



# 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.

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