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## **Prohibition: Its Roots and Bitter Fruit**

### **Prohibition as Religion**

I suspect that almost everyone here today already knows that the prohibition of recreational and religious drugs is a disastrous policy, and that it has always been so. We all know that prohibitions of things people want are self-defeating by their very nature, and we all know that prohibition is productive mainly of across-the-board corruption, immense criminal syndicates, disease, death, destruction and destitution, the poisoning of peoples and their lands and other such gross violations of human rights.

Although so much is obvious to us, representatives of many countries will next week, at their meeting at the U.N. here in Vienna, all continue to insist that it is the drugs that are the problem, and their continuing prohibition the only logical remedy. That idea, of course, has a long history. For some, it is a lie necessitated by their political duties or vested interests, those for whom prohibition is not a disaster but a source of personal advancement and comfortable salaries. To be frank, I can see little moral distinction between such persons and the so-called drug barons and drug-pushers whose livelihood is also the direct result of prohibition. For some others, the lie of prohibition is perpetuated for lack of courage, or perception of an alternative. For others still, the true believers, it is sheer delusion.

Since you all know these things already, what can I say to you this afternoon that might enlarge our collective understanding? I'd like to weave together a few diverse theories and observations, some of my own manufacture, that should help us understand the attitudes of these honourable gentlemen who will attend the U.N. meeting, and understand as well the attitudes and psychology of that great mass of the mostly-deluded both present and past who, simply by default or through a lack of courage and clear thinking, support the honourable gentlemen's absurd quest for, in their own words, a "drug-free world."

Only through an intimate and rigorous understanding of such a phenomenon as prohibition can we hope to effectively lessen its negative consequences. I will avoid, however, raising any hopes that we can soon overturn prohibition no matter what we do, for among other serious problems, it seems that the time left for achieving such a result is far too limited by a multitude of impending social, economic, and ecological crises now well underway. But let us at least try to understand why prohibition is so impervious to change, for no matter what the issue, the value of such fundamental knowledge can never be predicted and it has a strange way of providing opportunities for action that never could have been anticipated.

I just mentioned that prohibition today is directed not only at some recreational drugs, but also against religious drugs, some of them the designated sacraments of various religious followings. As you know, ayahuasca and peyote are two such religious drugs which are *not* subject to total prohibition everywhere, yet in general, the use of

psychoactive drugs for religious purposes *is* either subject to total prohibition or at a minimum, very strict controls. This too has a long history worth exploring.

Taking a hint from this situation, it is then a short step toward concluding that prohibition itself is in many respects *like* a religious phenomenon, an important clue being that it is little affected by anything from the realms of science or logic, and depends primarily upon *convictions*: On the one hand, the economic and political convictions of those who profit from prohibition, and on the other extreme, the convictions of the true believers, those for whom science and intellectual pursuit is for the most part just elitist snobbery, to be looked down upon by the common people who don't need university learning to know right from wrong. Convictions, as the philosopher Frederick Nietzsche wrote, "are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies."

If I may borrow a few excellent phrases from a recent paper by my good friend Peter Cohen, who deserves a great deal of credit for promoting this idea widely, prohibition "has a certain status that shields it from rational and functional evaluation. [It] has acquired a *sacred significance* that places it beyond the pale of what we call scientific discourse; [its status] removes it from the realm of ordinary debate about policy, or about scientific or economic issues. [It's religious nature] censures any argument demonstrating the irrelevancy of the policy...in much the same way that the culture of the infallibility of the Bible - that is, of the Church - pronounced Galileo a heretic. [Prohibition is thus] not susceptible to observations or data proving the ban to be incompatible with human rights, dangerous, destructive, impossible to enforce, inhumane, expensive, crime-inducing, and dysfunctional..."<sup>i</sup>

Well, that about sums it up, and provides us with an important evaluation of why our task of drug policy reform is so difficult. But there is something even deeper about prohibition's connection with religion that we should be aware of, and it has to do with our collective western post-Renaissance perceptions about religion itself. Not only is prohibition *like* a religious phenomenon, not only does prohibition *satisfy a religious function* for many of its supporters, not only has prohibition *become* a religious phenomenon in the broad sense of the term, but an examination of the roots of prohibition, extending back over 500 years, shows that it *is* a religious undertaking. Prohibition is a direct descendant of the dogmatism that the Renaissance Catholic Church had evolved over the centuries, and then used as a tool to legitimate its political goals during the Age of Exploration.

