

Therapy of Last Hope, or Communion Amid Cannibal Tribes

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(Partial Translation / Summary)

Iboga, coming in from humanity's homeland - Africa, has been used as an effective drug to combat addiction to heroin, cocaine, nicotine or alcohol since the 1960s.

In its history there is a place for the Black Panther Party, the mafia, politics, violence, and even for religious warriors fighting against government-sponsored cannibals.

We owe the discovery of ibogaine (but not its anti-addictive properties, this will come decades later) to Jan Dybowski, a botanist of Polish descent, one of the best renowned 19th century explorers of Africa. His cousin, Benedykt Dybowski, was a famous explorer of Siberian wildlife.

Jean Thadee Emmanuel Dybowski was born in 1856 in France and worked for French government – at that period Poland was under the Partitions (the land was split between Russia, Germany and Austria). However, he always emphasized his Polish descent and had a good command of Polish language. Dybowski, an expert on tropical plants and a Professor of the most prestigious French agricultural school, contributed to the development of desert areas of Sahara: he built artificial oases, wells, and also propagated artificial irrigation works. He compiled ethnographic, geographic, economic and political reports about visited regions. Dybowski, during his expeditions to Africa, gathered thousands of specimens of flora and fauna. During one of the expeditions he ventured exceptionally deep into Congo's virgin territories, inhabited by mysterious cannibal tribes. It was an uncharted and completely obscure territory. Dybowski reached the same dark places as another contemporary scholar, Joseph Conrad (Józef Korzeniowski). Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" which described bestial exploitation of natives by white colonizers and base human instincts, was adapted for the screen and inspired creators of a well-known war movie entitled "Apocalypse Now" (1979, directed by F.F. Coppola). Dybowski set off in order to aid people from Paul Crampel's missing expedition. His boats were fired at by cannibals; however, it turned out that Crampel had been killed by Arabic slave traders. In 1794 France was the first country to legally abolish slavery, yet for decades slave trade had made fortunes of many nations – in fact, this practice

occurs in many places throughout the world up to now. Those opposing the shameful slave trade were at risk of being killed by bandits. The French authorities refused to protect Dybowski's expedition and were against its continuation. Despite that, Dybowski tracked down the murderers' camps and avenged the French. Crampel's killers and their people were punished and their bases destroyed.

Dybowski had his travel accounts printed in Poland and in Polish communities abroad, among others in "Wędrowiec" ("Traveller") That is how he describes his encounter with cannibals:

*Enormous cauldrons, leaning against big stones, are standing over the fire, and something is boiling... Compulsory stopovers and a long stay in mostly barren lands have completely depleted our supplies. We do not have any more European products to add variety to our local meals. So we hurry to the cauldrons to check what is left for us. What an abomination! These are human remains: a thigh, an arm, legs, a head with white glazed eyes wide open and froth flowing down the chin. No, it is impossible to enjoy such cuisine. Yet, the meat has been prepared with elaborate care – potatoes, peels from various vegetables and from small pumpkin prove the chef's effort. Yuck! What an atrocity! At first we are so overwhelmed that we want to punish the cannibals. However, where will it lead us? By accident we saw a scene which has been taking place each and every day on the coast, in all villages of the Bongo tribe. So we are to take our revenge, because we saw the scene which disgusted us? In logical order it would be necessary to destroy all the villages encountered on the way, a responsibility beyond our capabilities, and by its fulfilment we would not unlearn the savages this atrocious custom.*¹

Dybowski learned about and described outrageous cannibal customs: they carefully selected and prepared their victims, fattening and pampering them. The chosen few were happy because of abundance of food and they did not even try to escape, afraid of running into worse trouble. Slaves were treated and eaten like cattle. Women were too valuable – only men were consumed. Human meat was a delicacy eaten during festivals and magnificent feasts – it did not constitute the daily menu. Dybowski noticed that this cruel custom could be eradicated through the development of stock-farming.

Cannibalism occurred repeatedly in the history of various (also European) nations, even in the 20th century. This ghastly practice appeared usually during war or famine; however, it is regarded as a taboo. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to justify cannibalism and it should be eliminated – yet Dybowski chose different measures than violence. No matter how disgusting and horrifying human actions sometimes appeared to be, he always tried to understand and help. Bullets and rifles were a definitive argument. This agriculturist, scholar and warrior worked also as a missionary of science and morality. Taking into consideration the spirit of the times, the accusations against Dybowski or Conrad-Korzeniowski of racism

¹ excerpt from Ryszard Badowski's "Uncovering The World. Poles on six continents".

and acting on foul motives are totally pointless. Despite having worked for colonial empires, they were exceptionally sensitive to other people's pain – as their homeland was also under foreign annexation. A scientist and an artist, both men represented completely different outlooks on the world than military minds of those times.

