Synthetic drugs versus natural drugs; which are safer?

The author states that taking drugs of any form is a DANGEROUS activity, sometimes in the short term and sometimes in the long term and both tobacco and alcohol are included in that statement.

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Let’s start this short article by just mentioning that all drugs can be dangerous and are generally harmful to the anatomy of the human being; even when being used by doctors on patients for medicinal purposes, as pharmaceuticals (in other words government approved drugs used for certain disease fighting properties) also have side effects. Everything in nature has a cost and indeed there is no such thing as a free lunch, and it is often the case that prescribed drugs can be more dangerous than those drugs being used for recreational or “spiritual purposes”.

The major difference between medicinal drugs and recreational ones is that in the case of the former the cons of the side effects should be outweighed by the pros of the “healing” benefits whereas in the case of recreational or “spiritual drugs” the cons of the side effects should be outweighed by either the “enjoyment” of the high or the benefits of self discovery and personal growth.

As this short article is only for the purpose of questioning the general belief held by many drug users that natural drugs are supposedly safer than synthetic ones; I will focus on those generally illegal drugs used for either their recreational “enjoyment”, or for the spiritual purpose of self discovery, and not those used for medicinal purposes.

So, let’s first define what I mean by a natural drug and a synthetic one. A natural drug is likely to be a plant or a fungus and a synthetic drug is one that has been synthesized with chemicals in laboratories by chemists. It is usually the case that a synthetic drug was originally an active drug constituent found in a plant or fungi that has been isolated, synthesized and then usually further modified in the laboratory

Natural Drugs include

- Coffee
- Cannabis
- Opium
- Coca
- Khat
- Betel Nut
- Tobacco
- Magic Mushrooms (there are many forms; the more well known ones being the Psilocybin and Fly Agarics)

- Synthetic Drugs include
- Amphetamine
- Methamphetamine (Ice)
- Ecstasy
- LSD
- Benzodiazepines
- Crack Cocaine
- Heroin
- Ketamine
- PCP

So is a natural drug or a synthetic drug more dangerous? The answer to this generally depends on who is taking the drug and what the drug is; however, it is often stated by people who take these substances that natural is nearly always safer than synthetic/chemical. When asked as to why they feel natural is safer than synthetic a common answer is often something along the lines of “because it’s natural duh” and “I only do natural and so should everyone else, synthetics are dangerous dude” (being a bit over the top but you get the general idea).

However in my view if a natural drug is considered safer than a synthetic one only on the basis of its “naturalness” then this is a dangerous and irrational conclusion. If natural is always safer, then natural poisons (toxins) should not be any less deadly than synthetic ones? Well in fact some of the world’s most deadly poisons/toxins are found in such organisms as the Cone Snail, The Abrin Tree, The Poison Dart Frog and Botulism (as listed in the book DNA Armageddon); all of the aforementioned poisons are extremely deadly and would kill a full grown man very easily and quickly. Does this “naturalness” make them less deadly than synthetic poisons? Indeed it is often the case that natural substances can be far more deadly than synthetic ones.
This natural versus synthetic poison example is an analogy for the natural drug versus synthetic drug toxicity argument. There are indeed some extremely potent naturally occurring drugs such as opium found in the opium poppy and the many hallucinogenic drugs found in hundreds of fungi and other micro organisms and plants. These can cause as much of a high or spiritual trip and as easily lead to overdose as those drugs produced in the labs by the men in white coats. It is also often the case that many natural hallucinogenic plants are just too complex for any chemist to replicate in the lab, indeed millions of years of evolution makes it a monumental task, and even when successes are made simple economics means that it is cheaper to let nature grow these drugs herself rather than using expensive laboratory chemicals, chemists and equipment to try and replicate a chemical that has taken millions of years to evolve. But just because it has evolved rather than been synthesized does not make it any less or more dangerous than a synthetic one.

**The Great Dosage Danger; the Achilles heel of natural drugs.**

One of the main safety disadvantages of natural drugs compared to synthetic ones is that of dose reliability. For example opium poppies from different strains or growing in differing environments will produce differing opium strengths per plant whereas something like Ecstasy or Ketamine can be taken in more accurate doses. In other words when smoking opium there is no way to know the strength of “your batch” (unless you want to ask a lab to test it for you which would not be wise considering the legal issues), but when taking Ketamine the educated user has far more idea about dosage and can even measure his ingestion to his known requirements (well at least more accurately than when smoking or ingesting a natural substance). This is especially the case if he gets his drugs from the same chemist or his dealer gets his drugs from the same chemist (providing it is a reliable chemist who has not cut it with dangerous substances for motives of profit or other). Unfortunately it is mostly the case that synthetic drug chemists by and large do it for money and not for any spiritual purposes (not always but generally speaking).

As far as taking a handful or two of magic mushrooms (tea pot full) well that is a real dosage gamble for every single individual mushroom in that handful will have produced varying amounts of hallucinogenic compounds; whereas one tab of LSD if produced cleanly and correctly is a measured equal dose.
LSD from the same batch generally means twice the strength but two tea pots of magic mushroom could mean twice the strength or less than twice or far more than twice all depending on the individual mushrooms used; which vary more greatly in strength than do tabs of LSD taken from the same batch. This means that when educated drug users ingest synthetic drugs they are generally more aware of the dosage they are ingesting; thus being less likely to suffer a massive overdose.

One of the reasons that synthetic drugs are becoming more popular than natural drugs is that they able to be produced more easily in large quantities in a clandestine manner. It is a lot easier to produce a few hundred kilograms of methamphetamine in the USA than to harvest a sprawling opium field in the USA.

Now obviously smoking Cannabis is not as dangerous as Crack Cocaine; however it could be argued that taking an ecstasy pill from a known “brand is a lot safer than eating some fly Agarics mushrooms or drinking opium tea. Yes people have died from drinking tea made from just the seeds of the opium poppy.

Nature is generally a lot more variable, magical and surprising than what is cooked up in a lab, but it can be a big mistake to believe that natural is always safer than synthetic. And the strengths of the active constituents in natural drug plants can vary as enormously as the quality of the chemists who make the synthetic drugs. Having said that I am still a believer in natural is best and the human chemist has a long way to go to catch up with plants and fungi that has evolved through millions of years of evolution. Making natural plants and fungi illegal just because some people enjoy their use for medicinal, spiritual or recreational use is moronic, arrogant and in my view a sin. Natural is cleaner and more magical and beautiful but just be aware that it can also be as deadly if not more deadly than some synthetics. Natural can kill too!