The use of psychoactive plants for religious purposes is perhaps one of the most ancient of human universals, extending back into prehistory to our very origins. And so, as the great explorers of the Renaissance discovered new territories, the peoples they encountered were, more often than not, found to use a wide range of psychoactive drugs in their shamanic, religious, medical and social traditions.

According to recent findings by a few intrepid researchers including my good friend Carl Ruck of Boston University, the Catholic Church was, however, no stranger to the use of psychoactive plants for attaining religious ecstasy.<sup>ii</sup> A long tradition of such use by the Church elite now appears to be the case, but the practices were reserved for only the highest echelons within the church, and completely prohibited for the general masses of Christians. The inner sanctum of the Catholic Church realised, of course, that if Christians were able to attain religious ecstasy and insight on their own

with the aid of psychoactive plants, then the authority of the Church would be severely undermined, and their political quest for world domination damaged if not destroyed.

A main purpose of the Holy Inquisition was therefore to stamp out uses of psychoactive plants wherever they were to be found. And that included branding as heretics those European outsiders such as the medieval practitioners of the ancient traditions of witchcraft and alchemy, the pursuits of whom we now know were concerned with the use of psychoactive plants such as mandrake, belladonna, and other native European drug-plants. The doctrine of the Church therefore became one of public repudiation of drug use as a form of Gnostic heresy, while at the same time secretly preserving the knowledge of that use for the Church elite.

In the following quotation from a book by David A. J. Richards, we see how this repudiation has translated itself into modern times, how it has become a general, inbuilt, default perspective about the Christian religion that dominates the outlook of theologians and Church members alike. Now please bear with me, this quote is important but a bit tricky to understand when spoken rather than read. For the benefit of those wishing to read the quote, as well as my entire talk today, I have made it available at my website. More on that later. Here is the quotation:

“Shamanic possession and ecstasy, at the heart of much earlier religion, becomes, from [the perspective of the Church’s repudiation], one form of demonic or satanic witchcraft, a charge that Catholic missionaries made against the shamanic practices they encountered in the New World. The leading contemporary defender of this Judaeo-Christian repudiation, R. C. Zaehner, has argued that the technology of the self implicit in the orthodox western religions requires an unbridgeable gap between the human and the divine, expressed in the submission of the self to ethical imperatives by which persons express their common humanity and a religious humility. Accordingly, western, in contrast to non-western mystical experience, expresses the *distance* between the human and the divine. Drugs, including alcohol, are ruled out as stimuli to religious experience because they bridge this distance, indulging the narcissistic perception that the user himself is divine and thus free of the constraints of ethical submission.”<sup>iii</sup> (End of quote)

Ethical submission to authority, there we have it. Whereas Eastern religion and philosophy has little problem with perceiving mankind and all creation as a manifestation of the Divine, quite capable of judging right from wrong, the Catholic Church, and today its political descendants, want us to be submissive, to laud their authority, and to never get the idea that we may in fact know as much about things as they do. I’ve read this quotation many times, and its great importance only slowly became obvious to me. It explains many things about contemporary attitudes to both religion and drugs, and why so many otherwise intelligent people will automatically support notions such as “drugs are wrong” and refuse even to consider their convictions through rational processes based on evidence and logic. Nietzsche’s condemnation of convictions being more dangerous enemies of truth than lies becomes even more to the point.

### **The Political Tool**

Among those who will be attending the U.N. meeting next week, there will surely be ardent believers, the modern-day analogues of the second-tier of Catholic Church officials who honestly promoted the Inquisition’s anti-drug crusade, officials who were

