

“THE DRUG PROBLEM”

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Andrés Laszlo Jr.

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The Author

“The writing of Andres Laszlo is not for everyone. He challenges, pushes, provokes, and dances wildly in that strange borderline between cool analytics and expressionistic creativity. This said, he has written a book on drugs, drug use, drug policy and drug experience that deserves to be taken seriously, as a challenge, a push, a provocation and an orgiastic dance of intellectual energy. It will not be to everyone’s liking, and takes a certain pleasure out of just this fact.”

Professor Alf Rehn

1. INTRODUCTION

Though this text is not a research paper, yet your writer believes that he, in this book – while scrutinizing illegalization and SODPs (Supply Oriented Drug Policies) and their chances of success – have corroborated/suggested/pointed out several new or at least oft-forgotten/unconsidered thoughts.

SODPs will not work: I believe that I have close to conclusively argued that a continued emphasis on illegality and SODPs in regards to “the drug problem” is likely to be at best unlikely-to-succeed, as well as dysfunctional in the sense that such policies rarely will achieve societal changes that we upon reflection will think of as predominantly beneficial.

The concept of “the drug problem” is meaningless: The expression does not mean the same to you as it does to me, and as long as we do not settle on a shared definition, or split it up into distinct and well-defined parts, we more or less by definition are precluded from finding a solution. Though this critique is valid for a lot of concepts, it especially applies to the “the drug problem.”

The Sneaking Economic Reason (SER) refers to the often insufficiently well understood or unacknowledged fact that, as money is becoming the measure of ever more, economic reasoning tends to “sneak up on us” ever more frequently and ever more unexamined. The concept of SER further suggests that whenever there is an economic reason for something to happen, the probability that it actually will happen – more or less whatever “it” happens to be – increases in proportion to the strength of the economic reason. It is suggested that this can be seen as a law of human behavior; a once-probabilistic law that is moving in a deterministic direction. I even go as far as to suggest that the concept of SER can be used to predict social phenomena as, for instance, the undocumented and as far as I know unacknowledged cooperation between drug and real estate lords. If this prediction would turn out to be true, then my suggested SER would have been used to predict the existence of something previously unobserved. Though what is suggested to exist may not be a new planet or elementary particle, its existence would, on a “social science level,” corroborate the hypothesis that our inclination to do things for economic reasons could explain human actions better than we have previously given it credit for. SER is so commonly used that it is often referred to only as; “Because whenever there is an economic reason...” or even “Because whenever...”

Work with the market forces refers to the belief that as money is becoming the measure of ever more, this is creating market forces so powerful that we ever more rarely can “profitably” oppose them. Thus we should as far as possible try to work with these forces rather than against them; a way of thinking that relates to SER, and very much suggest that: 1) illegalization and SODPs are not the best way of dealing with social problems

such as “the drug problem” & 2) for “good” human intentions to influence a situation, economic de-powering of the forces we want to overcome can be a policy-ingredient worth considering.

Harassment: In pursuing a SODP the greatest price-increasing effect, rather than from seizure/destruction of drugs *per se*, could well be had from harassment of racket members, especially if the policy is implemented with such intention. It is suggested that such harassment, assuming that we insist on continued illegalization, ought to be seen as a targetable weapon susceptible to fine-tuning rather than just as a “the-more-the-better canon” to be indiscriminately fired at the supply chain.

S&D incompatibility: Drug policies designed to reduce supply (SODP) and demand (DODP) are coexisting uncomfortably in a world where price is singled out as the primary weapon in the fight against drugs. It is suggested that these policies may even be mutually exclusive unless applied to different parts of the drug distribution chain; it seems that economic models at least in part corroborate this way of thinking.

More law enforcement will not necessarily cause higher prices: Considering the possibility of continued globalization and the impressive weaponry in the service of both supply and demand, there is nothing necessary about a long-term price rise on drugs in response to increased harassment, even if such policies would succeed both in causing the racket increased costs for purchasing/producing/distributing drugs and for harassment-compensation.

Demand’s own weaponry: The users themselves have a vast variety of powerful and often not very well recognized price-lowering weapons at their disposal, and I have suggested the possibility of increased user self-sufficiency. User weaponry – together with globalization, the www, and reduced imports – could, even without legalization, metamorphose the stage upon which “the drug problem” is enacted.

The pro-prohibition argument: Quite unexpectedly and unintentionally I have stumbled across a pro-prohibition argument that I have rarely seen emphasized. If drugs became legal, then the market forces could well take over, pushing us towards consuming more drugs rather than less. When tobacco and alcohol, from having been outlawed have become legal, that is normally what has happened. This possibility makes even a legalization enthusiast such as your writer feel slightly uncomfortable.

“Convection” and “conduction”: These two suggested mechanisms/phenomena are claimed to be useful ways of thinking about how illegalization – by creating uncontrollability, criminals, criminality, cornering, surplus profits, need for laundering, etc. – reduces more or less everybody’s quality of life. These mechanisms, when looked at closely, reveals how illegality necessarily corrupts the fabric of society and how it does so in often unacknowledged ways. *Convection* argues that if the (bad) ways in which the drug racket’s surpluses are acquired are reflected in how these surpluses are invested, then – especially if this is representative of how other similarly acquired surpluses are invested – there could be cause for concern. *Conduction* argues that when a bad person “bumps into” a “good”, the overall outcome is likely to be moral deterioration rather than improvement.

Other rackets would shrink too: Assuming that the drug racket could be eradicated or caused to dramatically shrink it is suggested that other criminal rackets, in consequence, would suffer the loss of both investors and customers, thus offering the criminal justice system a once-in-a-millennium opportunity to substantially reduce the “total crime.”

