionary opposition, they encouraged the mobs under their influence to become destructively violent. Later, when they had come to power, it was only in relation to foreigners and selected scapegoats that they permitted herd-intoxication to run its full course. Having acquired a vested interest in the status quo, they now checked the descent into subhumanity at a point well this side of frenzy. For these neo-conservatives, mass intoxication was chiefly valuable, henceforward, as a means for heightening their subjects' suggestibility and so rendering them more docile to the expressions of authoritarian will. Being in a crowd is the best known antidote to independent thought. Hence the dictators' rooted objection to "mere psychology" and a private life. "Intellectuals of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your brains."

Drugs, elementary sexuality and herd-intoxication—these are the three most popular avenues of downward self-transcendence. There are many others, not so well trodden as these great descending highways, but leading no less surely to the same infra-personal goal. Consider, for example, the way of rhythmic movement. In primitive religions prolonged rhythmic movement is very commonly resorted to for the purpose of inducing a state of infra-personal and subhuman ecstatic. The same technique for achieving the same end has been used by many civilized peoples—by the Greeks, for example, by the Hindus, by many of the orders of Dervishes in the Islamic world, by such Christian sects as the Shakers and the Holy Rollers. In all these cases rhythmic movement, long-drawn and repetitive, is a form of ritual deliberately practiced for the sake of the downward self-transcendence resulting from it. History also records many sporadic outbreaks of involuntary and uncontrollable jigging, swaying and head-wagging. These epidemics of what in one region is called Tarantism, in another St. Vitus's dance, have generally occurred in times of trouble following wars, pestilences and famines, and are most common where malaria is endemic. The unwitting purpose of the men and women who succumb to these collective manias is the same as that pursued by the sectaries who use the dance as a religious rite—namely, to escape from insulated selfhood into a state in which there are no responsibilities, no guilt-laden past or haunting future, but only the present, blissful consciousness of being someone else.

Intimately associated with the ecstasy-producing rite of rhythmic movement is the ecstasy-producing rite of rhythmic sound. Music is as vast as human nature and has something to say to men and women on every level of their being, from the self-regardingly sentimental to the abstractly intellectual, from the merely visceral to the spiritual. In one of its innumerable forms music is a powerful drug, partly stimulant and partly narcotic, but wholly alterative. No man, however highly civilized, can listen for very long to African drumming, or Indian chanting, or Welsh hymn-singing, and retain intact his critical and self-conscious personality. It would be interesting to take a group of the most eminent philosophers from the best universities, shut them up in a hot room with Moroccan dervishes or Haitian voodooists, and measure, with a stop watch, the strength of their psychological resistance to the effects of rhythmic sound. Would the Logical Positivists be able to hold out longer than the Subjective Idealists; Would the Marxists prove tougher than the Thomists or the Vedantists? What a fascinating, what a fruitful field for experiment! Meanwhile, all we can safely predict is that, if exposed long enough to the tom-toms and the singing, every one of our philosophers would end by capering and howling with the savages.
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The ways of rhythmic movement and of rhythmic sound are generally superimposed, so to speak, upon the way of herd-intoxication. But there are also private roads, roads which can be taken by the solitary traveler who has no taste for crowds, or no strong faith in the principles, institutions and persons in whose name crowds are assembled. One of these private roads is the way of the mantram, the way of what Christ called "vain repetition." In public worship "vain repetition" is almost always associated with rhythmic sound. Litanies and the like are chanted, or at least intoned. It is as music that they produce their quasi-hypnotic effects. "Vain repetition," when practiced privately, acts upon the mind, not because of its association with rhythmic sound (for it works even when the words are merely imagined), but in virtue of a concentration of attention and memory. The constant reiteration of the same word or phrase frequently brings on a state of light or even profound trance. Once induced, this trance can either be enjoyed for its own sake, as a delicious sense of infra-personal otherness, or else deliberately used for the purpose of improving personal conduct by autosuggestion and of preparing the way for the ultimate achievement of upward self-transcendence. Of the second possibility more will be said in a later paragraph. Here our concern is with "vain repetition" as a descending road into an infra-personal alienation.