not privy to the inner sanctum of the Church and its secrets. But we can be sure that the highest level delegates to the U.N. meeting, especially from those countries with the loudest prohibitionist voices, know what the Church insiders knew: the entire prohibitionist undertaking is a ruse, false propaganda designed to promote and maintain ulterior motives and purposes. As it was for the Catholic Church of the Renaissance, this is a matter of world control by the chosen few, nothing more. For such as these, prohibition is a just a blatant lie, as opposed to a fantastic delusion. Those in the inner sanctum of political power today use prohibition as a political tool for ends having nothing to do with the stated necessity to control drug use and assist society. But again, I think a mere mention of this is all that is necessary today, for we all know already how prohibition has been a prime tool of the CIA, a tool of the U.S. State Department and Executive Branch for invading countries, manipulating the world economic system, and making 'offers they can't refuse' to various people on the world scene who have forgotten their place and attempted to resist the desires of the rulers of the world; we all know how prohibition and the Drug War has been a tool of successive U.S. regimes to build a gigantic prison system and a nation-wide network of courts and judges perfectly willing to ignore the most fundamental of Constitutional rights; how it has made of many police forces the close equivalent of a gang of storm troopers. The neoconservative movement, born in the early 1970s as a reaction against the ideals of the 1960s, when government realised just how powerful the people could be when they wanted to, has now reached the zenith of power, and what they intend to use their justice and prison system for is now becoming quite obvious. Enough said about that. We should conclude, of course, that any attempt to directly interfere with these processes has little chance of success, and may even involve personal danger, and on this count the lie of prohibition will remain untouchable.

## **Psychedelics in Eden**

So let me take the religious theme back even further. I mentioned that the use of psychoactive plants goes as far back as we can show, probably to our very origins as a species. When did that occur? Quite recently, as modern genetic investigations have shown. In a lecture I gave in Basel, Switzerland, for the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration for Dr Albert Hofmann, I presented a theory I had been working on for several years. Using evidence from many sources and fields, I outlined a scenario for the sudden awakening of the human race, exactly 74,000 years ago in the Ethiopian highlands of East Africa.

Our immediate ancestors, I shall call them the proto-humans, were physically identical with modern humans but lacking in our most human characteristics, and they had already been living in the area for 100,000 years or more. A technology of tools similar to that of the chimpanzee, and no indication of ritual or shamanism or other symbolic behaviour, was their collective condition. The obvious question is why, given that they were in every physical sense identical with modern humans, they did not evolve beyond the proto-human state over this great length of time?

One day 74,000 years ago however, Mount Toba on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia let loose with a spectacular volcanic eruption, spewing into the air an amount of material almost 3000 times that of the 1980 eruption of Mount St Helen's in Washington state, USA. The eruption deposited meters of ash in locations as far away as the British Isles, and caused several years of a volcanic winter; it caused the

onset of the severest part of the last ice age, and this radically lowered sea levels and continental precipitation.

Many species, including proto-man, were threatened with extinction, and it was thus that a small surviving band of our ancestors retreated to the highlands of Ethiopia in an attempt to escape the devastating conditions of their homelands further to the east. It was in these mountains that our ancestors, famished and at the end of their hope for survival, came to use a psychoactive plant, probably a mushroom. Shamanism, symbolic behaviour and religious awareness were born, and the course of evolution on earth was altered dramatically.

Now I have intentionally presented this brief summary of my theory in a most provocative way, designed to cause general disbelief that one could possibly find evidence to support such a fantastic idea. Yet no less an authority on human evolution than Chris Stringer, head of the Human Origins Group of the London Natural History Museum, admits in his book *African Exodus*, that there must have been some kind of unusual event, some catalyst, some kind of "trigger" which set in motion the very rapid rise of human culture from a mere handful of individuals, and a mere few moments ago on an evolutionary scale.

Studies of human genetics had already shown that the entire human race had descended from a small number of individuals who had lived in East Africa some time between 50 and 120 thousand years ago. The trick was to explain how and why. Chris Stringer writes in his book:

"It was one of the critical events in mankind's convoluted route to evolutionary success. The nature of the trigger of this great social upheaval is still hotly debated, but remains a mystery at the heart of our 'progress' as a species. Was it a biological, mental or social event that sent our species rushing pell-mell towards world domination? Was it the advent of symbolic language, the appearance of the nuclear family as the basic element of human social structure, or a fundamental change in the workings of the brain? Whatever the nature of the change, it has a lot to answer for. It transformed us from minor bit players in a zoological soap opera into evolutionary superstars, with all the attendant dangers of vanity, hubris and indifference to the fate of others that such an analogy carries with it." <sup>iv</sup>

Needless to say, perhaps, in this age of drug paranoia, neither Chris Stringer nor any other professional scientist, with just one or two important exceptions, has written back to me when I suggested to them what the trigger may have been!