Dybowski's expeditions had gained international renown and acknowledgement, and his collections, amounted to around 7 thousand specimens, had expanded [Musée de l'Homme](#), in [Paris](#) and a botanical garden. He received a gold medal of the French Geographical Society. In 1901 Dybowski's services were appreciated again, as he was nominated Chief Colony Inspector. Contemporary press wrote that France owed him all that the country owned in Africa in the scope of agriculture. Dybowski was regarded as the best expert in colonial matters and tropical crops, and a liquidator of uncharted areas on the map of Africa. In the same year Dybowski and another scholar, E. Landrin, were first to isolate ibogaine, the main active alkaloid of *Tabernanthe iboga* bush. This plant appears in tropical forests of West and Central Africa, in territory of contemporary Congo, Sudan, Gabon and Ghana.

Holy War Against Cannibals

Iboga in local languages means “cure.” The African *iboga* bush may be up to 180 centimetres high. It is also known as “The Tree of Life”, “God's Leaf” and “bitter grass”.

Legends ascribe the discovery of this plant to Pygmies. Humans could observe the behaviour of animals which after consumption of this plant became extremely energetic. According to local mythology, Pygmies had known the holy bush *iboga* hundreds of years before their neighbours. Only intertribal wars and aggression driving them back deeper into the jungle caused a betrayal of their secret and they acquainted other tribes with *iboga's* effects. Pygmies knew that their quarrelled neighbours would find peace and their own place. Researchers say it looks like the plan succeeded – up to now some of Gabon's territories are among the calmest in war-torn Africa.

Based on *iboga's* sacramental intake as a Communion, Bwiti's faith is one of the three Gabon's official religions, practised by almost half of the country's residents. “Bwiti” means “Liberation”, it is also called “ Religion of the Forest” – as the jungle covers vast parts of Gabon.

In contemporary Bwiti African beliefs, old religious customs blend with Christian ideas. One could be convinced of that while watching a documentary programme *Bwiti: the Struggle Against the Cannibal Witch Doctors* on National Geographic Television in

December 2000. Many Africans consuming *iboga* believe that through this plant Christ speaks to them. As Christ was not able to reach them personally with the Gospel in the far south of Africa, he had sent this holy bush. This belief makes them fight against neighbouring obscure cannibal cults which are often supported by local dictatorships. Maybe even now, at this very moment, so wish them luck.

Nick Middleton, a Professor of Geography at Oxford who cooperates with *National Geographic*, has visited with his camera more than 70 countries. He admitted that while he was going to Congo he was afraid, as he had expected to find Conrad's "pure evil" there. However, the Pygmies whom he got to know in local forests turned out to be the nicest and the most hospitable people he has ever met.

Africans take small doses of ibogaine to struggle with famine, thirst and fatigue. During the religious initiation doses from 50 to 100 times bigger than usually are taken; however, it is a dangerous experience which the member of the church usually goes through only once in a lifetime. Important parts of the ceremony are fast, contrition (especially regret for sins against society) and confession. Negligence in fulfilling these conditions may have fatal consequences for a person who has decided to take part in this sacred rite of passage. An initiated person is considered to have spent time with ancestors and is treated as a dying or dead person.

The rite can last up to several dozen hours. During this time the initiated are mostly unable to move and naturally take on the position of the departed, in order to enter the world of memories, hallucinations and visions. We will probably feel like dying for hours, gradually lose our trust in the senses, and open ourselves to the spiritual world. Africans believe that they stay with their ancestors – researchers suspect that access to the so-called genetic or cellular memory sometimes stands open. Memories of childhood are frequent, new members realize their faults, consequences of their actions, complicated relations in the world, they teach themselves humility. Some meet guides, angels, spiritual beings. Others feel like standing near the borderline between life and death and can hear weakening heart beating and fading electrical impulses in the brain. We may feel piercing presence of a different world whose existence was beyond our comprehension. This experience is so strong that hardly anyone wants to repeat it – the only wish is for a safe return to life. Africans believe that in that way God tells them that they belong to him. During the ritual all members try to help each other and are overflowed with love. At the end, the new church member is washed with water and anointed with oil, then he dances and sings with the others, tells about his visions and experiences and is allowed to eat his first meal within a community. That is an ancient

Religion of the Forest of the inhabitants of a deep jungle. Its currents have city variants that consider not only society's needs but also requirements of modern life.

In African healing tradition ibogaine is applied also to treat schizophrenia. In the West, it turned out to be helpful in drug addiction treatment.

From Africa to New York

In fact, contemporary history of ibogaine is a history of battle against heroin which also can mercilessly devour people who got addicted to it.

