



The Cult of Pharmacology: How America Became the World's Most Troubled Drug Culture

Richard DeGrandpre

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America had a radically different relationship with drugs a century ago. Drug prohibitions were few, and while alcohol was considered a menace, the public regularly consumed substances that are widely demonized today. Heroin was marketed by Bayer Pharmaceuticals, and marijuana was available as a tincture of cannabis sold by Parke Davis and Company. Exploring how this rather benign relationship with psychoactive drugs was transformed into one of confusion and chaos, *The Cult of Pharmacology* tells the dramatic story of how, as one legal drug after another fell from grace, new pharmaceutical substances took their place. Whether Valium or OxyContin at the pharmacy, cocaine or meth purchased on the street, or alcohol and tobacco from the corner store, drugs and drug use proliferated in twentieth-century America despite an escalating war on "drugs."

Richard DeGrandpre, a past fellow of the National Institute on Drug Abuse and author of the best-selling book *Ritalin Nation*, delivers a remarkably original interpretation of drugs by examining the seductive but ill-fated belief that they are chemically predestined to be either good or evil. He argues that the determination to treat the medically sanctioned use of drugs such as Miltown or Seconal separately from the illicit use of substances like heroin or ecstasy has blinded America to how drugs are transformed by the manner in which a culture deals with them.

Bringing forth a wealth of scientific research showing the powerful influence of social and psychological factors on how the brain is affected by drugs, DeGrandpre demonstrates that psychoactive substances are not angels or demons irrespective of why, how, or by whom they are used. *The Cult of Pharmacology* is a bold and necessary new account of America's complex relationship with drugs.

The Cult of Pharmacology: How America Became the World's Most Troubled Drug Culture Details

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Author : Richard DeGrandpre

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Marie says

This was a tedious read that, for the most part, droned on and on with studies and statistics. When my mind starts wandering to any other minutiae and/or I start anticipating the end of the book simply because I couldn't wait to get it over with - it warrants two stars or less. I expected this book to be more engaging with relatable examples and outside of the first several chapters, it wasn't. I expected it to be less statistically and theoretically oriented. I expected a grand conclusion and it simply fizzled out (did he exhaust all of his theories?). And lastly, I never expected that I would see the word 'panacea' so many times in one book.

Ana says

This book was recommended by a professor I had at university whom I have a lot of respect for. I remember him telling us that it was a bit much but overall a good read. That was definitely an understatement to say the least and I found this book to be extremely disappointing.

Richard DeGrandpre sets out on a critique of pharmaceutical companies, policy makers, the FDA, etc. and how certain drugs were labeled as "angels" or "demons" based on what suited companies best rather than what valid scientific evidence showed. While he is not wrong in his argument, his book is written in such a conspiratorial tone it makes it hard to read. He comes across as ranting and paints only one side of the story rather than painting an objective picture. I really enjoyed the first three chapters (discussing Ritalin vs cocaine, SSRIs and the tobacco industry), but everything after that is just a repeat of his previous arguments albeit with different wording. And no, Richard, it is definitely not OK to compare drug policy to Nazi ideology.

The book does have one saving grace, and the reason why I am rating it as "OK" is that it does paint a clear picture of the drug history and drug culture that developed in the U.S. throughout the years, giving a bit more sense to the current overdose crisis occurring throughout Canada and the U.S. If you can read past all his bias, and appreciate all the history the book contains I guess there's things to learn off the book.

Annie says

I found the parts dealing with cigarette addiction especially interesting, from what I remember nicotine has far less to do with it than one might think.

Jess says

The main theme is how in America there are "good" drugs, which are prescribed by doctors and therefore

healthy and safe, and "bad" drugs, which are used for recreational purposes and which will ruin your life. This line becomes blurred, however, when you take look into the history of drugs like heroin and cocaine and see that they were once on the "good" side. Or when you look at the irresponsibility with which the so-called "good" drugs of today are manufactured and prescribed at alarming rates and to disastrous results.

barry says

not all that great...a friend from the coffee shop who is also a patient of mine gave it to me.....a little too much on the conspiricay stuff

Josh says

Licit or illicit? This book says why. One option is deemed evil by the culture while another is sanctioned by industry (and, therefore, government).

Dawn says

"America had a radically different relationship with drugs a century ago. Drug prohibitions were few, and while alcohol was considered a menace, the public regularly consumed substances that are widely demonized today. Heroin was marketed by Bayer-Pharmaceuticals, and marijuana was available as a tincture of cannabis sold by Parke Davis and Company.

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While there's a lot of information in here that I knew—and most people knew (the racism behind drug laws, wanting to make more money from taxes, etc.), what was the most fascinating was the number of studies presented regarding addiction models. Or rather, the studies and sheer numbers that show just the opposite of what we're told regarding how addictive all these drugs are, how every addiction is a disease, and how addiction works. It's quite typical of the American government to bury what it doesn't like in order to further push an agenda. It also further proves just how much prohibition doesn't work.

Louis says

Why are some drugs considered "bad" and demonized, while others are considered "good" and praised or at least considered acceptable to use? Richard Degranpre's *The Cult of Pharmacology: How America Became the World's Most Troubled Drug Culture* argues that such distinctions are arbitrary and meaningless, and that pharmacology alone does not drive drug use. Furthermore, Degranpre makes a persuasive argument that America's disastrous drug policies have been the result of such arbitrary distinctions between "good" and "bad" drugs.