If any of you are interested to explore some of the evidence I have collected in support of the theory, a video of my presentation is available at my website, The Psychedelic Library.<sup>v</sup> For our purposes today it suffices to say that the additional evidence I compiled from various sources shows that in all probability the psychoactive catalyst to our evolution was not just an incidental thing, perhaps helping us along on a process already well underway, but that the drug-produced awakening was absolutely necessary, that without it we would still be proto-humans.

For newcomers to such an idea, it is certain to sound just too fantastic to be true, but I assure you that if you study the evidence I have collected with an open mind and stew on this idea for awhile, you will begin to see not only that it follows from the evidence, but that it has potential to explain a great many other things, including an aspect of our subject today, why prohibition is so resistant to attack and change.

If the spark to the entire collective psychology of the human race was a drug experience, whether or not you consider such ideas as a Jungian collective consciousness to have any scientific validity, we can be reasonably sure that such an event has somehow been preserved in the crevices of human thought and the subconscious of all individuals, and that the ancient event exerts an effect on behaviour and inherent attitudes similar in nature to other inherited instincts.

An example of the effect of ancient attitudes persisting to the present day was provided by the famed banker-turned-ethnomycologist R. Gordon Wasson, who led the expeditions to Mexico in the 1950s to discover the continued use of magic mushrooms by Amerindian descendants of ancient meso-American peoples. Wasson showed in another important discovery that modern European attitudes to mushrooms in general, which differ greatly across Europe, could be traced to ancient European traditions of religious use of drugs. The traditions themselves had of course long been abandoned and forgotten, but inherent, almost instinctive attitudes about mushrooms had persisted into modern times. This has resulted in, for example, the British, Portuguese and Castilian Spanish seeing mushrooms as generally poisonous and something to be detested and never touched, while the Catalans, the Basques, Russians, and most eastern Europeans seek out and eat all the wonderful wild mushrooms they can find. Totally different inherent attitudes have persisted down through centuries, yet the mechanism for cultural transmission of such attitudes is for the most part a mystery. As Wasson showed, however, the effect is real, and based on ancient, long-forgotten traditions and beliefs.

During the sixty or so millennia following the human awakening in East Africa, mankind was to undertake his *first* Age of Exploration, in fact much more ambitious if more gradual than that of the Renaissance, and tribes of the human species migrated from their African homeland to populate essentially the entire globe. According to the evidence we have of aboriginal peoples, everywhere that early man went he found and used the psychoactive plants native to the new regions, in perpetuation and imitation of that same process which ignited human awareness in the first place. Shamanic religious, medical and social practice was in fact everywhere maintained by the use of drug plants.

Whether early mankind's explorations were in part *motivated* by the search for psychoactives cannot be known of course, but since the quest for using psychoactive plants is evidently a human universal, that fact is surely strong evidence that the practices existed at the source, in East Africa right after the Toba eruption, and were not practices that sprang up at random in the various locations where man settled over the following millennia. Thus the universal use of psychoactive drugs is part and parcel of the entire human experience on earth, at least for our first 70 thousand years until the prohibitionists came upon the scene. Our long association with drug plants can be expected to have shaped the course of human consciousness and psychology significantly. Attitudes about drugs are therefore automatic and instinctive, and as Wasson showed, they can be negative or positive, but most importantly they require of an individual quite strenuous logical thought and analysis to understand and overcome where necessary. This is more than just a religious matter, it is inherent in being human.

I think you can see therefore how such an inheritance allows the propagandist to arouse automatic, instinctive attitudes in people so that they will support prohibitionist

agendas without any question or analysis. On this matter of drug use, the uninitiated person is perhaps more susceptible to manipulation than on any other subject. In its latest reincarnation, the process of prohibition has been going on for over 500 years and as such has a momentum that will be extremely difficult to alter, even if we were to have fair and equal access to the media through which the prohibitionist agenda is broadcast. A few years ago I was considerably more optimistic about the possibility of slowly reversing this prohibitionist tide but I regret to inform you today that the more I examine the roots of prohibition, the more my optimism fades.