In 1962 Howard Lotsof from Bronx, New York, a 19-year-old heroin addict, ingested a drug called ibogaine and unexpectedly spent the night watching his whole life and having ready answers for important questions. The day after the ingestion the effect was even more uncanny – physical craving for heroine and willingness to take have disappeared. Not only the body was purged – he also experienced spiritual awakening and felt being given a chance for a new life. These observations were confirmed by Lotsof's friends after trying this medicine. Lotsof, an accidental discoverer of properties of ibogaine, with his friends and enthusiasts started taking action in the matter of making this new addiction treatment available to others in need. He collected and invested one million dollars in a company which was to promote and to market ibogaine. This sum of money turned out to be definitely too small for effective actions. Because of that a mutual aid among drug addicts came into existence. Lotsof was the first one to notice, as later proved by scientists, that ibogaine stops craving for drugs and often completely eliminates symptoms of drug deprivation. Ibogaine allows one to stop compulsive drug taking without concomitant inconceivable suffering – for many it is a sufficient motivation to undertake therapy, which they would not dare to approach otherwise. Despite the lack of higher education and rage of American establishment caused by promotion of a remedy from African forest which was more effective than remedies from modern laboratories (e.g. methadone), Lotsof did not surrender. He made thousands of phone calls, held hundreds of meetings with scientists and officials. This pioneer of addict mutual aid movement is nowadays the central figure of television programmes and an indisputable authority when knowledge on the subject of ibogaine is concerned.

Physicians and political activists (e.g. Irvin “Dana” Beal from Cures-Not-Wars, author of the book on ibogaine) in many different ways, often against the law, have tried to alleviate the plight of addicts, especially those HIV-infected. In the USA insults and arrests took place

of activists who worked in harm reduction programmes (e.g. replacement of needles and syringes) directed against AIDS dissemination. In 1988-1991 the American Congress enacted as many as 5 legal articles which banned “clean needle programmes”. Jon S. Parker who started the campaign was arrested 27 times. Nowadays, such projects do not give rise to controversy and governments often take part in them. On the defence of the American government it can be said that in those days in many countries of the world drug addicts were simply hanged. Only AIDS, a lethal disease, and dissemination of HIV have drawn public attention to problems of addicts and started their slow rehabilitation as sick people – because by politicians and even by many physicians they used to be perceived as enemies and demons.

Ibogaine was particularly attractive for addicted Afro-Americans. New York Black Panthers unit from the beginning of its existence had helped in a difficult task of drawing public attention to terrible situation of the addicted. In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s the idea of slavery and racial segregation was still vivid across the USA. In the South, thousands of murders, arsons, mob actions and lynching affected the Blacks. Riots in ghettos burst and there appeared the *Black Power* movement, propagating vengeance for injustice and ideas of armed fight. The movement had caused the foundation of Black Panthers and belligerent Black Liberation Army who practised armed self-defence, robbed banks and shot at the police. It was the period of racist FBI head John Edgar Hoover, a massacre of Black activists, assassinations of such leaders as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. In 1968 racial riots broke out in more than 100 cities in the USA. Since then prisoner population in the USA has increased from 200 thousand people to more than 2 million – as a result of an increased control of Black ghettos. Nowadays, almost half of Black men in New York are unemployed, 1 out of 3 ends up in prison. More than half of the USA prison population are Afro-Americans, in most cases convicted for drug-related crimes. In 1997 AIDS was the primary cause of death among Afro-Americans aged between 25 and 44, more than half of cases of illnesses were associated with intravenous drug usage. Ghettos are still at war, especially in South Central LA and in destroyed by hurricane New Orleans.

In Europe it was not better: even in the 1980s Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, notoriously called Nelson Mandela and The African National Congress “terrorists.” Real terrorists from Red Army Fraction (RAF) or Italian Red Brigades tried to wage urban guerrilla warfare in Europe based on the pattern of Latin America. Decolonization of Africa was perceived as a threat of international communism. The last thing which the American government needed was African medicine – a sacrament able to help “non-whites”

to get out of drug addiction and alcoholism or unite. Not only the disposal of ibogaine but also scientific research on ibogaine was banned. It was blacklisted in the group of the worst drugs – those without possible application in medical science and with large addiction potential – despite the fact that ibogaine is non-addictive and helps to eliminate addiction! The CIA tested ibogaine on Afro-American morphine addicts back in the 1950s; however, the agency decided to remain silent about its properties – the files were classified. This secret had been kept for many years, up to the age of the Internet.

