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HIPPIE LIFE STYLE: AN EXTENSION OF PREVIOUS LIFE STYLES

It is the writer's contention that people in the helping professions should be informed about social phenomena such as the women's liberation movement, the students' unrest and the hippie movement. Obvious reasons for the contention are: we must first acquaint ourselves with a person or persons before we can understand, accept or even tolerate them; also, we must be aware of the influence or potential influence persons representing supposedly avant garde ideas have on the general public. Finally, based on the writer's recent observations, it is contended that many of the so-called avant garde ideas forwarded by members of women's lib., by radical students or by the hippies are really ideas held, in one form or another, by most women, by most students and by most young people respectively.

The fact is that most people do not have the initiative, imagination, courage or inclination to articulate their ideas. So, when particular groups of people present their views publicly by means of soap box speeches, demonstrations, underground papers, etc., they are labelled in a way that tends to polarize peoples' thinking. There are those who hate and distrust the so-called radicals, and try desperately to repress the ideas that they have in common with them—then there are those who join the proverbial bandwagon, busily conjuring up ideas that they have in common with only an obscure, infamous minority.

The previously mentioned "bandwagon" has always been loaded with neurotics, psychotics and other counselling candidates who have exaggerated and distorted the originally well articulated views of a few courageous ones so that most people categorically reject the hippies and their whole philosophy, at the same time repressing thought, ideas and dreams which they share with the hippies and for that matter, with all mankind.

In this paper the writer is attempting to point out that at least one social phenomenon—the hippie life style—has always been with us and will likely continue to be with us. The historical perspective outlined below indicates that hippies have always mirrored certain aspects of man but that most people reject those aspects when seen within the context of a hippie life style.

Buddha, whose family name was Gautama and whose given name was Siddhartha, lived in the first half of the sixth century, B.C. He grew up amid conditions of luxury and sensuous enjoyment offered by the Saka clan to which he belonged. Recognizing the facts about old age, of disease, of death and of the poverty around him, he left his beautiful wife and newborn son in search for the meaning of life. His enquiries led him to the doorsteps of hermits, to an escetic denial of his body's demands and finally to an extended period of meditation under a large tree, where he presumably integrated his personal experiences and decided to teach others what he had

learned about true happiness, peace and love (Hesse, 1951). Neill (1970), suggests that the chaotic religious and political conditions prevailing in Buddha's time are similar to the ones we are experiencing today and that the hippies, like Buddha, are seeking for a way of escape from a mundane human existence and like Buddha are characterized by a certain fearlessness, unconventionality, other worldliness and quietism.

Boyle (1967) argues that ". . . hippies are not just a passing fad (p. 10)" and that throughout history, segments of the world population have distinguished themselves by subscribing to a bohemian or hippie life style. Socrates and the Cynics for instance, ". . . made a living out of *not* making a living (Xenakis, 1970, p. 1)." Socrates, like Buddha, was an ascetic, denied himself bodily comforts and in his later years had a circle of leisured young men around him who listened to him expound, mainly on the ignorance of public men. It has been said that to the age of 40, Socrates was considered to be ". . . an amusing eccentric, a combination of pedant, paradox-monger, free thinker and necromancer . . ." (Taylor, 1953, p. 89)."

Wach (1967), in his description of Philip Neri, a protestor against the Catholic church in the sixteenth century, says that Neri ". . . adopted a critical attitude toward the church life of his day and began, as a hermit, to realize his new ideal (p. 157)." Wach adds that all Neri's associates were characterized by peculiar dress and diet.

The Hutterites, also religious protestors, although rarely described as being hippies, also distinguish themselves from the larger society by dressing uniquely, by subscribing to a communal way of life, by living a simple life supposedly rewarded by a freedom from many "worldly worries" and by claiming to have a monopoly on religious truth. Hutterites, in turn, are often distrusted, frequently held in disrepute and sometimes hated. Jacob Huter, the sixteenth century founder of the sect, endured persecution and finally died at the hands of those who distrusted him. Eaton and Weil (1955) describe the relationship between the Hutterites and the larger society as follows: "Non-Hutterites generally regard the brethren inferior because they are different; Hutterites regard many of their neighbors as spiritually contaminated or misguided by decadent 'modern ways' (p. 32)."

A group of bohemian minstrels of the sixteenth century, in many ways similar to Buddha and Socrates, roamed at will about the countryside of Western Europe searching for ways of transcending the menial human existence so characteristic of their fellow countrymen. The minstrels, like Neri and like the Hutterites, suffered severely at the hands of those who distrusted them because of their peculiarities. The minstrels were described as able-bodied beggars, rogues and vagabonds who pestered other people in all parts of England and Wales. Apparently whipping, branding with a hot iron and even death at the gallows proved to be ineffective means of controlling the so-called undesirables (Duncan, 1907).

