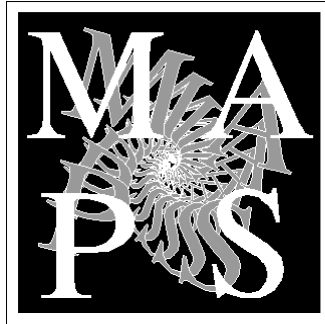


Mr President, Ladies and Gentleman of the Philosophical Society, Ladies and Gentleman,

Thank you all for inviting me to speak here tonight. I've come thousands of miles, left behind my wife, three children and one dog, separated myself from my fellow Jews on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which took place from sunset on Wednesday to sunset this evening, all to speak to you for 9 minutes. As a result, each moment of our time here this evening is precious, and I'll be as clear and direct as I can be. I'll be presenting ideas that are controversial and may contradict what you currently believe. I ask only that you think carefully when you evaluate what I have to say as you come to your own conclusions. That you have freedom of thought is a precious liberty, and is precisely what we are talking about this evening, since the prohibition of drugs is a blow against cognitive liberty, against the full range of consciousness itself.

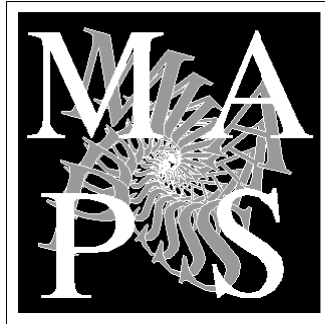
It takes either bravery or foolishness to disagree with Mahatma Gandhi, especially when endorsing the contrary view that the proper role of government is to limit freedom whenever the rulers supposedly see a way to help people from making what they consider to be errors. This is dangerous ground, with a substantial potential to tread on people's liberties, especially people who hold minority views. When treading on such a slippery slope, it's wise for advocates of limiting people's freedom for their own good to be accurate with their facts about what constitutes error, be rigorous with their logic and reticent in the extent to which they seek to empower the government to override people's preferences for their own good.



Obesity is a greater health risk than drugs and has a higher prevalence than drug use, should chocolate and sugar be illegal for our own good? What about sex and love, certainly more dangerous than drugs, look at sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancies and abortion, the many marriages that end in divorce or domestic violence. Should we go back to the criminalization of premarital sex, have all arranged marriages and the prohibition of divorce? What about sports- in the US more young people go to the hospital emergency room for cheerleading than for Ecstasy use, even after equalizing for the number of cheerleaders as compared to the number of Ecstasy users. We created a graph that illustrated the comparison that we entitled, "Give me an E". People die mountain climbing, skiing, scuba diving, there is risk in life in everything we do. Shall all of that be criminalized, for our own good?

In the paper presented this evening, let's start with a few facts that are not actually facts. "The opposition probably preach moderation and a culture of responsible psychoactive drug use. This may be possible in a few cases."

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, a US government agency, the percentage of people who ever used marijuana who develop marijuana-related dependence or abuse problems is about 8%, fewer than the percentage of people who have used alcohol who develop alcohol-related dependence or abuse. The percentage of people who have ever used cocaine who subsequently develop cocaine-related dependence or abuse is about

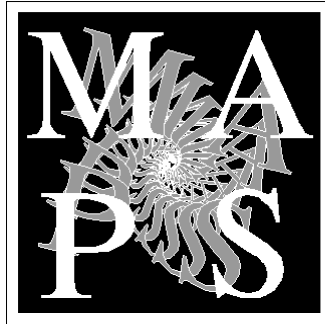


15%, with the percentages for heroin only slightly higher.

The author of tonight's paper apparently agrees with NIDA's figures, since a few sentences after we're told that responsible psychoactive drug use is possible in only a few cases, we're told, "There is strong reason to suggest that most individuals can make responsible decisions regarding marijuana.'" What error is the policy of marijuana prohibition addressing in the majority of individuals who can make responsible decisions about marijuana?

We're also told, "Most of the harmful effects [of marijuana] are similar in magnitude and nature to alcohol and tobacco, coupled with impaired cognitive function and poor memory." This is plainly ridiculous, since despite what you have been told, marijuana does not cause lung cancer or heart disease, while tobacco causes both and kills millions of people per year around the world, while alcohol is associated with aggression, violence, drunk driving (more dangerous than driving stoned, according to scientific research), sexual assaults, alcoholism, liver damage, fetal alcohol syndrome, and is substantially more often problematic than marijuana.

