

The Role of Treatment and Punishment for Drug Offenders



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I am going to base my presentation on three main points, rather different from the presentations given during this Symposium. My first question is: Why do humans use mind-altering substances? I rarely use the expression “drugs”. I prefer to say “mind-altering substances”, which are either defined by the law as legal or illegal, to draw attention to the fact that I take into consideration all substances capable of modifying the Central Nerve System and, consequently, psychological function. Men use drugs, or mind-altering substances due to divine fault. God is responsible for this. He is the only one and if you pay attention to Michelangelo’s magnificent painting *The Creator and Adam* (*see image 01*), you will see that Adam’s hand does not quite touch the Creator’s hand. This is the root of our problem! If God had kept his finger in contact with Adam’s finger, our nature would remain divine and we wouldn’t be free to intervene in our destiny, we wouldn’t have free will. Separated from the Creator, we gain human nature without losing the memory of what we were and could have continued to be.

The Book of Genesis tells us that the Lord forbade our original parents of having the Fruit of Knowledge or of Wisdom. We can think, as others have done, that linear Time (without a beginning or end) was a t play;



Imagem 01

the Forbidden Fruit revealed to the two divine beings a new kind of time, circular, with a beginning, middle, end and a new start. This is where humanization started.

Finitude, marked by death, defines our condition of “suffering beings”. Here’s an absolutely human question: suffering determined by the realization we have of death. Free will gave humans the possibility of searching in the objects of the world something that could diminish the suffering caused by the realization of their finitude. I stand by the theory that chance brought by free will was the condition responsible of life, via the reduction of suffering achieved through psychoactive substances. In this condition, we use drugs because we are sons of God made humans. This is the first point.

Another way of answering the initial question of “why do human beings start using drugs”, can be found in the myth of the “Primitive Herd”, made famous by S. Freud on his book *Totem and Tabu*: human beings found themselves on this Earth after being cut off from their Creator and wandered for a long time without a destiny, possibly without a future or a past, because there was a time when humans were not humans. We were a herd that always moved in the present because we did not have the

gift of language or symbolism. Because of this, we could not anticipate the future or reconstruct the past. Awareness of a past and a future comes about at the time when humans gradually recognise their situation, construct a communication system, begin to symbolise, to look back and realise that something has been left behind. I have called this something a bit of recognition of death. When we have language and symbology, and when we realise the inevitability of death, we begin to construct history - the history of mankind. After recognising the existence of the past, we start to anticipate the future and we lose the present, because the present ceases to be possible. This is because the present does not exist. The present only exists under the condition that humans do not have a future or a past. At the very moment humans become capable of anticipating things, the present will always be a construction which is either anticipated or has already gone by.

This intolerable position, the human condition that causes so much suffering, this creation of mankind, puts human beings in the position of horror, suffering and recognition of death. When they are in this position, they are going to find among the objects in the world - as I said - things, situations and products that are capable of reducing suffering after they have been ingested in some way by their bodies. I therefore stand by the fact that the use of psychotropic substances is God’s fault, but the act of using the substance is human, due to the fact that we seek to reduce the suffering caused by being human. This is the second point.

Having said this I ask of you for a break to deal with the issue of why we use mind-altering substances. We need to recognise

the fact that not everyone consumes psychotropic substances in the same way. I am tired of fighting against a tide of so many who force us to see something bad in casual consumption, unexpected consumption, in consumption that is absolutely void of illness. We talk about casual consumption as if we were talking about a chemical dependence or a drug addiction. For dealing with parents in my clinical practice, I have established two categories of young drug users. Every time that someone comes to my clinic, or goes to the centre that I manage in Bahia that is equivalent to NEPAD – that has been in the Federal University for 25 years – and every time that a parent comes to me to complain that one of their children is using drugs, I always ask them the same question: “Who is your child?” The parents are sometimes surprised by this question:

- What do you mean “who is your child?”
My child’s name is Marcelo.
- And who is Marcelo?
- Marcelo is my child.
- Yes, but who is your child?

It became clear that parents, despite their relationship with the kids, couldn’t really talk to them; I normally ask them to talk to their kids and then come back to share what they discovered. Little by little I am able to establish a dialogue with the parents, in which I put their children into one of two categories: lizards or crocodiles. For those of you unfamiliar with the concept, a lizard is a little gecko, a little animal that always runs away and is sad, ugly, frightened and lives in houses, mostly in the northeast of Brazil. If a lizard takes cocaine, it will always be a cocaine-lizard. How do I deal with a lizard? I grab the nearest shoebox and trap the lizard inside it. It does not matter

how much cocaine the lizard has taken, it will always be a lizard. What about the crocodile? The crocodile is an animal with a gigantic mouth, a lashing, powerful tail and gnashing teeth. If a crocodile takes marijuana, it will be a marijuana-crocodile. The damage that a marijuana-crocodile can do will probably be much greater than any damage that a lizard under the effect of lysergic acid could do. This is trivial.

