

Ethan A. Nadelmann

Psychoactive drugs are not easily understood in American society today. Most Americans mistakenly assume that alcohol and tobacco are safer than most illicit drugs. Cocaine and heroin are blamed for many social problems, with little regard for the ways in which drug prohibition makes drugs even more dangerous than they need to be. All sorts of myths are associated with psychedelic drugs like LSD, mescaline, and psilocybic mushrooms.

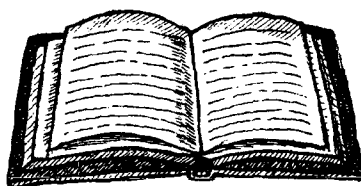
Andrew Weil has long been a brilliant analyst of psychoactive drug use around the world. His first book, *The Natural Mind* (Houghton Mifflin, 1972, 1986), explained drug use in terms of a near-universal human desire to alter one's state of consciousness. A second book, *The Marriage of the Sun and Moon* (Houghton Mifflin, 1980), examined the diverse ways in which people around the world alter their consciousness—from peyote-based religious ceremonies to eating hot peppers, sitting in sweat lodges, munching on fresh mangoes and experiencing lunar eclipses. *From Chocolate to Morphine: Everything You Need to Know About Mind-Altering Drugs* (Houghton Mifflin, 1983), written with Winifred Rosen, completes his trilogy on drugs and drug use, providing a valuable antidote to foolish thinking about drugs.

Designed as a drug education book for both young people and adults, *From Chocolate to Morphine* is remarkably well written and accessible. Weil and Rosen make clear from the start that the best way to avoid problems with drugs is never to use them in the first place. But they also know that virtually all of us are likely to use psychoactive drugs in one form or another, even if we restrict our consumption to those that are legal.

Weil and Rosen describe what drugs are, where they come from, and what their effects are likely to be. They provide guidance as to which drugs and means of consumption are safer or more dangerous. They suggest how to recognize the point at which drug use becomes habitual or otherwise dangerous. And they emphasize that human beings, not drugs, are ultimately responsible for the relationship between the two.

There is no question that drug policy in the United States would improve dramatically if policy makers properly digested this text. No other domain of policy affords public speakers such latitude in substituting distortions, lies, and ignorant beliefs for well-established truths backed by historical and scientific evidence. As enthusiasm for the "war on drugs" fades, there is reason to hope that public discourse and policy increasingly will be shaped by scientific evidence and common sense. *From Chocolate to Morphine* should be priority reading for anyone who uses drugs, wants to use drugs, wants to know about other people who use drugs, just wants to learn about drugs, or wants to shape policy on drugs.

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Steven R. Postrel

Choosing books for others, especially young people, always brings out the pomposity in an intellectual—if you read this, *You Will Be a Better Person*, goes the subtext. In that vein, I considered recommending Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War* for its unparalleled de-

scription of civic virtue and vice and for the pity and terror it evokes at the grim realities of power politics and total war. *The Apocalypstics* by Edith Efron, which is the best antidote to Rachel Carson and the popular hysteria over cancer from industrial chemicals, almost got the nod as well.

Instead, I chose a book that I can honestly say might make the reader a better person—Vladimir Bukovsky's *To Build a Castle: My Life as a Dissenter*. First published in English in 1978, it is the gripping story of a man whose thirst for liberty and sense of integrity were so strong that he could not submit to the will of the Communist Party, even when his defiance brought down upon him the entire repression apparatus of the Soviet state.

When imprisonment in the gulag wasn't sufficient to break his spirit (and his survival techniques are fascinating), Bukovsky was declared insane and placed in a mental hospital to be cured of his anti-communist delusions. Even there, surrounded by truly demented psychotics and threatened with horrifying drug treatments and physical torture, he managed to resist—smuggling out his medical records for independent evaluation by Western psychiatrists, exposing the fraud of Soviet psychiatry to the world at large, and becoming an internationally known prisoner of conscience whose fame intimidated the authorities.

Bukovsky's memoir offers the contemporary American college student many valuable things. It demonstrates the meaning of political courage in the most direct way and shows that flinty toughness rather than squishy compassion is the key to resisting oppression. It explodes the idea that propaganda and re-education can reshape human nature, undermining the fashionable notion that our ideas are determined by the oppressive power of "privileged" texts. It brings back to fresh, vivid life the meaning of individual rights, such as freedom of speech and due process of law, whose perceived importance has been dulled by ritualistic invocation.

Battles over political correctness at universities take on clearer perspective after reading Bukovsky's accounts of his "crimes," their adjudication, and their punishment. On the one hand, the self-correction sessions, guilt by ideological accusation, and illogical charges are eerily familiar; on the other hand, the punishments meted out to campus dissidents today seem paltry in comparison to the kind of thing Bukovsky and his fellows took for granted.