Ethnic minorities, especially the Blacks, were regularly poisoned with drugs by the mafia, and even by the police. As the famous Knapp Commission (1972-74) determined, many NYPD officers worked hand in hand with five mafia families, systematically substituting flour for confiscated heroine and circulating it on the streets of Harlem and other Black population centres. As a result of the investigation, the majority of the city's anti-drug squad officers resigned in disgrace or committed suicide. Corruption reached the City Council and involved prominent officials. Some of these events became the basis for the screenplay of *American Gangster* (2007, directed by R. Scott).

Black Panther street activists, called “soldiers”, were waking Black Consciousness through armed resistance against local drug dealers. Raids on drug dealers' dens, seizing heroine and dumping it in the river, bomb attacks and combat actions organized in retaliation by drug dealers, false and forged accusations in court, planting material evidence (e.g. machine guns) by the police, innocent activists sentenced for other people's crimes (later often revoked by courts of appeal), indemnities paid to families of “accidentally” killed activists – that was Black Panthers' everyday life. They were supported by other organizations in those days, among other White Panthers, Yippies and Christ's Army. Many people, also white students, voluntarily organized street demonstrations and political fights after a particular event, that is when on one Sunday afternoon American fascists from the Ku Klux Klan in Birmingham, Alabama, blew up a church with four Black girls inside. Some of the activists paid for it with their lives but the perpetrators were convicted. The KKK followed the policy of “eliminating the Blacks, Catholics, Jews and immigrants”. The KKK, which gathered millions of members, was banned in 1958, but their underground activities have lasted up to now. Catholic Churches in the South of the USA are still torched; since the 1990s about 20 have burned down.

Nelson Mandela showed profound interest in the subject of ibogaine during his visit to the USA in 1990. Recent actions of scientists and responsible politicians have induced the American government to change its mind about legality of research into ibogaine.

Science about religion: how the African holy medicine works

First reports on ibogaine were published in 1864. European reports called *iboga* an aphrodisiac and a stimulant. *Iboga* was supposed to increase warriors' strength and endurance, e.g. during lion hunting. Scientists reported that ibogaine, in small doses, had strong aphrodisiac effects: sexual activity may have lasted ceaselessly from 6 to 17 hours (unproved reports informed about even up to 48 hours). However, these properties could be obtained only in favourable conditions. Due to the fact that the above mentioned African ceremonies do not consist sexual references, children are allowed to take part in them. The Blacks often use *iboga* together with another African cure for impotence acknowledged by Western science – famous yohimbine, extracted from the bark of Yohimbine tree (*Pausinystalia yohimba*) and many other plants. Until recently, yohimbine had been a closely guarded secret of African shamans. For instance, it is given to newlyweds. With the use of yohimbine ceremonies may last for many days or weeks. At that time men do not show tiredness caused by frequent sexual activities. Western researches confirm that yohimbine doubles the number of sexual intercourses in a week.

Works on ibogaine allow scientists to suppose that the same mechanisms rule all known addictions – that is why they are so important. Ibogaine may "erase" brain changes caused by addictions, normalize tolerance and remove craving for drugs. Among scientists who are interested in ibogaine there are also Polish names. We have got great scholars and science centres interested in addiction researches; however, we lack funds to support their efforts. A work written by Piotr Popik, PhD, from the Institute of Pharmacology PAS in Kraków, is worth recommending. It is titled "*Suppressing Addictions by NMDA Receptor Antagonists - The History of Discovery and Operating Mechanism of Ibogaine*" and it is available on the Internet. In order to stop an avalanche of letters to Piotr Popik from desperate addicts and their families, it is important to add that he does not conduct research on ibogaine any longer and has never administered it to people, only to animals.

A team of experts from Medical College in Albany, New York, created a synthetic compound similar to ibogaine, known as 18-MC. Dr Stanley Glick, the director of Neuropharmacological and Neurological Center, obtained approval for clinical research on the new compound. Many scientists in research on ibogaine's derivatives see great chance to succeed and to authorize the use of it. Studies on animals show that the new medicine has the

same properties which cease craving for drugs with smaller toxicity and the lack of unpleasant effects associated with ibogaine. It seems that the new medicine manages well with amphetamine and nicotine addiction (like ibogaine, it bonds with nicotine receptors and blocks dopamine liberation by nicotine). American scientists working on ibogaine compare its effects to Prozac (antidepressant) which is stronger and has long-lasting effects. We can only guess what kind of medicines would exist if researches on ibogaine and similar natural (which means unpatentable = unprofitable) medicines had not been suspended and hindered for decades.