### **Malignant aggression – the xenophobic instinct**

As long as we have examined prehistory in our quest today, why not go back even further to examine evolution itself, to see if it holds any clues to our present predicament with prohibition?

An eternal question for mankind has long been to know the source and reason for what might be called malignant aggression, that human characteristic that has been manifested collectively in the pointless slaughter of war and conquest, genocide and slavery, and individually in participation in horrendous acts of murder, pillage, rape, torture and so forth. Indeed, such violence seems to be the main determinant of the course of history.

It is a question that has occupied many a philosopher, psychologist and scientist, for it would appear that something special has gone wrong with evolution such that it would produce a species capable of wantonly killing its own kind, and apparently quite willing to eradicate itself and all life on the planet as well. Collectively, mankind seems especially insane, and it would seem that nothing in the study of evolution could demonstrate how such a situation could have occurred. In the past, such deliberation has probably led to much pernicious religious dogma such as the doctrine of original sin and the necessity of redemption, confessional practices and the belief in the irresistibility of sin and the superhuman power of evil, and the literal belief in the devil as an actor on the world stage.

It turns out, however, if a theory I've been working on is correct, that the seeds of human malignant violence grew from a necessary and beneficial characteristic in our immediate ancestors, the great apes, and it is only when this tendency became subject to the human abilities of language and symbolic behaviour that it then became unmanageable, uncontrollable for many, and the catalyst behind mankind's collective insanity.

The psychiatrist and author Erich Fromm, in his excellent 1973 treatise, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, took up what is still an excellent analysis of the problem. His first task was to debunk a theory that had been proposed in the 1960s by the Nobel-prize winning ethologist Konrad Lorenz. His book, *On Aggression*, had become a best-seller, and its main thesis was that mankind's collective behaviour as manifested in violence and destructiveness of every sort is due to a genetically programmed, powerful and innate disposition for aggression that forever lies in wait for the opportunity to express itself. In other words, mankind's problem with violence was based on an *instinct for violence* that we were essentially powerless to counteract.

In his critique, Fromm relentlessly makes the case for the dismissal of the “instinctivist” theories on aggression. To begin his analysis, Fromm first stresses the important distinction between benign, biologically adaptive aggression, such as is aroused for the defence of life or territory, or for obtaining food, compared with what he calls *malignant aggression*, whose definition should be obvious. According to Fromm, it is a distinction which Lorenz and the instinctivists failed completely to make, seriously undermining their theories on that count alone.

Fromm then shows in a broad survey of animal and human behaviour that the evidence is solidly against blaming inherited instincts for violence and malignant aggression as the main determinant of the course of history. Fromm also makes the following important observation of why a theory such as Lorenz’ gained so much popular attention. To sum up his views on that point:

The turmoil and increasingly violent nature of the period when the theory captured the public mind, during which we witnessed the assassinations of the Kennedys, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, the Cuban missile crisis and the increasing threat of nuclear holocaust, through to the darkest days of the Vietnam genocide: such events produced in people a widely perceived feeling of powerlessness to change things, certainly contributing to the popularity of Lorenz’s neoinstinctivism. It was a case of public susceptibility rather than any scientific rigour of the theory — it was rejected by most psychologists and neuroscientists, according to Fromm. Its great appeal to the public also stemmed from the fact that it was a “magic bullet” kind of theory, pretending to explain away a complex phenomenon with an easy-to-understand, all-encompassing and irremediable cause. It was the always-popular kind of explanation that more or less relieved the reader from feeling any responsibility for the situation — how could one hope to go against a psychologically inbuilt inevitability?

Although Fromm certainly succeeds in discrediting Lorenz’ “instinct for violence” theory, I believe, nevertheless, that it is indeed an instinct at the root of the problem. It is an instinct that has come into existence through long evolutionary pathways, one that has been critical and necessary for the evolution of the most advanced hominid species. Its effects may therefore be surmised to be important, universal among members of our species as well as other advanced hominid and ape species, yet with the negative blowback for humans that it is indeed at the root of our problem with irrational violence and malignant aggression. It is not, however, an instinct *for* violence, nor aggression whether defensive or malignant, but an instinct which can be satisfied through a variety of behaviours, and whose net effect was a key factor in allowing the evolution of complex societies, large brains, and, surprisingly, true altruistic behaviour.