Perhaps the most valuable commodity *To Build a Castle* provides today's campuses is its exploration of the fundamental evil of Soviet communism, now in the process of being forgotten or trivialized. Bukovsky ties that evil directly to the professed ideals of the regime: "You have to understand that without the

use of force it is realistic to create a theoretical equality of opportunity, but not equality of results. People attain absolute equality only in the graveyard, and if you want to turn your country into a giant graveyard, go ahead, join the socialists." Now there's a statement just perfect for use in your sociology class.

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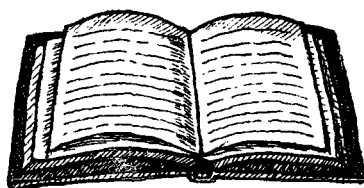
Paul A. Rahe

There was a time, not so long ago, when the study of war, politics, and power was thought to be part and parcel of an undergraduate education. In the course of the last four decades, this has ceased to be the case. Except at a handful of institutions, such as Ohio State University and Yale, military history has been abandoned. Within today's academy, the practitioners of this dying art are shunned as pariahs, for it is assumed that no one would devote a career to the study of armed conflict who is not somehow morally deranged. Programs in peace studies and in conflict resolution abound; rarely does anyone face up to the fact that conflicts quite often get resolved, and peace achieved, through the successful conduct of war.

One consequence of the reigning academic pieties is that in college one is far more likely to encounter an offering in the history of women's fashion than to have the opportunity to study Napoleon's campaigns. This is not because of a lack of demand. Books in military history have always sold well and still do; undergraduates are quick to enroll in courses dealing with politics and war when given the chance. Red-blooded they always were, and red-blooded they remain. Therein lies hope.

Ten years ago, the obvious place to begin would have been Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War. Nowhere can one find a subtler depiction of the moral and practical dilemmas faced by the statesman in a world torn by conflict. Moreover, Thucydides' environment was bipolar—as was ours in the great epoch of struggles on the European continent that stretched from 1914 to 1989—and Thucydides' war pitted a maritime power, such as we were, against a power, such as Germany or the Soviet Union, threatening dominance on land. But the two great world wars are now long gone; the Cold War has come to an end; and we no longer find ourselves hovering on the verge of conflict with a single foe.

Our situation more closely resembles the plight of the late Victorians than that of Pericles, Archidamus, Alcibiades, and Lysander; and while we still have much to learn from Thucydides, there is something to be said for asking contemporary students to read Winston Churchill's lively accounts of the dirty little wars that his countrymen had to fight at the end of the last century in defense of their empire and their way of life.



Unfortunately, the best of these—*The River War: An Historical Account of the Reconquest of the Soudan* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899)—was never reprinted in its original, two-volume edition. Those in search of instruction will have to turn to the library or even to interlibrary loan. The re-

wards will amply repay the effort of acquisition, for the reader will have no difficulty in understanding why Churchill was eventually awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Churchill's great, neglected work is, like Thucydides' history, a prose epic. His subjects—the Nile and its peoples; the conflict between Islam and modernity; the origins, character, and course of the Mahdist revolt against Egyptian rule within the Sudan; the resistance mounted by General Gordon at Khartoum; the fecklessness of Gladstone's Liberal administration; and the campaign of reconquest ultimately mounted on behalf of Egypt and Britain by Sir Herbert Kitchener—offered him the same sort of canvas available to Thucydides, and he took the endeavor as an occasion for reflection on the moral responsibilities attendant upon great power and as an opportunity to explore the relationships between civilization and decadence, between barbarism and courage, and between modern science and the changing character of war.

In an age when Americans are likely to be called on to respond to ugly little conflicts marked by social, sectarian, and tribal rivalries in odd corners of the world—the Arabian peninsula, the Caucasus, the Horn of Africa, the Balkans, Central Africa, the Maghreb, and the Caribbean, to mention the most recent examples—I can think of no other historical work that better deserves our attention.

Paul A. Rahe chairs the department of history at the University of Tulsa. His book Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution was reissued in August by the University of North Carolina Press in a three-volume paperback edition.

John Shelton Reed

Maybe it's not helpful to start by questioning this assignment's premise, but in fact I'm not sure there any longer are such things as "typical college syllabi," at least in the humanities and social sciences. With a few honorable exceptions, college faculties have exploited the elective system to make an implicit pact with our students: We don't require them to read anything in particular, and we get to teach whatever we want. The upshot of this cheerful permissiveness is that there's almost nothing except maybe *The Color Purple* that all students have read, and almost nothing—Zane Grey's novels, Turkish cookbooks, the opinions of Justice Brennan—that one can't imagine being assigned by some professors, somewhere.

Notice I said "almost nothing." We do have our orthodoxies,