

An intuitionist's response to the question "Should cannabis be legalised?"

The case for the legalisation of the drug cannabis has been raised by a newspaper article arguing for and against downgrading cannabis from class B to class C. Alice Thompson puts forward a convincing argument for the drug to stay in class B, since she argues that the risks of schizophrenia and other mental illnesses is too high. "Sue Arnold, the journalist who spearheaded the campaign to legalise cannabis in the 1990's changed her mind when her son, a cannabis smoker, became psychotic." Comparing the actions of other countries in their attempt to reduce cannabis use, Thompson argues "Holland believes it lost a generation when they relaxed their cannabis laws 26 years ago." Sweden toughened its lie towards cannabis, and drug deaths have dropped for the first time since 1990."

On the other side of the argument, Stephen Robinson argues "Drug laws are intolerant, illiberal, and impossible to police. We have a crisis." His view of the government's narrow-mindedness is met in his part of the article. Robinson does not take into account the biological problems as far as Thompson does, and his weaknesses also fall in the way his article is written – in the first person. Thompson has argued in seemingly a much less biased way, from a logical informed point of view. Robinson however takes the standpoint of arguing from personal experience. "Smoking pot was on of the ways in which teenagers of MY generation repaid their parents. ...School fees." The positive uses of cannabis have been described as mood lift, relaxation, stress reduction, creative, philosophical or deep thinking, increased awareness of senses; (eating, drinking, smell), change in experience of muscle fatigue, pleasant body feel, increase in body/mind connection. Also, pain relief (headaches, cramps), reduced nausea, and increased appetite (used medically for this).

From my viewpoint as an intuitionist, I would argue that cannabis should not be legalised, because my intrinsic belief is that drugs are wrong. This is due to three main points, firstly my conscience; my experiences tell me that taking drugs is wrong; it carries punishment and has ill effects on health. The second point it because of society. I have been bought up in a society and community which does not promote drug use; furthermore it actively discourages use of drugs.

Thirdly, my belief in God and the Christian Church leads me to understand that drugs are wrong and to taking drugs has bad consequences. Natural Law believers also take into account the view that drugs harm the body, thus are not helpful to the view of promoting all human life. Also if we take into consideration the medical usage of cannabis, other medical solutions for all of the conditions described have been found. However the side effects of cannabis can be found in the column from Alice Thompson. Yale

Medical School, after an extensive study, showed that

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) the active ingredient in cannabis, could produce a psychotic reaction.” Thus making cannabis a much more dangerous drug to use for medicinal purposes.

Basic moral principles are self – evident, meaning obvious to you. Intuitionism promotes the view that we know what is right and wrong because of our intrinsic feeling, not because of logic. Discussing Sidgwick's three principles, we can find out whether drug taking is right or wrong. Firstly he states the principle of prudence, i.e. immediate pleasures should be deferred in favour of greater pleasures to come. In the case of cannabis, we need to consider the reasons people use it. Primarily it is for pleasure, so the immediate hit you gain from taking cannabis will be deferred in favour of more money, better health and possibly a longer life. It is also sometimes used to reduce stress, enhance good feelings (and reduce bad ones) and also to relax. However, these latter ‘positive points’ can also be gained through other activities, e.g. exercising or socialising without the use of cannabis.

The principle of justice, the second principle, is based on universifiability. This means we should treat other people as we would like to be treated. In relation to cannabis use, some people would want their wishes to be respected and to allow cannabis use when people are able to make an informed knowledgeable choice. If this were the case, cannabis users should be educated in an unbiased way and would intuitively know what is the right or wrong decision to make. In my opinion it would be that the use of drugs is wrong. The final third principle, that of benevolence investigates the statement that ‘you are as important as me’ (selfless actions are better than hedonistic actions). This principle leads to the logic vs. gut feeling argument. The logical argument against the use of cannabis in relation to natural law can take two courses, firstly would be to explain that harming the body is wrong, cannabis has been proven to harm the body especially the mind, and therefore cannabis is wrong. The second argument would be to consider the legality of cannabis. Breaking the law is wrong, using cannabis is breaking the law, and therefore using cannabis is wrong.

Even for non-Christians, a gut feeling guides their decisions, from experience in society, and from their own conscience. For believers, God is speaking to them through their conscience, it is God's voice within their mind. So for either Christians or non-Christians, we can find that intuitively, we know cannabis use is wrong, especially when we relate this to legal, and moral laws.

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