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## In Drag on Drugs

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Abstract: Since commentators generally assert that the war on illegal and illicit drugs has been a failure, we should evaluate the assertion and, then, opine on why there is a war, winnable or not.

Since commentators generally assert that the war on illegal and illicit drugs has been a failure, we should evaluate the assertion and, then, opine on why there is a war, winnable or not.

Is the war on drugs a failure? The criterion of amounts of drugs intercepted and destroyed is suspect because there's no finite limit from which to head towards zero. There's always more to be grown, refined, and sold. Whether the price goes up due to temporary scarcity or down due to temporary excess, the users keep on coming. In fact, regardless of carrots and sticks, regardless of legalization, decriminalization, or criminalization, drugs are still available and affordable. If the financial, physical, or psychological cost becomes too high, ingenuity assures providers and users will create or identify substitutes. Crop substitution and crop and lab destruction seem to have little long-term effect on an impervious economics driven by demand. Purveyors, possessors, and users of drugs and their enemies are still being murdered, tortured, incarcerated, and otherwise treated malignly. Educational and therapeutic programs seem to 'work' with some users and not with others for various interludes of time. Meanwhile, new users are coming into the pipeline. Funds from government and for-profit and not-for-profit organizations are still being expended towards the war as opposed to other possibly more productive goals incurring sunk costs and opportunity costs. The logic employed to support the evil and insidiousness of drug use at times gives logic—both deductive and inductive—a bad name and rap and obfuscates the very real harm consequential to drug use and abuse by some users. The construct drugs has even invaded language conflating positive drug and non-drug experiences—e.g., sex, food, physical exercise, a great book, a great thought or feeling, victorious competition, physically beating someone or being beaten dependent on psychosexual nexus, a religious experience—being referred to as a high whether the high is an upper, downer, inner, or outer.

Is the war on drugs a success? .Anti-drug government organizations have been created providing jobs, careers, respect, and prestige. Drugs as demon may foster social cohesion and meaning of life among those who buy into it, and may serve as a socio-psychological receptacle into which one may project one's own feared and unappealing aspects. Drugs as demon also fosters social cohesion and meaning for life among those who buy and use and approve the buying and use of drugs. Thus, the career of a junkie, for example. Inevitable conflict among and between purveyors of drugs, among and between users of drugs, and among and between those who buy into drugs as demon still provide other sorts of social cohesion and meaning of life, even as any attrition through conflict benefits the war on drugs. Drugs as demon also serves as a ready excuse for things not being quite right in the world or with one's life. Tactical success in drug use prevention and minimization, drug interception and destruction, and the arrest and conviction of those involved with drugs from international traffickers to local users leads to job promotion for those held responsible. And huge funds accumulated through the drug industry serve as an underground fiscal stimulus in times of economic trouble and mitigates the negative consequences of governmental deficit spending.

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So, why is there a war? Why should something that makes people feel good, even if temporarily, and even with obviously horrific effects for some be the object of such crusade-like fervor and indignant righteousness from government and its enablers? The usual answer involves something about a social contract leading to government responsibility for the welfare of citizens as to what is right from wrong and good from bad. The counter to this is led by small-government and no-government supporters.

But beyond the social contract and beliefs about the need and function of government is the curiosity that what feels good needs to be closely regulated...even if the horrific consequences for some could be prevented.

One explanation is that people need to be controlled so that they can support and carry out government-prescribed functions and feeling good may lessen the control. In essence, drugs nullify or grossly distort Adam Smith's inner witness and invisible hand thus subverting moral sentiments and homo economicus. A related explanation is that people who struggle with self-control fear loss of control in others. Why? They need others to be controlled to bind their own self-control. This is supported by social psychological theories and data on identification, internalization, and vicarious conditioning. Farther removed is the belief that people are not supposed to feel good. If they do, there's a violation of sacred or natural law. One cannot attain or deserve God's love, grace, and salvation or Nature's beneficence through getting something good but only through feeling bad. This is because people are inherently tainted with sin or unnatural proclivity and need to atone in the material world. The notion that feeling good could lead to more good seems too extraordinary in some to contemplate seriously.

A more novel explanation is that drugs put people in drag, and drag—save for a few special cases—must be prevented. How is this? Following the analyses of Judith Butler (1990), gender is not a core aspect of identity. For example, there is no essential masculinity and femininity. Instead, gender is a fantasy that is performed through bodily posture and movement, costumes, and transactional codes. According to many readings of Butler, one always dresses like a person of another or opposite sex because there is no core gender for reference. In essence, one operates within a Derridean aporia, and gender has no logos. So we all are in drag all the time.

Because there are no essential norms of desire and gender in an alogical world, anxiety results and leads to the social creation and policing of 'deviant desires'. Drag then becomes deviant even as it is democratic. We all can and do do it and are in parody. We are all false in this way even with an oppressive environment of socially proscribed gender roles. Drag enlightens on the very incoherence which oppression attempts to make coherent.

What drag does for gender, drugs do for social identity in general. They expose the incoherence and artificiality of socially sanctioned identities. This why being in drag and on drugs constitutes a double nightmare for social authority. This is why—except for some carefully prescribed exceptions like those in the theatre, at parties, and within jokes containing deadly serious truths (Freud (1905))—oppression is necessitated.

Ironically, we all are who we're not and not who we are. This cannot be dressed or drugged up.

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