University of Miami in Florida is recently at the forefront in research on ibogaine. Deborah Mash, a neurologist, planned to invalidate what she thought was the myth of ibogaine. However, she changed her mind while looking at remarkable results she obtained – a gossip from the streets and the drug underground appeared to be true, a promise of a breakthrough in researches on addictions. Doctor Mash involved herself in the work on African medicine. She gathered professional staff, she received, not without difficulty, a permission from U.S. Food and Drug Administration for clinical tests; however, she did not succeed in gaining attention of sponsors and collecting funds. Her team was forced to move with their research outside the USA. The clinic led by Dr Mash on the Caribbean is probably the most professional medical institution among other 40 places in the world offering ibogaine treatment. Dr Mash joins scientific research with helping the addicted and she adjusts price for treatment to her patients' financial capabilities.

Many researches on animals have confirmed effects of ibogaine against different addictions and small toxicity of effective doses. Researches on rats and apes have not revealed any pathological changes in the brain, liver, kidneys or neurotoxicity during chronic administration of high doses for many days. It was stated that quantity of cocaine and morphine taken by rats decreased by 80%. However, clinical tests are still rare. Recently they have been conducted in the USA, Canada and Israel only. Newly obtained data suggest reduction in symptoms of craving for opiates within 1-2 hours and a complete disappearance of the craving within 24 hours. There exist innumerable reports about total abstinence or substantial reduction of daily drug dose for months and years after the treatment. However, they are not confirmed by science.

Ibogaine is used by a growing number of physicians and scientists. Articles about the new method have appeared in prestigious scientific magazines: *Lancet*, *Science* and *Journal of Neuroscience*. In 2007, in hotel Victoria in Warsaw, a symposium on the promising therapy was held. The most recent data were presented by scientists, activists and journalists from the

USA, Israel, France and Mexico. The most admirable are Americans from New York who have helped addicts and worked with ibogaine for the longest time despite the risk of being imprisoned. At the same time in Warsaw the 18th International Harm Reduction Conference was held under the patronage of the Minister of Health, Zbigniew Religa. The Conference was supported by the Ministry of Justice, the Warsaw City Council, MONAR and, like in preceding years, by international organizations: WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF, IHRD. More than 1200 physicians and specialists from 80 countries came to Warsaw. They discussed problems with illegal drugs, tobacco, alcohol, HIV and AIDS, prison system, prostitution, connections between drug abuse and prohibition and racism. People were called up to reform law concerning drugs and to find just and humanitarian solutions.

Ibogaine as a natural plant alkaloid has never been attractive for American pharmaceutical industry. According to many specialists, the reluctance to look for solutions in hard to patent nature is a big mistake. Dr Arnold Demain, a biochemist from Drew University in Madison, New York, thinks that nature is more able in creating interesting chemical molecules than chemists, and by ignoring natural resources the industry loses a lot – instead of creating totally new things from scratch, they can develop ready ideas. Clearly, pharmaceutical industry has forgotten about the history of penicillin and many other well-known medicines. Unfortunately, even the interests of private business are totally different from the public interest. Brain Vastag reminds in the prestigious *Journal of American Medical Association* that in 1997 pharmaceutical giants carried researches on only 10 substances against drug addiction, and the same companies tested simultaneously 400 substances against cancer. Their spokesmen, asked for the reason for such a phenomenon, regretfully stated that they did not know the answer. Specialists suppose that the reason was a taboo on addictions and small profits. Meanwhile, it was calculated that the American nation loses annually more than 160 billion dollars due to illegal drug addictions (medical care costs, decreased productivity, crime and prison system). Funds allotted to working out the medicines used in addiction therapies are minimal in contrast to expenses for the prison system or arms. In Los Angeles there are only 3 public detoxication centres working – and there are about 100 thousand heroin addicts living in the city.

Costs of introducing the medicine in the USA are too high for independent research centres, universities or small pharmaceutical companies. Connections between some well-known politicians and the mafia or actions taken by pharmaceutical, tobacco and alcohol lobbies are too strong: one should not expect that such medicines will be created in laboratories of huge American pharmaceutical companies. The more so when public opinion

is being successfully persuaded that an addict is not a sick person, poisoned and hurt by the system for generations, but a sinner and a criminal who is entirely to blame. Up till now ibogaine has been illegal in the USA; outside the USA ibogaine raises enthusiasm and hope of public opinion and in most specialists.

That is why the responsibility for expensive science researches has fallen on universities. Nowadays, the academic society plays a significant role in the search for truth and its opinion is more trustworthy than research results obtained on political or industrial directive.