Illegality “is the drug problem”: Your writer believes that he has strongly corroborated that the cause of the main part of what most of us upon reflection think of as “the drug problem,” quite possibly including

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problematic use itself, is drug illegality, rather than drug use. Recognizing this does not solve “the drug problem,” but in a way it allows us to look at it differently, because rather than asking, “Why do people use drugs?” or “Why is the drug situation perceived of as problematic?” we can ask “Why are drugs illegal?” – a step in a potentially fruitful direction/a direction where an answer more easily might be found.

Drug illegality is a dysfunctional discourse: Your writer believes that he has shown that our presently dominating approach to problematic drug issues (illegalization and SODPs) is bad: that it is bad virtually “absolute”/full stop and not bad only from one or more particular point(s) of view, or way(s) of thinking, or for a certain group of people. It is bad for everybody except maybe for 1) those that benefit from high drug prices and profits and 2) children that keep off drugs because use is illegal, rather than because of parental advice or for some other reason. Drug illegality to a vast majority is simply bad: a societally dysfunctional discourse that is not achieving – nor is it likely in the future to achieve – much of what our majority would think of as “good.” The way your writer think of dysfunctional discourses is pretty much the same as Iago, in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, alleges that he thinks of jealousy: “Oh! Beware my lord of jealousy; it is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on.”

“The drug problem” is the solution: This is the suggestion that rather than asking “How do we make ‘the drug problem’ go away?” we should ask “What ‘real’ problems (or, sort of, problems ‘in the real’) does society solve by creating “the drug problem” (including our drug policies) in the way it does?” a question here only formulated and briefly touched upon, yet one that your writer, DV, shall try to throw some light upon elsewhere.

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A few important concepts: The end of this book contains an appendix with definitions and clarifications of concepts used. However, a few are so essential that your writer is insisting on briefly introducing/repeating them here:

ATS: Amphetamine Type Substances,

Drugs: all mind-altering substances,

Narcotics: cannabis, cocaine, opium and their derivatives with or without ATS and crack cocaine,

SODP: Supply Oriented Drug Policy,

DODP: Demand Oriented Drug Policy, and

Peter: St. Peter.

PETER AS GOLFER

Pest, poo Popper, and popes! Peter cursed to himself. *Don't order me. Don't order me. Please do not order me;* the Gatekeeper silently repeated to himself as he watched the Boss approach.

"You know I don't like to bully anybody about..."

"I know that."

"And you also know that I feel that you deserve some time off."

"Yes, yes I know that too. You've made that clear, often, and I see your point, and I appreciate it."

"And I would so much have preferred that you found it within yourself to suggest it."

"Yes, yes, I know that too, and I will... I really will look... hard... harder... within."

"So, you... you'll have a think about it, and we'll do the same. Right?"

"Absolutely."

Peter wiped the sweat from his forehead as the Boss departed. *Much too close for comfort and I don't like the sound of that "we" one bit*, he thought, as he walked over to introduce himself to a busload of new arrivals. "Hi, I'm Peter, and there is no need to be upset, sad, or formal," he said in what he thought of as his most cheerful and encouraging voice and one that did not in any way reveal his seriously upset equilibrium. *What should I do if I wasn't guarding the gate?* "This is a good day for all of you – probably" Peter continued, more from rote than from actually thinking so. *Terrible things would happen the very moment I left it unattended.* "Because if no mistakes have been made, and assuming that the accounts you've given are all true, you are just about to enter Heaven, which can be a very nice place to hang out." *And who would watch it for me?*

It had been a busload of cancer-related deaths, and though all of them indeed had been supposed to be dead and earmarked for Heaven, something that wasn't always the case, there had been problems: two incidents of lying. One had been an expert liar who had managed to wrangle his way past the not always all that bright preliminary interviewers. That one, however, was not the problematic one, because such liars all, in their hearts of hearts, expected to be exposed. Peter sent the man off with no ill feelings, and he even gave a smile as the old man told him "It was worth a try; see you later alligator," cheerfully waving as he headed for the purg-elevator.

Rather, the problematic one was the one who had managed to convince herself that she was telling the truth – an elderly woman. *Could it be a design flaw?* Peter had sometimes wondered silently to himself when encountering people like this – very silently. The woman had lost every last bit of doubt and with that her value as a human being. Such people troubled Peter, because, just like puppies and kittens, they often seemed quite attractive. However, just like some types of kittens, like tiger cubs, some of them would grow in power quite considerably, despite the intellectual limitations they had incurred upon themselves by refraining from critical thinking. In such cases, especially if they got injured, again just like tiger cubs, they could grow up to cause all sorts of trouble, not only for themselves but also for others: "negative externalities," it seemed people called it.

Peter didn't blame the preliminary interviewers for missing this one. These at best could tell the liar from the truth-teller, so detecting the truly convinced – the “too successful” faith-leapers – was a task very much placed on his desk. These people could not enter Peter's place, nor did they fit anywhere else: Heaven did not cater to liars, Hell was not for people who had not acted against their own still small voice, and Purgatory was not for those convinced there was nothing inside them that needed to be purged. The only option left was to send the poor souls back for another innings in the hope that this time they would think critically, and thus not escape judgment.

Peter watched with sadness how the old woman, with great dignity, looked at Peter in a way that told the Gatekeeper that though she would not say so, she knew that he was wrong, but that she nevertheless forgave him. *Got helfe mir. Amen.*

Also, there had been administrative problems because many of the so-called cancer deaths had had to be re-attributed to other causes before they could get properly filed. Peter hated paperwork, was annoyed at the sloppy preliminary interviewers, saddened by his experience with the self-deluder, frightened at the prospect of being relieved of his duties as gatekeeper, and generally in a bad mood. *What should I do? Where would I go? What will Jesus talk him into doing? Does He think I'm doing a bad job? Who would stand in for me?*

Having finished the busload, Peter decided to do what he virtually always did when in a bad mood and without newcomers to handle: to look in at what some non-directly-admissible yet interesting future clients (i.e., still living) were up to. “Purg-movies” Jesus used to call them: “purg” pronounced with an “e” sounding “u” and a blurred “g” that allowed for the possibility that he actually meant “perv.”

