

**Opposing the Evolving Threat of Secondhand Smoke**  
**Diversions in History / althist.xyz**  
**2015**

Tobacco has been a nightmare for mankind, leaving millions dead and countless cases of disfiguring, incurable disease and hopeless addiction. But finally, after having free reign for so many years, tobacco seems to be moving toward its demise, with tremendous progress having been made toward reducing its position in human culture. At the same time, however, this has triggered a continuing backlash from not only the tobacco industry but also some of its customers, who claim to be persecuted and marginalized, and in then railing against smoking bans, they express so much concern for their own supposed rights that they disregard the rights of everyone else.

The dire health risks of secondhand smoke, the tobacco smoke users discharge into their surroundings, are a fact, and chiefly for that reason, but for many others as well, smoking bans are absolutely justified, while arguments to the contrary are vacuous and deceitful. The most important thing regarding the whole issue is protecting everyone else from smokers' "freedom of choice."

Another part of the backlash entails tobacco turning up in new forms or in spirit, such as through the recent trend of electronic cigarettes and the push toward marijuana legalization, both posing new risks of secondhand exposure to nonusers and to some extent even threatening society at large. In the end, regardless of the specific substance or the means of ingesting it, no one has the right to inflict his poor choices on anyone else, while individuals and society have the right to protect themselves from those who do so anyway. Moreover, people need to take a more critical and circumspect view of smoking and of drug use in general and the full impact of these things in order for society to truly move forward on the issue.

**The Universal Legitimacy of Smoking Bans**

Anyone who denies that secondhand smoke presents a great danger to health denies reality, and one can debate whether it is harmful with as much credibility as whether the earth is round. It would be a waste to lay out the case here, and the issue of secondhand smoke and smoking bans should not have to be defended at all at this point, considering the long-established worldwide

medical consensus and ever-growing mountains of peer-reviewed scientific studies (enter “secondhand smoke” into Google Scholar, and see how many papers claiming it is harmless come up in the results) showing that secondhand smoke has many devastating effects, like lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, asthma, pneumonia, and sudden infant death syndrome<sup>1</sup>. The World Health Organization, American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, U.S. Surgeon General, Centers for Disease Control, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) all agree about the danger, just to give a few examples. Also consider the 168 nations—more than any other treaty in the history of the United Nations—that signed the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which unremittingly acknowledges the dangers of secondhand smoke and requires signatories to address the issue.<sup>2</sup>

Even if all the evidence and consensus regarding secondhand smoke’s dangers were absent, the potential risk would still be obvious, and it would really have been strange if secondhand smoke had turned out to be harmless. Consider, for instance, what happens over time to a computer running in an environment with tobacco smoke. The inside gets coated with a sticky paste of tobacco tar and dust, which can instigate corrosion in the electronics and ruin them or gum up the fans to the point they no longer function. Clinging in every groove, the paste is almost impossible to fully remove without causing more damage. If secondhand smoke, “harmless” as it is, merely “an irritant,” something that just “dissipates away,” can destroy the insides of a machine, what does it do to the insides of living people?

Common sense makes it clear that breathing smoke is unhealthy. Look how people cough, how their eyes tear, when they are exposed to it; the body is reacting to the damage being caused. Look at the function of the lung, to oxygenate the blood and excrete carbon dioxide, a function smoke is obviously not conducive to. With the higher concentrations resulting from a fire, people are quickly and directly killed by smoke inhalation, so nobody should expect milder or long-term smoke exposure to somehow be benign. Almost no one tries to argue that smoking does not cause harm to smokers, and if tobacco smoke is harmful to them, it is perfectly logical that it could harm other people who breathe it. One stale counterargument to this point is that secondhand smoke is more dilute, yet look at how it can visibly hang in the air, how irritating it can be, and how strong the smell is. Obviously, in an indoor setting at least, the smoke is not nearly dilute enough. In fact, it has turned out to be such a potent poison that exposure to the air in a room where smoking had taken place even several days earlier,

---

1 “Secondhand Smoke.” American Cancer Society. Web. 27 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancercauses/tobaccocancer/secondhand-smoke>>.