The Last Resort

Presently, the treatment by ibogaine usually consists of 3 phases. In the initial phase effects of ingestion of ibogaine appear, first images and recollections. These effects last for a few hours. The second phase lasts up to 20 hours and is described as a journey through the whole life, 20 years of psychoanalysis in one day. Recollections appear only when eyes are closed and these visions resemble a dream – ibogaine is not a typical hallucinogen. In the final and most important phase life returns to its usual course slowly; it may last up to a few days. Integration of received information may last up to a few weeks. In the meantime patients are exceptionally sensitive to signals coming from the outside world. During this final phase patients usually obtain particularly important information and answers. Some scientists perceive ibogaine as a sensational remedy for use in psychotherapy. It is true that after such a session demand for drugs virtually plummets to zero. A feeling of physical purity and freedom dominates. Ibogaine in huge doses acts as chemotherapy – it eradicates what is bad or sick. During African rites or amateur therapies it may happen, admittedly very rarely, that ibogaine causes death (in the last decade 9 deaths which could be connected with ibogaine were recorded). In monitored hospital conditions the risk virtually does not exist. Deaths happen usually after a few days: as a result of overdose or when the patient is not hospitalized and takes drugs again. The body is “clean” and reacts much stronger – as if it was the first contact with a narcotic. Drug toxicity after taking ibogaine is much higher – numerous scientific researches have confirmed it. Tennessee Brzek, mother of Marushka – a girl who had fatally overdosed heroin a week after ibogaine treatment – despite her pain over the death of her daughter, claims that the new therapy carried out in appropriate conditions may be a

tremendous chance for addicts. Marushka had been treated in many rehabilitation centres; however, the treatment was never successful.

Legal drugs are the cause of death of more than 100,000 people annually just in the USA; innocent aspirin is the cause of hundreds of deaths; as a result of nicotine addiction about billion of people around the world will probably die. Daily, thousands of people get addicted to heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine or alcohol and are unable to give up the habit throughout their, usually short, lives. 9 out of 10 heroine addicts return to drug abuse – prisons, closed institutions, the most expensive therapies, even the closest friends and family members are helpless. Without additional support only 1 person out of 20 is able to give up nicotine. But occasional deaths which may be connected with natural drugs are the cause of a smear campaign launched by the media and modern pharmaceutical industry. Plants have no lawyers, they cannot be patented or protected from competitors in order to earn a fortune on them. Additionally, drug addict mortality is much higher than the usual rate – companies do not want to risk tarnishing their reputation. Ibogaine does not secure enormous profits – it is not taken regularly as a support therapy (as it is with profitable methadone) but on a one-off basis or occasionally. Maybe a growing number of nicotine addicts will make a company notice that ibogaine may be a gold mine.

According to the current drug standards the risk of death is unacceptable, at least not for plant medicines or cultures different than the Western culture. In America, researches on ibogaine have always been made difficult, even though they brought promising results. It is possible to create a non-toxic equivalents and it is necessary to determine effective and safe doses. Some analysts emphasize that according to the current standards even aspirin would have problems with being released on the market. Having considered treatment by ibogaine to be a hazardous procedure like chemotherapy or surgery, available at clear request, even in current radical form it may be given the green light.

Pharmacologists discovered that ibogaine has a different effect on brain than any other medicine. Not only overdose (administered during religious ceremonies in Africa or therapeutic sessions in the West) but also insufficient dose, incapable of bringing into trance, may be dangerous. In Europe and in the USA, a great importance is attached to detailed heart examination results of a candidate for the therapy. African scientists indicate protective effect of the religious ritual: the brain is under the influence of music of appropriate vibrato, trance, dance and movement and hypnosis. In this way the heart is protected against sudden stress. The most important is to spend time with other members of a group and to feel their support. In 2006, researchers from African Scientists Society, U. Maas and S. Strubelt, drew a

hypothesis that the main reason of deaths during ibogaine treatment was cardiac insufficiency caused by an autonomic nervous system disorder. They noticed that many of the unexplained deaths may have been connected with... loneliness. In the West, in most cases the patient died when he was alone – in Africa the patient is constantly attended with care not only during the ritual but also long before and after it. It looks like people not only die in solitude but also because of it – and this phenomenon concerns not only the Western ibogaine sessions. A deep fear or depression can, so to speak, stop the heart. Then the brain releases the transmitters – a huge amount of strong biochemical substances which are able to cause death. African scientists think that monitoring the patient before and during the treatment cannot change anything. Effects of ibogaine treatment (similarly to strong stress) last for a few days or weeks – the brain and the nervous system are then completely out of adjustment. In Gabon it is thought that the critical phase lasts 3 days – at that time it is recommended to avoid stressful situations (not to mention dangerous drugs). Undoubtedly, it is worth listening to local doctors – they have extensive knowledge and experience, as in Africa there is the highest number of people who know the ritual connected with administration of ibogaine (about 100,000 people just in Gabon).