Peter had never managed to figure out whether Jesus meant that most of the people he tended to watch probably would end up in Purgatory, or that Peter had no business looking in on people while they were still alive. Peter – as he set his sight on a forest station in Bangladesh, and the timer on the appropriate date – hoped the former but feared the latter. The “purg” he was looking for – a giant of a man, lacking in moral rectitude but not in strength or desire for adventure – was pilfering a marvelously exquisite whiskey from a man whom Peter did not expect to find at his gate within the next few thousand years. Peter entered the young man's point of view; his name was Andres Laszlo Jr.

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“My dear Laszlo,” John started, turning towards me, “would you like me to tell you a story about a very sexy doctor?”

John – pedophile, billionaire or close to it, trophy-hunter, obese, a heavy drinker, and waiting to make yet another attempt to shoot one of all too few remaining Bengal tigers from the comfort of his luxuriously equipped chartered boat later that same night, using infrared sights – is the most despicable man I have ever met. And, though I do fancy very sexy lady doctors, I didn't really want to hear his story.

“I promise: it's very entertaining.”

I glanced at the despicable pedophile and then at his whiskey bottle, secretly but unrealistically hoping that some tiger would jump onto his boat, devour the man, and leave me with John's whiskey, without John, “Sure, pal. Shoot.”

“Try imagining this: she's a professional; a doctor, and she's had an exhausting week. It's Friday evening, and she's had a few well-deserved drinks. Now she looks at herself in the mirror, and she recalls that apart

from being rich enough to buy whomever she wants she is also unbelievably sexy. In a grown-up sort of way, if you know what I mean, and she has another drink – so now she wants to fuck. Can you imagine her?”

I nodded.

“She’s thinking about calling a hustler agency, but she decides against it, and instead she takes a cab to a bar. Now *you* walk into that same bar, and she looks at you, and you can see – or, you can sense, rather – that she’s asking herself whether you’d be worth it. That’s all; ‘Is he worth it?’ There’s no doubt in her mind, none whatsoever; as to whether she could have you if she decided that’s what she wanted. And you can see that one question in her eyes; ‘Is he worth it?’ Do you understand?”

I didn’t really. I just figured I’d be thrilled to bits if an unbelievably sexy woman looked at me like that, that John was a seriously sick person, and that he probably had bought the entire story from that \$1,000/hour shrink he had kept bragging about ever since he had arrived Hiron Point Forest Station a few days earlier. However, John’s whiskey was not only first-class – he had his own brand, or at least his own label – but it was also the only booze available at the Bangladeshi forest station of Hiron Point. The ten feet high fence that surrounded the entire place made boozing – apart from waiting to go tiger-hunting and poker at stakes I couldn’t afford – pretty much the only activity available. I nodded with a sycophantic smile, “I get it, pal.”

“That’s how ‘Chichh Kadune’ will look at you,” John continued, “Only he won’t be thinking about fucking you: he’ll be thinking about eating you. Being looked at like that does things to you: being seen as an objection by someone who can never become objectionable affects your mind. Going after *Chichh Kadune* wouldn’t be like going after an average tiger – not even like going after ‘an average’ man-eating ten foot plus over curves male Bengal tiger – because being seen as nothing but food by a habitual man-eater is scary. It’s very scary because being looked at like that is a real experience. It forces you to look at yourself through the eyes of another; the eyes of somebody who thinks of you as something to be eaten and unless you happen to be Saint Peter, Jesus Christ, or God himself, what you will feel is shame.”

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Peter – though astonished at John’s amazing ability to turn his considerable gifts to evil use was delighted by his inclusion, and Smokey’s exclusion – started to feel much better. Nevertheless, duty-bound, he went back to his gate to check for new arrivals; a busload of drug-related deaths was expected to arrive shortly. But, as there wasn’t a soul to be seen, Peter returned to his purg-movie, fast-forwarded a couple of years to where Andres Laszlo Jr. once again was interacting with Peter’s favorite feline, this time a little tigress, and another despicable individual; once again he entered into the big man’s viewpoint.

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The description by the second most despicable person I’ve ever met of how *Chichh Kadune* – the Bengal tiger that in the beach jungle of Sundarbans’ Delta had made a name for itself by gobbling up the locals – would look at me if we ever met didn’t fit the tiger beneath me. It did not at all fit the little tigress that was guarding the drug lord’s estate, and that was now sitting – hesitantly roaring, if there is such a thing – beneath the balcony rail from which I was hanging. She probably weighed less than I, and she looked as if as terrified by the alarm and the approaching dogs as I was. For a moment I contemplated letting go my grip, trying to land

on the tiger's back so as to break it, and – assuming I didn't break anything myself, and that I succeeded in decommissioning the lady without getting harmed – make for the wall that surrounded the drug lord's estate.

"Mister Laszlo," Helmut started, "I could never have imagined that you'd be back so soon, and even less to find you hanging from my wife's balcony. Did you forget something?"

Gladys – beautiful, wonderful, lovely, and unbelievably sensual Gladys – made cutthroat signs from behind her drug lord husband's back, indicating that caution was called for.

As I was about to leave a little later, Helmut – that's not the drug lord's real name, nor was Gladys hers – offered me a cigar, giving me a big smile and looking straight at me. I generally look every human being straight in the face, but in the case of Helmut, I was making an exception.

The man had for a long time been a primary source of insight into the upper echelons of the world of drugs – generously providing me with all sorts of useful information for my research, even if and when criminalizing himself – all while getting ever pallier and actively seeking my company.

