

## The Morality of Illegality

The dictionaries define morality as an accepted moral standard or how right or wrong something is as in virtuous behavior. The noun illegality is simply an unlawful act or the fact of being illegal.

We tend to live in a world today that is rather confusing when you use these words together, especially when it comes to drugs. Because of the fact of this ambiguity when these two words are used together we may not realize the conflict that is generated leading to the confusion and disrespect of both words.

I truly believe that most people in these United States wish to be law-abiding citizens with a strong moral concept but we seem to have the greatest amount of people whose morality is in conflict with our legal system. In spite of this we have more prisons and more people in prison than any other country. There are many ways of looking at these facts, but according to one fact sheet comparing the United States to the rest of the World, *"The United States has the highest rate of incarceration at 726 prisoners per 100,000 people."* [ <http://www.publiceye.org/defendingjustice/pdfs/factsheets/9-Fact Sheet - US vs World.pdf> ] According to "Global Research" – *"The United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population. But it has almost a quarter of the world's prisoners."* [ <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=8801> ] In 2008, Diane Sawyer reported on ABC World News that *"The Justice Department has released a new report showing the nation's prison and jail population reached a record 2.3 million people last year."* [ <http://abcnews.go.com/TheLaw/story?id=5009270&page=1&page=1> ] If you look at these and many other resources available online you will see that we tend to remain number one in prison population and it keeps rising every year.

While I am sure there are many reasons that contribute to these statistics, in the interest of keeping this article short, I will just concentrate on the drug issue and the conflict we create with morality and illegality.

Why have we done so poorly in solving drug addiction for so-called legal and illegal drugs? I believe it is because of the weakness and ineptness of our moral standard when it comes to the topic of drugs. Most western people are steeped in dualism when it comes to our ways of thought and action. We tend to see everything as right or wrong, yes or no, black or white with little ability to include the whole spectrum of color or find any comfort in the "middle way". We speak about unity and wholeness but find it very difficult to attain these in most of our thinking and living.

As we learn more about humanity and our universe we are coming to realize a greater unity in the very essence and fabric of life itself. *"Fueled by the boom in neural network modeling, the notion that the circuitry of the brain can be mapped to identify where thoughts, images, memories, creativity, and similar "mental activities" originate seems more like science and less like science fiction. Whether dualism will be completely resolved to everyone's satisfaction seems doubtful, but biopsychologists and neuropsychologists continue to contribute data to address this philosophical puzzle."* [ <http://cwx.prenhall.com/bookbind/pubbooks/morris2/chapter2/medialib/lecture/dualism.html> ] Dr. Paul Davies, a Theoretical Physics professor, when speaking about holism versus reductionism says, *"Many of the old problems of dualism fall away once it is appreciated that abstract, high-level concepts can be equally as real as the low-level structures that support them, without any mysterious extra substances or ingredients. Just as a life-force is an unnecessary addition for matter to become animate, so a soul-substance is unnecessary for matter to become conscious."* ["God and the new Physics" by Paul Davies, Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, page 83]

We live in a world where information is peruse and freely available to everyone at anytime. It becomes increasingly difficult to proclaim a narrow view or that any one point of view is superior. When it comes to drugs we are clearly aware that no drug is completely safe and without side effects, even those that are so-called legal. Even experienced doctors find it difficult to determine that a prescription for any single

patient will have a positive effect without any harm, which is why we refer to them a practicing physicians. The more experience and practice a physician has will surely effect the outcome for their patients. We also know that some well-known safe legal drugs have been taken off the market because they became notably harmful. There are drugs that were clearly considered illegal that are becoming acceptable and made legal because they were found to have some value for certain conditions. These changes in legal status do not often coincide with a similar change in their moral status, even after many years. Change is always a difficult process for most people regardless of the impetus for the change.

The moral standard for drugs is not always the same in every place or culture, not even among small communities or neighborhoods. In fact, according to a report from Liberty Mutual, "A Moral Identity Crisis", our moral standards may be undergoing a serious change. *"We've watched all things personal undergo very public makeovers on reality TV--our noses, our houses, our cars and jobs and spouses. But something more fundamental may have quietly fallen victim to a makeover as well: our moral identities."* [ [http://www.responsibilityproject.com/blog/a-moral-identity-crisis/?src=keyword\\_s=ggl\\_K=Morals\\_C=Responsibility\\_G=MoralityBites\\_Moral\\_M=Broad-fbid=fj0ReWtDDOI](http://www.responsibilityproject.com/blog/a-moral-identity-crisis/?src=keyword_s=ggl_K=Morals_C=Responsibility_G=MoralityBites_Moral_M=Broad-fbid=fj0ReWtDDOI) ] When discussing "***The morality of drug use and its place in youth sub-cultures***" [ <http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/kids/demos/demos7.htm> ] there were several observations: *"The vast majority of young people had experimented with alcohol and cigarettes under the age of 15."* *"Despite extensive differences according to social group, there were some common threads in attitudes, both between the groups of non-users, recreational users and problem users, and between young people from different areas."* If we do not recognize this variance in our moral standards we will only exacerbate our problems further.

To keep this paper short, let me skip to, what I believe, is our greatest confusion – **Drug Pushers!** While everyone agrees that we have to go after the drug pushers on our streets and in our communities, we seem to have forgotten the greatest form of drug pushing – the **Advertisement of Drugs in our public media!** This common practice continually reminds all of us in every age group to "ask for drugs", especially when we go to our doctors. Are we crazy? Have we lost our common sense? These advertisements are designed to increase the economic benefit of the drug companies in the same manner our street vendors are seeking to increase their coffers! Shouldn't it be up to the doctors to recommend their legal store of drugs?

Our drug companies still have a significant advantage because they already have sales people who visit doctor's offices to educate and explain their products. After all, it is the doctor who has to be willing to prescribe their products and who is responsible to determine what drugs should be used by whom and why any particular drug will be beneficial in relationship to the risks involved for their patients. Morality and Legality need to work together, especially when it comes to the promotion of all drugs, for the primary good of public health. Allowing our drug companies to advertise in public media convolutes and destroys the proper relationship of moral standards and our laws.

Allowing drug companies the right to advertise as we do places our moral resolve to use all drugs properly in jeopardy. All of us are easily tempted to want a lot of things and that is the goal of advertisement. Drug companies therefore should not be able to tease us with unnecessary temptation. Drug companies are not public schools for drug use! Doctors and pharmacists are our primary professionals for public education; keep the drug companies in their proper place by dealing with our professionals and out of the public arena.