The syndrome of sudden and unexpected death means that medicine is unable to determine the cause of death. At that time psychological causes are taken into consideration – it tallies with African theory that the source of initiation problems is spirituality. Pangs of conscience may turn out to be lethal – that is why confession is so important. The patient may die because of excessively vivid imagination, suggestion (which is one of pillars of the so-called black magic), lack of motivation to live, feeling of desolation and loneliness, depression and, of course, fear. Doctors do not engage in explaining the cause of death while writing out the death certificate and write in medical manner (“cardiac arrest”) rather than in poetic manner (“broken heart”). Often during autopsy it turns out that the organs were perfectly fit and the underlying cause of death must have been in the psyche. It is widely known that the risk of sudden death is higher in the case of schizophrenia, epilepsy, depression, great stress and traumatic experience, also among infants. Higher mortality rate has been noticed among people who had lost their partners or sense of life and also on important dates (holidays, anniversaries). Doctors often quote the story of a man who locked himself in a cold store and almost froze there to death even though the refrigerating unit was not even connected to the mains. G. B. Schmid, a psychotherapist from Zurich, wrote a book under a meaningful title “Death by Imagination.” This phenomenon has been noticed by the Catholic Church and after Second Vatican Council the Church changed “last rites” into

“extreme unction” or “Anointing of the Sick” in order to protect lives of people who are prone to such suggestions.

Wild animals, when snared, may die of a nervous system disorder. In a life-threatening situation people and animals have two ways out: activity (fight/escape) or fake death in order to deceive the enemy. Then the mind orders the body to freeze in ones tracks, to reduce breathing and metabolism. It may be observed among infants. Sudden shock may equally cause sudden death – also during the ibogaine treatment, which in bigger doses seems to initiate the same chemical mechanisms and to fake death. Traditional healers eliminate this risk by isolating the patient from the source of stress, putting the patient in a calm mood by music and hypnosis. Thanks to this, sudden reactions which could threaten one's life are avoided. Scientists think that trance and hypnosis are effective methods of protection against cardiac arrest, the same as dance, movement and aerobic exercise. It was relatively easy to solve the riddle of the need for a ritual fast – a lot of different kinds of remedies and food dangerously interact.

It is important to remember the significance of social context of the treatment. In Africa preparations for the ceremony last weeks and months and they engage a group of people led by the elders, not by the pretenders. It is important not to rely only on the chemical substance as more important are contact with another person, being a member of a group, the ritual, and even the place and expectations. The rite of passage into adulthood cannot be accelerated – it concerns addicts in particular.

Undoubtedly, ibogaine is simultaneously a healing and toxic substance. The same may be said about the majority of drugs. Alcohol or caffeine in normal doses are known and popular ingredients of drugs, in bigger doses they are dangerous, lethal poisons. In the 16th century Paracelsus wrote, "All things are poison and nothing is without poison, only the dose permits something not to be poisonous." Every substance which can do good may also do harm. Paracelsus also appealed not to reject the treatment on the basis of its exoticism. Hippocrates, referred to as the "father of medicine," said, "Extreme cure is most suitable for extreme disease." It explains why the African sacrament finds application in treating heroine and cocaine addicts, additionally often suffering from AIDS.

White Blacks

During the conference about ibogaine which took place in 1999 at NYU Medical Centre, it was suggested that ibogaine treatment could be accepted in Eastern Europe. Sturdy

Slavs could be strong enough to undertake African traditional ritual treatment. An English word *slave* derives from *Slav*. “National Geographic Magazine” informed in its first Polish issue that about 1000 years ago slave trade flourished around the world and slaves were captured mostly in Africa and Slavic lands. At the time slaves constituted about 10% of the population of England.

As “white Blacks” or “Blacks of Europe” Poles have a better chance to come out unscathed of conscious ibogaine overdose. However, without a doctor-companion, test examinations, reliable preparation and knowledge about ibogaine one should not set off on a trip deep into oneself and into Black Africa even in spite of physical and mental strength.

Recently, ibogaine has been the subject of many television programmes and news reports. The African drug obtained broadcasting time on Planete, National Geographic, BBC, TVN and many other TV channels around the world. Some of the material compiled into one file and entitled *Death Drugs and a Possible Solution* is obtainable on the Internet. M. Trojanowski, a TVN editor, has a website about ibogaine, which contains information, translations and contacts (<http://www.zigzag.pl/jmte/ibogaina.htm>). On the Internet one may find plenty of ibogaine treatment offers – from religious ceremonies in Africa and amateur therapeutic workshops to professional medical care in clinics. The prices of those treatments are diversified: they fluctuate from several hundred to several thousand euros.

War Against Science And Drug Addicts, Not Against Drugs

Some American agencies spare no effort to ban ibogaine and the research on it around the world – by a strange twist of fate exactly when scientists have become interested in its effective action against nicotine. Ban on the use of ibogaine will not reduce its toxicity – it can be achieved only by doctors who will draw up procedures and determine safe doses. Scientists cannot be deprived of methods of searching for the truth. Some people work on even more dangerous things, trying to achieve often morally ambiguous goals.