The wicked man had by now helped me in my drug policy research for several years, and though he was a pretty big fish, he probably wasn't big enough to worry about my legalization enthusiasm. Or, maybe he simply figured I wasn't good enough to cause any radical change. For whatever reason, seven months ago, he had felt sufficiently comfortable in my company to introduce me to his wife, Gladys – a big mistake! That was the reason that I of lately hadn't looked the undoubtedly extremely wicked, murderous even, man, straight in the face.

As I, now sort of forced by the occasion, looked the man straight into his face, I expected his eyes to tell me something along the lines of *If I ever catch you at this again, you'll be in big trouble*. However, there was no such message, instead what I was... Suddenly I realized that I was looking into those eyes John had described back at Hiron Point Forest Station in Bangladesh a couple of years earlier and that John's \$1000/hour shrink – even though he, or John, had gotten the Lacan-part pretty mixed up – had been spot on. I decided to do my very best to stay away from Gladys so as not to make harming me worth this man's while.

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Peter had enjoyed himself; he liked tigers, clear-cut cases like John's and Helmut's, and Gladys was indeed a remarkably beautiful creature well worth to behold. Laszlo was sort of interesting too, as the man obviously very well knew that what he was doing was not morally acceptable. Thus, as Laszlo – as well as nearly all people deep down know that breaking the moral rules within precludes us from direct entry into Heaven – there would, at best, be Purgatory for the big man.

However, there was another reason for Peter's interest in the big man. Laszlo was studying drugs from an academic point of view, and the man had some ideas regarding definitions that Peter found interesting. Human definitions of drug-related deaths constituted a major nuisance and were in urgent need of reclassification, and as this Laszlo had the potential... Peter felt a sudden urge to find out whether the man would have the kindness to check out anytime soon, and he was just about to fast-forward when, from behind, the one voice he did not want to hear addressed him.

"Peter."

"Yes, Jesus."

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(THE BACKGROUND AGAINST WHICH “THE DRUG PROBLEM” WILL BE SEEN)

The most fundamental principle of friendship, Mister Laszlo, is that when your friends annoy you *a little*, you forgive them; and, when they annoy you *a lot*, you do the same thing. However, when they annoy you *too much*, then you must kill them; anything between these two ways of dealing with one’s nearest and dearest is at best a waste of time, and at worst can be severely detrimental to your physical or economic well-being. This time, Mister Laszlo, you have annoyed me too much.

Those were Helmut’s last words before he had me murdered, and though you will hear a little more about the beautiful Gladys – and of how Helmut killed me, of what happened on Peter’s day off and of how the Gatekeeper made me try life as an employee – the primary purpose of the above has been to catch your interest. It wants to suggest to you that this book will be at least a little less dry than you would have expected from a book on drug policy.

The primary purpose of the rest of this book will be to take *you* along on a journey that will encourage *you* to reflect over illegal narcotic drugs in general, and in particular over whether present illegality and SODPs have a reasonable chance of coming to terms with whatever it is that *you* think of as “the drug problem.” It will be a journey contemplating questions such as what “the drug problem” really is or ought to be about; what “the drug problem” can be, and is, used for; whether some policy other than illegalization would be more likely to bring about something positive, etc.

During this journey, I will attempt to sprinkle along *your* path, and encourage *you* to pick up, facts, ideas, theories, and concepts that I believe can be of use for *you* in finding out what “the drug problem” means to *you* and what *you* ought to figure ought to be done about it. I will also encourage *you* to reflect on why others – the media, politicians, law enforcers, etc. – may think of “the drug problem” differently. This book’s primary aim is thus to be *your* guide for finding *your* answers to *your* drug-related questions, and in so doing encourage *you* – when/if called for – to be guided by *your* reason a little more, and by *your* emotions, a little less.

This book – a book that alternatively could have been titled “Drugs,” “Drug Policy Madness,” “Drug Reflections,” “Drug Illegality,” “Introduction to Why Drugs Are Illegal,” “Why Supply Oriented Policies Will not Work,” “Does *The Drug Problem* Offer Good Examples of Us Doing Bad Things For Economic Reasons,” “Are Bad Guys Getting Too Big a Slice of the Surplus,” or “Dysfunctional Discourses: an Introductory Example” – wants to be neither as heavy nor as didactic as I believe most people would expect a book on “the drug problem” to be. My aim, just like that of John – who did get his trophy tiger: an old male well past his prime, bought from an Indian zoo for \$400, though he was told the tiger that he had shot was none other than *Chichh Kadune* – is to entertain. I want to entertain because 1) something as tragic as that which “we” have made into “the drug problem” ought not to be made worse by a dry or depressing manner of presentation and 2) this way I hope to reach people that think: *Drugs are bad, so of course they should be illegal. Yet, since*

they say that this book is an entertaining read, I will give somebody with the opposite view a chance to convince me.

By the way, I never shot *Chichh Kadune*, and today I am ashamed that I ever contemplated shooting one of maybe only four or five thousand tigers still roaming the wild, multiple man-eater or not.

Since this book pretends to be mainly a thought-provoker and an introduction to illegal narcotic drugs and drug policy – and as it is aiming to entertain rather than to present the scientific community with new data – please do not expect an academic discourse. The writing tone is not invariably such that it encourages dialogue; the problems, assumptions, and concepts discussed are not always minutely stated or precisely defined. The data is not always fresh off the press and the line opinion/fact may on occasion be slightly blurred. Your writer may not, at heart, be as impartial as he sometimes pretends to be; dialogue with relevant scientific literature and methodology may not be entered into at every opportunity and may on occasion even be intentionally shunned.