My theory would take far more time to justify with evidence than I have available today, so once again I must ask your indulgence when I insist that my brief outline to follow has been well researched and thought out, and would be far more convincing were you to see the complete body of evidence I have collected. I hope soon to finish a paper on the subject, but for now let me just describe the basic features of the idea so that I can connect it with the problem of prohibition. In fact, I already published an introduction to these ideas in the *International Journal of Drug Policy* in 1999. The paper was titled, “Drug Prohibition: A Perverted Instinct?” From that title you will

already get a hint of the connection between my theory and the problem we are concerned with here today.

The concept of instinct needs some rehabilitation, however. Whether due to some still-lingering absurdities from the long reign of Behaviourist psychology, or the general tendency of scientists today to disbelieve in an entity unless having on hand several specimens in formaldehyde, it seems that mainstream science today is loathe even to use the word, substituting “innate behaviour” or some other euphemism when they need to explain certain behaviours. However, in promoting a rehabilitation of the term and concept of instinct I am not proposing we go back to accepting the ideas that proliferated early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the long lists of sometimes very dubious things that were supposed to be instincts. For me, it seems that the concept of instinct was in its beginnings scientifically useful, and still is, but that it became corrupted by too wide and too wild an interpretation, leading to its discredit. This is no reason to throw out the baby with the bath-water, however. Many terms have general use meanings completely at odds with their scientific use. And not all scientists have joined in the condemnation, far from it. Here is what a top authority on cognitive neuroscience has to say: Jaak Panksepp has stated in his book *Affective Neuroscience* that, quote,

“It is becoming increasingly clear that humans have as many instinctual operating systems in their brains as other mammals. However, in mature humans such instinctual processes may be difficult to observe because they are no longer expressed directly in adult behavior but instead are filtered and modified by higher cognitive activity. Thus, in adult humans, many instincts manifest themselves only as subtle psychological tendencies, such as subjective feeling states, which provide internal guidance to behavior.”<sup>vi</sup> End of quote

I think we can accept the validity of such a view in spite of widespread professional objections, even if we do not know exactly how an instinct is implemented in the brain, or perhaps in some as-yet unproved manifestation such as a species collective memory, or whether we yet understand how an instinct is transmitted from generation to generation. For neuroscientists, everything is in the hard wiring. For evolutionary biologists, everything is in the genes. I’d recommend that they should go looking for the gene or the hard-wiring that makes them believe such reductionist nonsense! Given the importance of instinct for behaviour throughout the entire animal kingdom, and the obvious way that instinct itself has been subject to evolutionary principles, it would be curious indeed if suddenly a species arose, ourselves, whose behaviour was simply beyond the influence of instinct. With that observation, I’ll leave my brief justification of instinct as a real and effective determinant of behaviour not only for animals but for humans as well, and go on to the meat of my theory.

So what is this instinct I propose that results in malignant violence and aggression? Agreeing with Fromm, the instinct itself has nothing to do with violence *per se*, but is one that arose and developed as advanced mammals – especially the monkeys and apes – began living in larger and larger, and more complex social groups. It is now believed that the advancing complexity of social groups and the demands that this entailed on individuals, was the primary evolutionary engine for the rapid increase in brain size we see in monkeys and apes through to the hominids and our own species.<sup>vii</sup> This increase in brain size, so rapid as to be declared by evolutionary biology as practically unprecedented, was obviously the most important development leading to the appearance of our species.

In order to live in complex, stable, exclusionary and coherent social groups, members of a group would necessarily have to know who was in the group, and who was not. To make a long story short concerning my findings, knowing who is *in* the “in-group” involves many complex aspects of individual and group interactions and thus could not be subject to a simple instinctive drive to enable it. Managing all the complexities of interactions in large social groups was and is the domain of our powerful and large brains, not something that could possibly be controlled by a simple instinct. However, knowing whether a given individual is in the “out-group” is a straightforward matter: it could easily be mediated by instinctive behaviour that led individuals and the group to define as the necessary characteristic any simple, easily-transmitted perception or quickly-invoked attitude about unfamiliar individuals. Once that determination has been made, it persists like a knee-jerk reflex.