A growing demand for effective means against drug addiction meets with objections of some politicians. People who for generations have been rendered addicted to different chemical poisons are called by those politicians sinners and criminals without strong will. Even the fervent adherents of building prisons and resolving problems by force must admit that the addicted to legal drugs, especially smokers suffering from cancer, need more effective means against their addiction.

Illness as a phenomenon is variously understood by science and religion. Physicians describe illness as a physical disorder, sum of different factors and specific causes. Psychologists observe the role played by denied emotions. Different religions perceive illness as a punishment for sins, a lesson and even as an illusion. Until recently even alcoholism had been perceived not as an illness but as a sin. Nowadays, drug addicts are deprived of humanity. Drug abuse is not only an illness of a weak will but also of a poisoned body and mind, it changes chemistry and physiology of a human system. The latest scientific discoveries of mutual mechanisms of all addictions, the confession of tobacco companies stating that tobacco is addictive and the growing number of people suffering from tumours who are unable to give up nicotine or alcohol will hopefully induce governments and industries to change their standpoint and to support researches on effective remedies. Nowadays, all people are allowed to use the benefits of modern chemistry or medicine. Those truly in need are refused assistance – in the name of prejudice.

People with open minds sometimes have problems with understanding the chemical addiction – similarly, the satiated will not understand the hungry. Some of these people claim that a drug addict needs a punishment in the form of suffering, imprisonment or death. These people call themselves merciful Christians – they should try to say these words in the faces of parents of children who are to make a decision: detoxification or death. One cannot imagine their pain and agony lasting for weeks. An addicted person is even prone to committing suicide by bashing one's head against the wall. This inexpressible craving for drug is the main reason for compulsive drug taking. To stop it would be a miracle. Addicted people (also to nicotine) need sanatoria and effective therapies, not sanctimonious reprimands and threats.

Ibogaine works but does not exempt one from taking action. It allows a heroin addict who has taken drugs for several years to free himself from compulsive drug taking – even when other methods fail. However, the change needs a lot of time and a tremendous effort. Ibogaine is not a “miraculous cure” for addiction as it is sometimes described by hysterical and sensation thirsty media. Ibogaine is a sort of device allowing to soothe physical craving for drugs and to spiritually awake a person who is fuddled by drug abuse. It is vital to continue the therapy, to change one's habits, to avoid temptation and sometimes to move. The miraculous cure for addiction does not exist and probably will not come into existence (however, there are researches on... vaccines). It is always an issue of freedom of choice – the most fundamental law of our civilization. Jerzy Vetulani, a professor from Institute of Pharmacology PAS in Krakow, states that human beings cannot be restricted to biochemistry

and “the pill of happiness” will not ensure good life – one must work hard to achieve it. On the other hand people should not expect that a poisoned person will recover just on his own. Sick people cannot be deprived of remedies and antidotes. Without a pharmacological intervention a slave of modern chemistry has no chance and dies. One should remember that drug abuse is a lethal illness which kills, above all, young people.

Examples of *crack* and *ice*, extremely addictive variants of cocaine and methamphetamine, give us some idea of how the future will look like. Just after these new variants of not-too-old drugs will appear new variants of heroine and other drugs. Such formulas do exist; luckily, they are difficult and expensive to produce. Laboratories of mighty drug cartels, racists, terrorists and leaders of criminal countries are still working on new formulas of existing drugs and they try to develop new kinds of poisons. The more addictive the product the better for business and the worse for the enemy. In the future people will have to deal with more refined drugs – as long as the existing system is not repaired. It is terrible to think what could happen if there was a drug more addictive than, for example, crack or heroin. Such a situation is depicted in a movie entitled *The 51st State / Formula* (2003, directed by Ronny Yu) with Samuel L. Jackson playing a scientist who offered his knowledge and skills to English criminals. The 51st state of the USA is supposed to be Great Britain, but it could be any other country or a banana republic – a similar scenario is feasible anywhere.

Only one tenth of Poles think that the appropriate punishment for a drug addict (not for a drug dealer) is imprisonment. Most people are convinced that more appropriate is to conduct treatment, to educate and to take part in community works. Poland, thanks to a reasonable legal code, was able to deter the HIV epidemic and not allow to imprison the addicted in the 1980s. At that time in many Western countries people convicted for having drug-related crimes constituted about 40 to 70% of prison population; HIV rate was much higher, ethnic minorities and even whole communities were expelled from society and life became much more brutal there.

Ibogaine is a challenge for modern pharmaceutical industry: how to create a safe and cheap medicine on the basis of a plant and to make profit without robbing African people as usual. Meanwhile, there is a patent war waged on the medical market.