As I have often failed to provide source references at the point in the text where such references ought to have been made, I have tried to compensate by, in Appendix II on my homepage (www.andreslaszlo.com), adding a large number of sources and places to start searching. My most influential sources, apart from academic articles, UN reports, and my own experiences, have often been the thinking and writing of Peter Cohen, Peter Reuter, and Ted Goldberg. As I started the ponderings that eventually would result in this book, publishing was not a consideration, and therefore early sources, unfortunately, have often been forgotten. Many ideas and facts that – here presented as if general knowledge, obvious, or my own conclusions – thus probably at least sometimes emanates from elsewhere. My failure always to attribute credit where it is due is a severe transgression for which I most sincerely ask the ideas originators and the facts discoverers for leniency in their judgment. A part of this book was written already in the 1990s, and the reason it hasn't been published earlier is that there has been no market for such a book until now (as finally, the world has started to come around...).

Also, I am an *a priori* sort of person, not only by nature but also in the sense that I believe that it is much easier for the beneficiaries of a particular discourse to corrupt the data that would have suggested that the discourse they feed on is dysfunctional *a posteriori* than it is to manipulate the sort of data that gets treated by the faculty of reason before reaching the mill-cogs of “empirification.” Thus, when possible, I opt for using my faculty of reasoning rather than empirical data that I believe are much easier to corrupt. Another reason for my mainly empirical approach is that I never got any money for field research. A consequence of a suchlike *a priori* disposition is that I often, from what I believe myself to know *is*, draw conclusions as to what *must be*. Unfortunately, and though it oughtn't to be like that, the world is not such that it in every individual case agrees; a state of things that I, of course, cannot be held responsible for.

Your writer has long harbored two central moral preoccupations: “Illegalization of narcotic drugs causes a lot of bad things and very few good,” and “Money is becoming the measure of too much and often of what it shouldn't become a measure.” Yet, he has always felt that there were people better suited than himself to get onto their soapboxes to deplore and explain this bad stuff or “dysfunctionalities.” Not until recently has he realized that: 1) the illegality of drugs could well be but one of many dysfunctional discourses that contributes to making our time on earth a less rewarding experience than it could have been and 2) the fact that money is

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becoming the measure of what it ought not to be allowed to become the measure of could be causing or accelerating this “dysfunctionalization.”

It was not until he realized that his two pet hobby horses could well be seen as if riding in tandem – and only when he started to believe that he had something new to say regarding why dysfunctional social discourses were allowed to survive and thrive, and why money as a measure gets permitted to dominate ever more – that he felt that he had something novel to contribute. Only then did he decide to put pen to paper and make this book out of his ponderings.

This book on drug policy is part of a larger project, and a future project will DV be to look for the answer to the question “Is drug illegality the only dysfunctional societal discourse?” And, if it is not so, if drug illegality is but one of several dysfunctional discourses: “Do enough dysfunctional discourses have enough in common for them to be discussed in a unified/unifying language?” If it turns out to be so, then your writer will be interested in developing or assisting in developing this language. This would be a language through which these dysfunctional societal discourses could be better described, discussed, and understood: dysfunctional societal discourses such as, for instance, the drug problem.

THE DRUG PROBLEM

(WHAT IS IT?)

“The drug problem” is a myth, because it has no universal definition, and it means different things to different people. All that the concept normally refers to are “drug-related issues perceived by the individual using the concept as problematic.”

We are by definition all part of society, and when society “wants” us to move in a particular direction, then most of us are usually willing to do so. Though directions of social movements can indeed be nudged – on occasion even halted, redirected, or even reversed by individuals or small groups – such “societal wants” do tend to set the guidelines for most of us as to what is practically feasible.

Yet, if society decides to criminalize the consumption of something – as an example, let us say wild bluefin tuna – some among us are likely to break the law and thus become defined as criminals by those with the power to effect such labeling, and a class of violators will thus have been created.

Among the violators, there will be a few unsavory individuals that will display conspicuous forms of despicable behavior, at least loosely connectable to their illegalized tuna activities. The labeling authorities will not fail to point at these and say, “Look what the illegal consumers or suppliers of wild tuna do/are really like” and use this, whether being specific about causation or not, to motivate continued illegalization or sanctions against the tuna criminals. In this way the lawbreakers thus created will get associated with frowned-upon behavior and a new class of “despicables” will come into existence: the villains of “the bluefin tuna problem,” whether the suppliers, demanders or both.

With sufficient agreement as to the villains’ identity – maybe fishermen, wholesalers, fishmongers, recreational consumers, addicted consumers willing to perpetrate “real” crimes to obtain their daily dose of tuna or some combination of the above – we would have a case for using the unitary concept of “the tuna problem.”

Regarding narcotic drugs, there is no such agreement, so there is no such thing as “*the* drug problem,” only “problematic drug-related issues perceived as troublesome by the concept users.” Therefore, that is what henceforth will be referred to whenever “the drug problem” is used, unless contextually specified.

If smoking and drinking again got criminalized, as it was in some parts of the “civilized world” around 1900, some might give up their outlawed practices, yet many probably would not, and thus they would get labeled as criminals. Society – as it is difficult to regulate something effectively once it has become prohibited – could then only hope that its power to influence public opinion was such that it would be successful in labeling the criminals among us who continue to smoke or drink as “deviants.”

By so doing, it would shame some into submission, and into taking up legal alternatives which, assuming the time again to be around the year 1900, could well have included substances such as cannabis, heroin, and

cocaine (*o tempora o mores*). As to those refusing to obey, successful labeling would see to it that at least some of them felt terrible about themselves, thus allowing the rest – the conformers, the repentant recovering addicts, and the labelers alike – to feel good because morally or at least legally superior.

However, as the deviants thus created conceivably could constitute a significant part of the population, maybe even a majority, they could well end up organizing themselves and turn on their labelers, who then would have to choose between giving in, seek a compromise, or declare a war proper. If they opted for the latter, then one scenario would be that the deviants all mended their wicked ways, resulting in a world without alcohol or tobacco. Another scenario would be that the smokers or the drinkers won the battle and that a more tolerant view would come to dominate.