We must now consider a strictly physiological method of escape from insulated selfhood. The way of corporal penance. The destructive violence which is the final symptom of herd-intoxication is not invariably directed outward. The history of religion abounds in gruesome tales of gregarious self-whipping, self-gashing, self-gelding, even self-killing. These acts are the consequences of crowd-delirium, and are performed in a state of frenzy. Very different is the corporal penance undertaken privately and in cold blood. Here the self-torment is initiated by an act of the personal will; but its result (in some cases at least) is a temporary transformation of the insulated personality into something else. In itself, this something else is the consciousness, so intense as to be exclusive, of physical pain. The self-tortured person identifies himself with his pain and, in becoming merely the awareness of his suffering body, is delivered from that sense of past guilt and present frustration, that obsessive anxiety about the future, which constitute so large a part of the neurotic ego. There has been an escape from selfhood, a downward passage into a state of pure physiological excruciation. But the self-tormentor need not necessarily remain in this region of infra-personal consciousness. Like the man who makes use of "vain repetition" to go beyond himself, he may be able to use his temporary alienation from selfhood as the bridge, so to speak, leading upward into the life of the spirit.

This raises a very important and difficult question. To what extent, and in what circumstances, is it possible for a man to make use of the descending road as a way to spiritual self-transcendence; As first sight it would seem obvious that the way down is not and can never be the way up. But in the realm of existence matters are not quite so simple as they are in our beautifully tidy world of words. In actual life a downward movement may sometimes be made the beginning of an ascent. When the shell of the ego has been cracked and there begins to be a consciousness of the subliminal and physiological othernesses underlying personality, it sometimes happens that we catch a glimpse, fleeting but apocalyptic, of that other Otherness, which is the Ground of all being. So long as we are confined within our insulated selfhood, we remain unaware of the various not-selves with which we are associated—the organic not-self, the subconscious not-self, the collective not-self of the psychic medium in which all our thinking and feeling have their existence, and the immanent and transcendent not-self of the Spirit. Any escape, even by a descending road, out of insulated selfhood makes possible at least a momentary awareness of the not-self on every level, including the highest. William James, in his
Varieties of Religious Experience, gives instances of "anaesthetic revelations," following the inhalation of laughing gas. Similar theophanies are sometimes experienced by alcoholics, and there are probably moments in the course of intoxication by almost any drug, when awareness of a not-self superior to the disintegrating ego becomes briefly possible. But these occasional flashes of revelation are bought at an enormous price. For the drugtaker, the moment of spiritual awareness (if it comes at all) gives place very soon to subhuman stupor, frenzy or hallucination, followed by dismal hangovers and, in the long run, by a permanent and fatal impairment of bodily health and mental power. Very occasionally a single "anaesthetic revelation" may act, like any other theophany, to incite its recipient to an effort of self-transformation and upward self-transcendence. But the fact that such a thing sometimes happens can never justify the employment of chemical methods of self-transcendence. This is a descending road and most of those who take it will come to a state of degradation, where periods of subhuman ecstasy alternate with periods of conscious selfhood so wretched that any escape, even if it be into the slow suicide of drug addiction, will seem preferable to being a person.

What is true of drugs is true, mutatis mutandis, of elementary sexuality. The road runs downhill; but on the way there may occasionally be theophanies. The Dark Gods, as Lawrence called them, may change their sign and become bright. In India there is a Tantric yoga, based upon an elaborate psychophysiological technique, whose purpose is to transform the downward self-transcendence of elementary sexuality into an upward self-transcendence. In the West the nearest equivalent to these Tantric practices was the sexual discipline devised by John Humphrey Noyes and practiced by the members of the Oneida Community. At Oneida elementary sexuality was not only successfully civilized; it was made compatible with, and subordinate to, a form of Protestant Christianity, sincerely preached and earnestly acted upon.