Evidently my metaphors have limits, many limits, but helped a lot of parents to understand the inadequacy of their attitudes towards their sons and daughters, not only regarding the serious issue of drug addiction but as a whole relationship. Clearly a lizard under the effect of any psychoactive substance runs the risks inherent with this abuse; however, the risk is part of life.

If, therefore, I treated a lizard as if it were a crocodile, I would have an enormous problem to solve, because I would certainly kill the lizard. I take a risk when I prescribe Haldol drops to a teenager, as this particular lizard can fall from a great height as he is undergoing a transition phase, a phase of recognising his identity and separating himself from the protection of his parents. Maybe he has broken away from school a bit, has formed bonds with his peers and uses marijuana to be the same as everyone else. He experiments with cocaine to rebel radically because he is master of his own destiny (this is where the risk lies). Risk is inherent to life. In the same way, life is a risk. After all, if I treat a lizard with Haldol (drops), which parents put in their child’s food to make them completely rigid with their tongues hanging out, bulging eyes, fearful, salivating and not understanding what is happening to them; if I put a lizard into a clinic for nine months without the



chance to have contact with their family, friends, sex, life or anything else; if I trap a lizard and I put it naked into a cell with crocodiles, I will certainly kill the lizard. Do not even think of telling me that the lizard died because it used marihuana. We could even think that the lizard was taken to a certain place because it took marihuana and died there. This is why it could be thought that the lizard died because it took marihuana. But there is no difference between this and when a shipment of marihuana fell on the head of the person who is cooper in the city of Rio de Janeiro – he also died because he was squashed by marihuana.

On the other hand, if I have a crocodile and I treat it like a lizard, it will probably eat me. In the worst sense, because there are much better ways of getting eaten. The crocodile would eat me. Without pity and with absolutely no mercy. Next, I need to check if my son, my teenager, is a crocodile. Even if he left school suddenly, if he has a serious personality disorder, if he shows psychotic tendencies, I still need to look at him with human eyes. This is because a crocodile-son never ceases to be the son of a man and a woman. Anyone who has crocodile-children knows very well what I am talking about. In some cases, a crocodile son causes suffering, a lot of suffering. This

is the third point.

What I want to say is that we need, once and for all, to be able to tell the difference between different types of consumers and who consumes what. After doing this, we can then think about which situations are risky and which need protection, as has been proposed. I am going to use two possibilities and I will finish by taking about protection.

Risks are all part of life. Protection also forms part of life. In my second slide, you will see Ana Beatriz. She is the daughter of my daughter, whose name is Adriana. Ana Beatriz is my future. I have a beach house close to Forte Beach, in Salvador. I ordered a swimming pool to be built. How do I protect her from this swimming pool? I have a few options: to fence in my pool with barbed wire so that Beatriz cannot get through. It didn't seem like a good option; a wooden fence painted yellow, very visible didn't seem viable either. The solution came from my daughter; she said: "I am going to take Beatriz to swimming classes." Now Beatriz knows how to swim. I did not put up barbed wire or an electric fence to protect my swimming pool and I will not put up a gate because my granddaughter, my family's future, knows how to swim. She actually swims very well! The risk and the effort are her own, the vigilance and support are ours.

Learning how to swim. This is my proposal: protection measures. We should teach our children to respect the law. This is because I am a great defender of the law, as I said to you a while ago. I think that I defend the law more than the officers of the law do. I need to teach swimming. I need to teach my children that it is necessary to go back to the

past, to recognise suffering, to recognise that mind-altering substances make up part of our history; that God gave them to us so that we can support the condition of suffering that is a result of being human men and women. We need to teach our children how to swim. With mind-altering substances, we need to tell our children very early on about the dangers of these substances, the risks involved, the implications, the necessities, when and when not to use them, when to get involved and when not to get involved.

To conclude: I think that Brazil is going through an ethical-moral crisis, that I believe is without precedent. The values that created and sustain human cohabitation are dissolving; families lost the possibility of defining the banks of the river and sons become lakes without a future. Technology offers us opportunities not even thought of by Jules Verne. The Internet frees us as well as it ties us. Child pornography is thriving in this ultra-modern mean of communication; violence pitches us against true barbarism. It won't be because we buy guns and cars that our law and order will be restored; a long work of training and value adding of police men and women will be necessary. More than this, we need to restore the meaning of Law. The respect of the law that organizes us is what allows us to emerge from the chaos.

We must warn our children of the things that hurt our body and soul. To review our own beliefs and to be a reference point. Maybe this is the crucial point: we, the parents, police officers, teachers, doctors, law enforcers, religious people, just to name a few, maybe we all forgot, or don't anymore, which legacy to leave to our sons and daughters. If that's the case, then it is us who need to learn to swim again.