A third scenario would be that the outlawing/labeling, rather than ending the now criminal behavior, would enhance the probability of the labeled in the future behaving really bad; that drinkers and smokers, from getting alienated from society and marginalized, would start to hang out with their suppliers and other “more real” criminals, take on their values, identify with them, become more like them, and give society even greater cause for concern. If so, both labelers and labeled could well end up with a problem much bigger than the one they started with, at least that is what labeling theory suggests and warns us of: *“Deviance lies in the response, and labeling stickers should be handled with great care.”*

The way that the “labeling authorities” of Western societies tend to look at the drug situation does not force us to accept their view, but as the dominant discourse is theirs – and as it tends to be backed by legislation, the rest of the criminal justice system, the media, the medical industry, politicians, etc. – it can be hard entirely to neglect it. That is because with the power of labeling comes the power of stigmatization: to produce deviants and to marginalize those who fail to take society’s hint.

More than a century of interaction between society’s constituent parts has produced today’s “the drug problem” that – oddly, it could be argued – lacks an official definition. This might sound funny only in the peculiar sense, but it is so also in the other (ha-ha) in that it ought to be obvious to even the meanest of intellects that a solution cannot be found to an undefined problem, something that makes the use of the concept moronic and arguably your writer, as he nevertheless will be using it, a moron.

For a scholar it would be hard, probably even unwise, to disregard the particularities of how “the drug problem” discourse – together with its international, national, regional, local and individual variations in definition – came about. The history and background of “the drug problem” – phenomenon such as the opium wars, the colonial trading companies, the US’s early want to criminalize drugs because threatened by immigration and to take over the high seas and world dominance from the Brits, the symbolic dimensions of drugs and drug use, etc. – are relevant for anyone who wants to understand and get an overall perspective of how the interpretations of “the drug problem” have evolved, and to why “we” now chose to counter it mainly by means of illegalization and SODPs.

Studying the background to the concept will, for instance, tell the scholar why in one country “the drug problem” is thought of mainly as a health problem, whereas in another it is thought of as a crime problem, a corruption problem, an economic problem, a problem of foreign relations, one of national security, or occasionally as one not worth bothering all that much about or even as something positive rather than a problem. Suchlike studies might also give him or her some insight into why some social phenomena get to be

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perceived as problematic – i.e., as the state of affairs needing to be addressed – while other apparently serious phenomena get more or less neglected: a fascinating question indeed.

If our scholar is an astute one, he might also notice how drug problem definitions, when focusing on use, over time have changed from being about bad but yet voluntary behavior, to get referred to through deterministic-sounding categories such as “addiction,” “habituation,” and “dependence” i.e., definitions very much going against the tradition in the social sciences of regarding reality itself as a social construct, embedded in a changing cultural and historical context.

Our scholar might also have noticed how many of his colleagues – presently and in the past, writing about “the drug problem” – tend/have tended to make an effort so as not in any serious way to offend against drug policy propriety. Our scholar might even have noticed how those few failing to make such an effort – like people promoting drug policies not focusing on illegality/attacking the supply of drugs – rarely get/got published, funded, rewarded, or otherwise appreciated. One core group that is involved in deciding how “the drug problem” gets defined and what policies are to be pursued – and who gets published, funded, rewarded, or otherwise appreciated – is the politicians.

*

As a political party gets presented with a problem, an early decision will have to be whether to adopt it into its political agenda or not. In order not to do so, it can, for instance, say that what is suggested to be a problem isn’t one, or, that though it is, yet it is not one worth bothering about. Even if and when it is obvious that a problem is one worth bothering about, the politicians can react in a variety of different ways.

One such way is to “hand it over to the experts,” thus distancing themselves from responsibility: “This is a scientific question.” Another way of dealing with problems – especially problems “unsolvable” by contemporary political structures (a.k.a. vote-losing problems) – is to neglect them, as has long been done with issues such as unchecked population growth, plutonium proliferation, obesity, greenhouse gases, as well as over-specialized, and undereducated voters.

Even when the politicians really do decide to do something about a problem, it is wise to be wary as to their motives, because the real reasons for politicians to take an interest have been known to differ from the alleged. A political problem-construction, in a way much like the problem construction of a scientific research program by scientists, is at least in part judged on what it has to offer outside of its immediate core. Thus problem-constructions that carry with them good stuff – income, perks, power, re-election, status, fame, lecturing opportunities, and whatever else that improves the politicians’ existences – have a much better chance of getting their attention than vote-losing problems such as “police-corruption,” “third world poverty” and “voter credulity.” To the politicians, “the drug problem” is a wonderful problem, because it carries along so much of what gives the politicians glad. Things such as:

Re-election. The “drug policy cycle” – through crusades, emotional televised commitments, demonization, well-timed drug seizures, international treaties, military operations, etc. – can easily be made to harmonize with the electoral cycle.

Power, in the shape of drug squads, military enforcement units, more police, etc. that can provide all sorts of useful services to give the politicians glad when not deployed against “the drug problem” *per se*.

Scapegoating opportunities. Opportunities of pointing the finger at drugs in order to divert attention from the politicians' own failings and shortcomings are always welcome, and there are few ills that a creative politician cannot attribute to drugs.

Smoke-screening. Policies, drug manifestos, and media campaigns allow the politicians to divert the public's attention away from the real causes underlying problematic drug use; real causes that quite conceivably can include the politicians themselves, their lack of competence, or their policies.

Natural friends – as the media, organized crime, the medical industry, and the criminal justice system – that all make for useful allies. These allies can all be attributed benefit-lists similar or analogous to the politicians, and it is important already at this point to understand that the disappearance of “the drug problem” would not be in the best interest of everybody – an issue to which we shall return.