And so, evolutionary pressures ensured that as ape societies became more complex, an instinct for xenophobia would develop, that is, an instinct mediating a simple, group-wide ability to instantly know an outsider, exclude him and thus preserve group coherence and stability. I call this, quite simply, the *xenophobic instinct*. It further turns out that recent research has shown that such group coherence, necessary so that *group selection* might occur, was the key evolutionary development that allowed the appearance of true altruistic behaviour.<sup>viii</sup> I'll have to leave that tantalising idea with just a brief mention, and continue with my central theme, but you can follow this and other ideas from the list of references supplied with the printed version of my lecture.

As for evidence of xenophobia and its instinctive nature in humans I wish to cite just two or three authorities on the matter.

In a paper by Alain Schmitt and Karl Grammer we read, “Indeed, xenophobia and ethnocentrism are universals and a primate legacy.”<sup>ix</sup> The noted ethologist Eibl-Eibesfeldt writes, “Xenophobia is a universal quality...an important component of the human behavioural repertoire. Infantile xenophobia was...observed in all cultures we studied. [Even children] born both blind and deaf display fear of strangers.”<sup>x</sup> Xenophobia in children and infants, observed in every culture, a primate legacy. And if exhibited by infants, no chance of cultural transmission by learning. Now if that is not an instinct, I should like to know why.

Let me briefly say some further things about instincts before I tie the matter to our present concerns.

— Instincts are in some ways like prejudices. It can be very difficult if not impossible to identify them as causative agents in one's own behaviour. It's not surprising that we, especially the scientists among us, believe that our rationality reigns supreme, free from inherited, unconscious determinants. That is, quite simply, the way it feels to be conscious.

Instinct and prejudice are also similar in that their sources lie in historical and psychological happenings mostly inaccessible to current awareness: from early childhood experiences and learning in the case of prejudice, and from hard-wiring or even collective species' memory in the case of instincts. We see, of course, the major difference between instinct and prejudice: whilst the latter is something learned, instinct is inherent and inherited.

Consider then the never-ending phenomenon of racism, a very obvious example of a tragically common behaviour enabled and aggravated by the xenophobic instinct. We believe that racism has its roots in prejudice, and true, some aspects of racism are learned in childhood – they are culturally transmitted. But the cultural transmission of racist attitudes would not be nearly so effective, and a permanent feature of human societies, if it were not enabled by the pre-existing xenophobic instinct in the first place. It is the instinct which makes it so easy to impart life-long racist attitudes to young children, although the particulars of who is to be subject to that racism is culturally determined.

It can be exceedingly tricky to demonstrate in a given individual whether he does indeed harbour racist convictions. But in his society as a whole, for example in the south of the U.S., the prevalence of black/white only facilities, lynchings, organisations such as the KKK, or recently, even widespread voter suppression and so forth, demonstrates that racist prejudice must be widespread and have an indelible effect on the collective behaviour of that society. This observation then lends a proof of the universal prevalence of the xenophobic instinct.

— Instinct in humans, as is made clear in the Panksepp quotation I read to you, does not cause an on-or-off, all-or-nothing effect. The actual net effect of a given instinct might well be “subtle” and even vanishingly small, “filtered and modified by higher cognitive activity”, *for an individual*. But an instinct exerting a slight but significant tendency collectively in a large social group, should result in a powerful force. We humans, on issues and preferences that are “6 of one, a half-dozen of the other,” tend to split reliably very close to 50/50 in our decisions (for instance consider how close honest elections tend to be, always very close to 50/50. Thanks to Diebold touchscreens, even the dishonest ones don’t go far from an even split!). Therefore, such an incremental or even differential effect of an instinct, when applied to entire populations, may well translate into an important motivator for behaviour exhibited collectively. And this effect should be magnified due to another human propensity: when a style or perception gets rolling in one direction (whether due to the subtle influence of an instinct or otherwise), a great many seem to pile onto the bandwagon just for the ride.