Herd-intoxication disintegrates the ego more thoroughly than does elementary sexuality. Its frenzies, its follies, its heightened suggestibility can be matched only in the intoxications induced by such drugs as alcohol, hashish and heroin. But even to the member of an excited mob there may come (at some relatively early stage of his downward self-transcendence) a genuine revelation of the Otherness that is above selfhood. This is one of the reasons why some good may sometimes come out of even the most corybantic of revival meetings. Some good as well as very great evil may also result from the fact that men and women in a crowd tend to become more than ordinarily suggestible. While in this state they are subjected to exhortations which have the force, when they come once again to their senses, of posthypnotic commands. Like the demagogue, the revivalist and the ritualist disintegrate the ego of their hearers by herding them together and dosing them with plenty of vain repetition and rhythmic sound. Then, unlike the demagogue, they give suggestions some of which may be genuinely Christian. These, if they "take," result in a reintegration of broken-down personalities on a somewhat higher level. There can also be reintegrations of personality under the influence of the posthypnotic commands issued by a rabble-rousing politician. But these commands are all incitements to hatred on the one hand and to blind obedience and compensatory illusion on the other. Initiated by a massive dose of herd-poison, confirmed and directed by the rhetoric of a maniac who is at the same time a Machiavellian exploiter of other men's weakness, political "conversion" results in the creation of a new personality worse than the old and much more dangerous because wholeheartedly devoted to a party whose first aim is the liquidation of its opponents.

I have distinguished between demagogues and religionists, on the ground that the latter may sometimes do some good, whereas the former can scarcely, in the very nature of things, do anything but harm. But it must not by imagined that the religious exploiters of herd-intoxication
are wholly guiltless. On the contrary, they have been responsible in the past for mischiefs almost as enormous as those brought upon their victims (along with the victims of those victims) by the revolutionary demagogues of our own time. In the course of the last six or seven generations, the power of religious organizations to do evil has, throughout the Western world, considerably declined. Primarily this is due to the astounding progress of applied science and the consequent demand by the masses for compensatory illusions that have an air of being positivistic rather than metaphysical. The demagogues offer such pseudo-positivistic illusions and the churches do not. As the attractiveness of the churches declines, so also does their influence, so do their wealth, their political power and, along with these, their capacity for doing evil on a large scale. Circumstances have now delivered the churchmen from certain of the temptations, to which, in earlier centuries, their predecessors almost invariably succumbed. They would be well advised voluntarily to deliver themselves from such temptations as still remain. Conspicuous among these is the temptation to acquire power by pandering to men's insatiable craving for downward self-transcendence. Deliberately to induce herd-intoxication—even if it is done in the name of religion, even if it is all supposedly "for the good" of the intoxicated—cannot be morally justified.

On the subject of horizontal self-transcendence very little need be said—not because the phenomenon is unimportant (far from it), but because it is too obvious to require analysis and of occurrence too frequent to be readily classifiable.

In order to escape from the horrors of insulated selfhood most men and women choose, most of the time, to go neither up nor down, but sideways. They identify themselves with some cause wider than their own immediate interests, but not degradingly lower and, if higher, higher only within the range of current social values. This horizontal, or nearly horizontal, self-transcendence may be into something as trivial as a hobby, or as precious as married love. It can be brought about through self-identification with any human activity, from running a business to research in nuclear physics, from composing music to collecting stamps, from campaigning for political office to educating children or studying the mating habits of birds. Horizontal self-transcendence is of the utmost importance. Without it, there would be no art, no science, no law, no philosophy, indeed no civilization. And there would also be no war, no odium theologicum or ideologicum, no systematic intolerance, no persecution. These great goods and these enormous evils are the fruits of man's capacity for total and continuous self-identification with an idea, a feeling, a cause. How can we have the good without the evil, a high civilization without saturation bombing or the extermination of religious and political heretics? The answer is that we cannot have it so long as our self-transcendence remains merely horizontal. When we identify ourselves with an idea or a cause we are in fact worshipping something homemade, something partial and parochial, something that, however noble, is yet all too human. "Patriotism," as a great patriot concluded on the eve of her execution by her country's enemies, "is not enough." Neither is socialism, nor communism, nor capitalism; neither is art, nor science, nor public order, nor any given religion or church. All these are indispensable, but none of them is enough. Civilization demands from the individual devoted self-identification with the highest of human causes. But if this self-identification with what is human is not accompanied by a conscious and consistent effort to achieve upward self-transcendence into the universal life of the Spirit, the goods achieved will always be mingled with counterbalancing evils. "We make," wrote Pascal, "an idol
of truth itself; for truth without charity is not God, but His image and idol, which we must neither love or worship." And it is not merely wrong to worship an idol; it is also exceedingly inexpedient. The worship of truth apart from charity—self-identification with science unaccompanied by self-identification with the Ground of all being—results in the kind of situation which now confronts us. Every idol, however exalted, turns out, in the long run, to be a Moloch, hungry for human sacrifice.