“The drug problem” is thus a problem that the politicians and their natural friends are more than willing to take on board; more than willing to create policies “against,” i.e., invest time and resources in. It is thus a problem they are reluctant to relinquish, solve, or let out of their control. The day the politicians and their friends, unpressurized and without putting up a fight, allow “the drug problem” to evaporate into oblivion, will not arrive until either more among us start thinking for ourselves much more than presently, or our world becomes much more transparent.

When the politicians decide to accept a problem, their two primary policies approaches are 1) Make the problem's recipients stop doing whatever wrong they are perceived of as doing (as, for instance, stop taking drugs or stop paying high prices for drugs) or 2) Make the problem's causers stop doing whatever wrong they are perceived of as doing (as, for instance, supplying drugs or making big profits from such supplying). If you figure that these two approaches seem somewhat related, you could well be halfway to becoming a philosopher of economics, and you might even be right, because it could be, and occasionally is, argued that they are aspects of the very same phenomena.

As policies, the first strategy is often referred to as “demand orientated,” the second as “supply orientated.” The first can succeed to the extent that those demanding the problematic commodity can be made to discontinue or sufficiently reduce their demand, the second to the extent that those who supply the commodity can be made to discontinue or sufficiently reduce their supply. Primary tools of the former policy are information and assistance, of the latter, punishment. Yet, at least in theory, there is nothing that precludes the tool-use to be the inverse.

The main utility the “recipients” must be made to relinquish is from consumption/use; the main utility the “causers” must be made to relinquish is profit/income. The stronger the demand is, the greater the profit that is awarded the supplier who manages to overcome the obstacles placed in his or her way. And, the greater the profit the supplier is awarded, *ceteris paribus*, the more unlikely a SODP is to succeed. For a DODP to succeed, those demanding the commodity must be convinced that their demand is ill-advised.

If you at this point believe that a SODP is the best way forward, yet ready to listen to someone thinking differently, take heart because this book is written with you in mind.

A natural problem, like a volcanic eruption or an earthquake, leaves little doubt as to what the problems are, or as to what the optimal action plan is. However, some problems, like “the drug problem,” have much less natural content and when that is the case, there will be much less that is “necessary” about how “we,” as in “we society,” choose to perceive of and approach the problem. Thus “the drug problem” and its related

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concepts – had we opted to perceive it, or its constituent parts, differently than has normally been the case – could have pointed today’s dominant discourse in any of a variety of ways:

The drug problem. As we have seen, there is absolutely nothing necessary or natural about perceiving the problematic drug situation mainly as one of drug supply (as the cause of drug consumption). Alternatively, “the drug problem” could have been seen as simply a non-problem, a problem of poverty, as about bad people getting rich from drug sales and using their profits to corrupt, about law enforcement growing too big or corrupted, as about the construction of a supply-countering system that will be hard to dismantle, or any of various other discourses or combination of such; discourses and combinations of discourses that in turn would have suggested all sorts of different policies.

Narcotics. If we had, for instance, not chosen to group cannabis, coca, opiates, and their derivatives, etc. together under the heading of “narcotics” and then made a lot of negative and generalizing statements about this set as a whole, then today things could have been different. Cannabis might have been thought of as the health-freaks alternative to alcohol or tobacco, cocaine as Coca-Cola’s powerful energy supplement or a way for students to burn the midnight oil and pass their exams, heroin as a form of passing on real life and maybe related to “too much virtual reality,” and “narcotics” could instead have been chosen as a word designating narcissistic people that go the whole hog and succumb to total and uncritical self-love.

Illegality. If we had, for instance, not chosen to illegalize and label as “bad” these things we have defined as narcotic drugs, today’s debate could have been about whether cannabis-eating or nicotine patches was the best aid for giving up smoking. Sigmund Freud actually recommended cocaine against “morphinism” and even wrote a book about it: *Über Coca*. The debate could then have been about whether cocaine supplied to unfocused, sloppy, or lazy employees should be tax-deductible or whether increased productivity was enough to compensate for purchasing costs and increased workplace violence. Use of opiates in the US might today have remained the vice of Chinese immigrants and leisured housewives, maybe with heroin still used as the outstanding asthma- and coughing remedy that it allegedly is.

Criminal because. If we had, for instance, not chosen to think of the crimes committed by drug users as perpetrated primarily or directly *because* of the users’ desires to finance their drug habits, or *because* they are under the influence of drugs, things could have been different too. If we instead had chosen to think of present “drug crimes” as committed by criminals who in addition to being criminals also took drugs, then the presently widely assumed causal relationship between drug use and criminality might have been seen as going in the opposite direction, never been considered, or at least not been seen as dominant. If so, we might blame drugs for causing crimes even less than we today blame poverty and misery for doing so, and we might even consider subsidizing some narcotic substances for poor people in order to reduce crime.

Drugs and addiction. If we had, for instance, thought of/defined 1) “drugs” as “whatever we think of as bad for us,” and 2) “addiction” as “too much of such bad stuff plus disinclination to stop/cut down.” Then maybe a) “money,” “bad food,” “alcohol,” “status,” “tobacco,” or “non-thinking” might have been thought the most dangerous drugs, and maybe then b) “avarice,” “obesity,” “inebriety,” “a haughty spirit,” “cancer,” and “stupidity” would have been thought of as the consequences of drug addiction and the primary drug harms.

The important thing is not whether the relation society/drugs ought to be seen in any particular way but to understand that – especially when talking about a problem as low on “natural content” as is “the drug problem” (we will get to biochemical determinism in a minute) – that there is very little that is necessary about the way

that it is usually perceived, and that as a consequence of this the constructed part of “the drug problem” is (and sort of has to be) quite substantial.