The gypsies, who appeared in central Europe were called "bohemians" because their brightly colored clothes, general appearance and behavior so closely resembled that of other vagabonds who had emigrated to France from Bohemia in the early seventh century A.D. A German philosopher, living in the fifteenth century A.D., described the gypsies much as we describe the hippies:

. . . they lead a vagabond existence everywhere on earth, they camp outside towns, in the fields and at cross-roads, and they set up their huts and tents,

depending for a living on highway robbery, stealing, deceiving and barter, amusing people with fortune telling . . . (Clebert, 1963, p. 49).

Ried (1969), implying bohemianism, described the youth who reacted to the superstition, restraint and religious dogma of the Dark Ages in Europe. He indicates that the roads of Europe were filled with ragged, bearded wanderers in search of knowledge, rebelling against the restraint of the mind and in search of the freedom to learn. The taverns and the market places in the cities to which the wanderers were attracted were boisterous with poets and songsters.

Bohemianism, as described above, was perhaps first observed in America toward the end of the nineteenth century (Delaney, 1968). The "Muck-rakers," thus named by T. Roosevelt, were bohemian Journalists who devoted themselves to exposing the inadequacies of the government and big businesses, inadequacies particularly relating to social reform. The "Muck-rakers" were soon followed by a new generation of bohemians known as the "Villagers" who congregated mainly in Greenwich Village, New York. They came from different parts of the United States, expounding new causes such ". . . individual freedom, free love, socialism, avant garde literature and futuristic painting (Delaney, 1968, pp. 103-104)." Steffens (1931) in her *Autobiography*, describes the salon of one of her "Village" friends as follows:

It was filled with lovely things . . . Anyway, we were soon told that one evening a week we might all come there with our friends, anybody . . . All sorts of guests came to Mabel Dodge's salons, poor and rich, laborers, scabs, strikers, and unemployed painters, musicians, reporters, editors, swells; it was the only successful salon I have ever seen in America (pp. 105-106).

In the early 1950's the Beatniks followed the "Villagers." The Beatniks were bohemians, "bent upon the removal of all conventional standards and the substitution of life based upon primitive instinct (Delaney, p. 129)."

Bingham (1968) cleverly and succinctly summarizes the idea that the so-called hippie phenomenon is not a new one:

There is nothing new, for instance, in the hippie's privatism (the Solipists long ago took it to the end of the line), nor in their hedonism (ancient Greece coined the word for it), nor in their reversion to the Natural (Rousseau promoted the 'Noble Savage' whether with hair on his face, like the hippie boy, or under the arms, like the hippie girls). Similarly there is nothing new in the hippies' passivity and pipe dreaming hashish—a stronger variety of pot—has been used for millenia (p. 481).

Goodman (1969) also taking a historical view in his article, "The Diggers in 1984," amusingly predicts what the hippie scene will be like in 1984. He indicates that the "hermits and monks" of the Byzantine Times, the diggers, alternately known as hippies, will multiply in the previously depopulated areas of the world where they can conduct their meditations and services to save their souls.

Conclusion

The literature cited above suggests that the hippie life style is merely an extension of previous life styles, alternately known as vagabonds, hermits, ascetics, etc. The hippie life style is however, progressively gaining in popularity and has become popular even among high school students (Penner, 1971). As helping professionals we must be aware of the ideas common to

most people and furthermore recognize that usually it is the small, so called, radical groups (unfortunately mixed with "crackpots" and sensationalists) who are first to articulate such ideas. Ideas espoused by the hippies, perhaps most common to all human beings are: a desire for creative expression, a desire for community spirit, excitement, a search for a "religious" experience and yes, even the fleeting desire to do nothing.

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ABSTRACT

Dans cet article, l'auteur tente de démontrer qu'un phénomène social au moins—le genre de vie 'hippie'—a toujours existé et continuera probablement d'exister. La littérature se rapportant à ce sujet indique que le genre de vie 'hippie' ne fait que continuer certains genres de vie antérieurs, connus tour à tour sous le nom de vagabonds, hermites, ascètes, etc.

En tant que personnes dont le métier est d'aider, nous devons être au courant des idées communes à la plupart des gens et de plus nous devons reconnaître que ces idées ont été tout d'abord énoncées par des petits groupes soi-disant radicaux, (groupes malheureusement associés avec des 'eccentriques' ou des gens à la recherche de sensationnel). Ces idées adoptées par les 'hippies' et probablement communes à la plupart des êtres humains sont: le désir de s'exprimer d'une façon créative, le désir pour un esprit de communauté, de désir pour une participation totale des sens, le désir de rechercher des expériences 'religieuses', et oui, même, le désir éphémère de ne rien faire.