When responsible users are in the majority, as they are for all the different illegal drugs, prohibition reduces social benefits and is a harm maximization program for those who do decide to use. Impure drugs, violent markets, untrustworthy information that substitutes propaganda for honest drug education, the suppression of research into beneficial uses of illegal drugs to aid in this propaganda, the allocation of

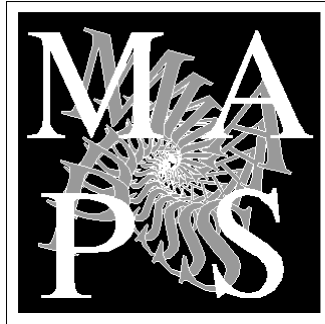


resources to police and prison instead of drug treatment, stigmatization of drug users who then delay seeking assistance for fear of criminal sanctions, criminalization of harm reduction programs such as needle exchange, enrichment of criminal undergrounds and terrorist groups involved in production and distribution, are all problems directly caused by prohibition.

In tonight's paper, we were told that legalization will not solve all drug-related problems, so legalization is no solution. But as we see all around us, prohibition certainly hasn't solved all drug-related problems and has created an abundance of new problems.

We were told, "IV drug users will not magically become careful about sharing needles, nor will they be cured of HIV/AIDS as a result of legalization." We don't need magic, just common sense and respect for facts. Numerous scientific studies show that needle exchange programs do reduce the spread of AIDS but these programs are frequently criminalized. In a post-prohibition world, with resources to drug treatment on demand and honest drug education, net harms will go down even if use goes up, which is not at all clear, and net benefits will rise. In the Netherlands, where marijuana use has been normalized, the percentage of young people who use marijuana is substantially lower than in the US. [OPTIONAL: Marijuana has lost its allure as a sign of youthful rebellion.]

A key assumption of tonight's paper is that drugs should not be available to minors. I do not concede that point. Parents, not the government, should decide whether minors should be permitted to use drugs. I'm

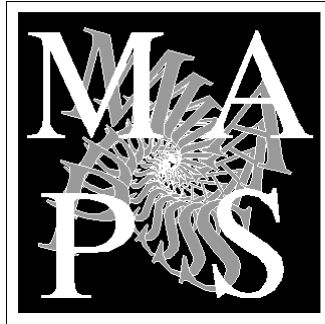


for family values, and I don't think its wise to give the government the power to make decisions that parents are in the best position to make for their own children.

We're told, "Young people cannot be trusted to make responsible decisions here, and it is cruel to place them in a society with drugs freely available to any adult. Education can only go so far, as evidenced in the abuse of alcohol among youths in Ireland today."

These alcohol problems come not primarily from the failure to prohibit alcohol by adults, but in large part from the prohibition itself of alcohol to minors, since in what passes for education they are not taught responsible use and can only use alcohol in unsupervised and unsanctioned contexts. Some but not most young people cannot be trusted to make responsible decisions about drugs, just as we can't automatically trust young people to drive responsibly or have sex or romantic relationships responsibly. There is risk in everything. But most young people can be trusted to learn from their mistakes. We need to reduce the consequences of mistakes, which prohibition maximizes and legalization minimizes.

We're told, "If Ecstasy become legal in this country, it would invariably become a staple part of the night-club scene and this would have a normative effect on teenagers." The legalization of MDMA (the pure chemical that Ecstasy is supposed to be but rarely is) would provide substantial social benefits. For one, use of alcohol would be reduced, with Ecstasy being less dangerous than alcohol in many ways, especially when harm reduction methods are legal rather than



criminalized. [OPTIONAL: Ask any police officer if violence and sexual assault is greater at an event where alcohol or MDMA is used and they will tell you that alcohol events are more problematic.] My organization, MAPS, has helped develop teams of people who work at festivals like Burning Man and Boom to help people who have what we call psychedelic emergencies. People who have difficult trips are encouraged to face their fears and their emotions and work through them, often ending up strengthened as a result. We've helped hundreds of people benefit from difficult experiences and have reduced harms. Ecstasy-related deaths are almost but not entirely preventable. MDMA has substantial therapeutic potential and we are conducting studies into its use to treat posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety associated with terminal cancer. MDMA causes chemical and hormonal changes similar to the post-orgasmic state, which helps explain why it improves communication between the sexes, and is the most inherently therapeutic of all the psychedelic drugs. The lost benefits of the medical use of MDMA, LSD, other psychedelics, and marijuana is a major cost of prohibition that almost never gets factored into risk/benefit calculations.

Drugs will always be associated with both benefits and problems. Prohibition maximizes problems and minimizes benefits. Legalization maximizes benefits and minimizes problems, and therefore Prohibition should come to an end. In his views about freedom, Mahatma Gandhi should be respected, not contradicted.