Whatever drug-related categories we chose to use – as, for instance, drugs, abusers, addiction, harm reduction, etc., all in themselves at least partly constructed and far from as natural as some of us using them in everyday popular or even professional discourses often pretend that they are – we must be careful. Whatever way we chose to use them when looking at what we think of as a problematic part of the drug situation we should try to remember that our chosen way is only one of a virtual infinity of different ways in which we could have opted to look.

It is a way of looking that has its origin in interpretations made by various often ax-grinding individuals and groups. “The drug problem” is defined by us humans, and in this definition game we all have had at least an opportunity to have our say, true, but since some of us have sometimes been absent, some more persistent, and as some of us have been and sometimes remain more equal than others, some of us have had/have more weight attached to our say. The weighted outcome of all these “says” is how “the drug problem” individually, locally, regionally, and centrally has – by being “discovered,” interpreted, defined, built, presented, manipulated, exploited, and kept in existence – been constructed and given a place amongst the other main social problems.

Following from the above, our construction of “the drug problem,” at least as long as it is not seen as explicable by biological determinism, can be seen not only as a problem but also as a consequence of “our” construction, and thus as a consequence of something other than “itself”: as a symptom.

Symptoms can be problematic without being neither original nor natural; this is something that quite possibly is the case for most states of affairs that we perceive as problematic. However, it is worthwhile to remember that the way that most of us tend to think of “the drug problem” is not an original one; it is not one that is high on natural content but mainly a made-up/constructed one.

When seen as a symptom rather than as a problem, “the drug problem” thus points to a cause related to its construction rather than at something natural. The attempt to trace “the drug problem” beyond the different ways it today is seen, and to ask why it has been constructed in the ways it has – and why some behaviors get labeled “problematic” and other not – is a task that will not be undertaken here, at least not very extensively.

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Putting these symptom-thoughts on the backburner, please accompany your writer as he jumps in at a hitherto un-argued point inside one particular way of looking at problematic drug issues. Please take a leap-of-faith and enter where it will be argued that our problematic relation to narcotic drugs can be seen as the result of two historical facts that, together with drugs’ illegal status, can explain much of what many of us today think of as the “the drug problem.”

The background against which drug use, especially problematic drug use, will be seen, will be that of mankind as a, in some regards, weakened species, living in troubled times and taking drugs as a means to deal with this: as one of many solutions to this double trouble.

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There are many other ways of explaining what makes/causes us to take drugs troublesomely; many combinations of explanatory lenses to view the situation through, and troubled times plus weakened species – together with illegality that will be added last – is only one such. At best this is correct, and this combination really is the best of all possible explanations, at worst it is totally wrong. But, even if the latter happens to be the case, this is at least a useful explanation. It is useful in the sense that it gives your writer the opportunity to, by reflecting over problematic drug-related issues, provide *you* with the information he figures *you* need to benefit from the rest of this book and to guide *you* towards finding out what *you* ought to think regarding problematic drug-related issues. In the next chapter we shall look a little closer at these three explanations as to why we take drugs, but first, let us take a short glance at the structure of this book.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

This book suggests that we should turn away from drug illegalization; that we should do so not because drugs are good, but because what follows as a result of illegalization and the accompanying Supply Oriented Drug Policies (SODPs), is much worse than what would follow a liberal approach. However, although this book is on a depressing topic, the text has been designed to be entertaining. You will be surprised.

Against an untraditional and provocative background – mankind as a weakened species and in need of certainties in a world that offers ever less such – *you* will be guided to find out for yourself whether illegalization is likely to bring about anything positive according to *your* beliefs and values.

The main conclusions/findings of this book will be that our present focus on SODPs is at best misguided, that partial legalization is an option well worth consideration, and that better understanding of “the drug problem” could well be had by asking; “Why are drugs illegal?”

*

Chapter 1 has presented *you* with a background to “The Drug Problem,” and in so doing it has claimed that there is no such thing as *the* drug problem, only problematic issues related to drugs combined with opinions. It has also outlined the main findings of this book. Chapter 2 gives a three-tiered explanation as to why we take drugs – weakened species, troubled times, and drug illegality – all while here and there continuing to sneak in bits of useful information, some new concepts, and finally some alternative explanations to why we take drugs troublesomely. Chapter 3 delves into the question of certainty/security: why do we need securities, why is security becoming an ever scarcer commodity, what do we do to “find” it, etc. Chapter 4 introduces the reader to most of the commonly recognized drug harms, together with some not so commonly recognized, all while *you* will be asked to make up *your* mind as to whether drug illegality or drug use is the main cause of each particular harm. Chapter 4 also offers *you* the possibility to put percentages on the different harms, in order to allow you to put numbers on what *you* ought to think about the cause of “*your* drug problem.” Chapter 5 speculates about what the different actors on the drug stage would have gotten up to without illegality and SODPs. Chapters 6 and 7 – by introducing “convection” (the flow of surplus capital) and “conduction” (interpersonal relationships) – suggest two novel ways of thinking about how the racket’s intrinsic immorality corrupts. Chapter 8 shows what sort of users would stop taking drugs if prices increased and guides *you* to answer the question “What ought *I* think about SODP’s chances of success?” and “Would these users’ discontinued use solve enough of what *I* think of as “the drug problem” at a ‘cost’ that *I* find affordable?” Chapter 9 presents the drug-stage’s three relevant forces – supply, demand, and the law – together with the weaponry each has at its disposal to once more put *you* in a position to judge illegality’s and SODP’s chances to succeed. Chapter 10 introduces additional arguments against illegality and SODPs: the mechanism of illegalization, SODP/DODP policy incompatibility, the unwise use of “because,” etc. This book ends by asking whether we really would accept the *sine qua non* for illegalization to succeed, and finally takes a glance

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at your writer's personal "drugs" – wine, tobacco, money, and unhealthy food – and he will contemplate whether he would have preferred a world where these "his drugs" did not exist.