— One further point, and this might at once provide an operational definition as well as a diagnostic characteristic for instinct: Satisfying an instinct makes the individual feel good, rewarded, successful, like he has accomplished something, but without any rational or logical perception of why or how that has happened. With those observations to clarify the nature of my proposed xenophobic instinct, and instincts in general, let me take the final step which you should all now suspect. What allows authorities and governments to get peaceful citizens to fight wars, commit genocide, torture, and crimes against humanity yet believe they are justified in doing so, even though they may suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and even complete emotional breakdown for having participated in acts they know full well to be atrocities? What allows even democratic regimes to incite radical nationalism — the flag-waving, troop-supporting blind adherence to an undertaking that can easily be seen to be a war of aggression? What enables prohibitionist governments to fight the so-called Drug War, whether honestly or for ulterior motives, and have the great majority of citizens support the effort?

It is, above all, the appeal to the citizenry's great weakness, that when an enemy has been defined, when an evil other, and out-group identified, when a group, a class, a race, a country or even a substance has been labelled as a threat, even for the most preposterous and mendacious reasons, it is the xenophobic instinct in every person which can be easily and reliably activated so that a great number of those persons can then be led off on the most absurd and destructive of crusades, to commit crimes and atrocities of every sort.

America's designated foes — and I single out America here not because it is alone in perpetrating these evils but because, just maybe, if there is one nation today that has the power to reverse this march toward destruction and global mayhem, it is the USA

— America's designated foes have been communists, gooks in Vietnam, rag-heads in Iraq, terrorists who hate our freedoms, Islamofascists, immigrants, and of course dope-smoking hippies, degenerate drug addicts and drug dealers who profit on the misery of others, and quite astonishingly most people go along with it. Try to get a great number of people to do something or believe something that is *not* enabled by the arousal of an instinct and you get apathy, indecision, endless bickering, and little action. But when an instinct can be aroused and used, perhaps 80% of the population will follow along, no questions asked.

### **Hard to believe that 80% figure?**

Psychiatrists Erich Fromm and Michael Maccoby conducted personality surveys in the early 1970s that indicated that a significant minority of about 10 percent of persons in all societies were theoretically capable of becoming Hitlers or Himmlers, given the necessary historical and social circumstances. Fromm classed the Hitler type as *necrophilous*, or death-loving, while Himmler was of a *sado-masochistic* personality type, more interested to exert absolute control over people than kill them.

Another, similarly-sized minority, were observed to have dominant personality characteristics that classed them as *biophiles*, those life-loving persons like Albert Schweitzer and Albert Einstein, incapable of being persuaded into supporting great collective crimes. The 70-80% of citizens in the middle, between the two extremes, apparently just blow with the wind, and follow whomever is shouting the loudest. It is of course the Hitlers, Himmlers, and other fascists of this world who know well the method to arouse the people by manufacturing a threat to the homeland, by defining an enemy, the evil outsiders who threaten our liberty, hate our freedoms, and they *do shout very loudly* about it. To some less-aware fascist types it just comes naturally, but it is obvious that the most crafty among them consciously know how to apply the method, how to make the people feel insecure and threatened by some class or group of outsiders, even if they don't suspect it is thanks to the xenophobic instinct that the method works so well.

The biophiles, for better or worse, tend never to shout, nor even take a role in government. We find that the biophilic personality typically experiences an all-encompassing unity of life, the kind of experience that mystics seek after, and which some have experienced through the judicious use of psychedelics. The experience of unity, of oneness of all life, may, in fact, be the only effective antidote to the xenophobic instinct, for such an experience simply does not allow fascist rabble-

rousers to define a class of outsiders, or separate people into a us-them dichotomy. If all of us are one, who is the outsider?

Well, in telling you all this, I hope I have not lowered your own optimism to the level of mine! However, for any task it is of great importance to know what to expect of one's attempts to bring about change. Realistic expectations are a great advantage for difficult tasks. The ideas I have expressed today were directed toward that end – to know the less-than-obvious history, psychology and reality of prohibition and its bitter fruits. I can only hope that such an understanding will assist you in whatever your tasks may be.

## References

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<sup>vi</sup> See, for example, several papers supporting this view in *Machiavellian Intelligence: Social Expertise and the Evolution of Intellect in Monkeys, Apes, and Humans*. Richard Byrne and Andrew Whiten, editors. Oxford University Press 1988.

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<sup>viii</sup> Alain Schmitt and Karl Grammer: "Social intelligence and success: Don't be too clever in order to be smart" In *Machiavellian Intelligence*, above.

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