2 “Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.” World Health Organization, 15 June 2005. Web. 08 July 2008.  
<[http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/WHO\\_FCTC\\_english.pdf](http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/WHO_FCTC_english.pdf)>. pp. v-vi, 1

contact with the residue of tobacco smoke on a surface, or even being around someone who *had* been smoking is damaging to one's health, hazards referred to as third-hand smoke<sup>3</sup>. No amount of exposure to tobacco smoke, in fact, has been shown to be safe, and at any concentration, it is harmful; even without regular exposure, it can cause damage that may lead to cancer<sup>4</sup>.

Secondhand smoke should not have needed to be proven harmful in the first place anyway. Instead of making everyone else meticulously demonstrate its ill effects and then, over decades, go through the grinding legal processes of forcing smokers outside, people who wanted to use tobacco in public places should have been the ones to bear the burden of proof, and it should have been on them to show that their activities were harmless to everyone else. Yet now some of them have the nerve to tell us that all that has been learned about the dangers is a fiction while, in the United States alone, 42,000 nonsmokers die per year because of secondhand smoke exposure<sup>5</sup>. While it is one thing to destroy oneself, this figure is made all the more appalling in that those deaths result from the activities of people other than the victims.

Even shifting the focus from all the disease it causes, however, smoking still should not occur in public places, one reason being basic etiquette. People should not have to deal with the pointless nuisance of having a swirling haze choke a room, to have it in their faces and in their eyes. Secondhand smoke irritates many people, burning the eyes and throat, causing headaches and other unpleasant symptoms, so any smoker with the slightest regard for others should want to keep it away. Few would think of being so rude as to walk into a restaurant with a radio blasting or to take off their shoes at the table. But at least, unlike secondhand smoke, those things would not actually hurt anyone. The air is common property, and no one has the right to needlessly contaminate it, especially to the detriment and discomfort of others.

And why would smokers themselves even want to have to be around tobacco smoke all the time? Imagine if everywhere you went smelled of flowers, to the point that you could hardly escape their fragrance. Or imagine if at the end of every day, you were made to come home with your clothes and hair reeking of chocolate or fresh-baked pie. However pleasant they may seem initially, you would probably start to hate those things before long. Why has the stench of tobacco smoke somehow been an exception?

---

3 Ballantyne, Coco. "What Is Third-hand Smoke? Is It Hazardous?" *Scientific American.*, 6 Jan. 2009. Web. 2 June 2014. <<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-is-third-hand-smoke/>>.

4 American Cancer Society

5 Fernandez, Elizabeth. "Secondhand Smoke Takes Large Physical and Economic Toll." University of California, San Francisco News Center, 20 Sept. 2012. Web. 24 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2012/09/12759/secondhand-smoke-takes-large-physical-and-economic-toll>>.

Another critical reason for smoking bans is fire safety. Directly and indirectly, in many parts of the world, the majority of fires is caused by smoking, and wherever relevant data is available, it has also been found to cause the majority of household fires, or fires in general, that lead to fatalities<sup>6</sup>. Even if secondhand smoke were totally harmless, is it a good idea to have open flames and burning material scattered through masses of random people in public places? For one thing, look at how smokers tend just to throw burning cigarettes on the ground when finished. Do you trust them, hundreds of millions of individuals, to all be careful and to dispose of smoking materials safely? The 27 victims of the King's Cross subway fire in London in the late 1980s probably would not if they were still alive, the fire most likely caused by a smoker's spent match, struck in defiance of a smoking ban<sup>7</sup>. Everyone remembers sealed exits and a lack of adequate fire escapes as the predominant causes for the 146 deaths in the famous Triangle Shirtwaist fire in New York, but a cigarette caused the fire in the first place. One also ignited over 600 square miles of Yellowstone National Park in 1988, and smoking probably touched off the ammonium nitrate explosion that all but obliterated Texas City in 1947.<sup>8</sup> Toward the end of its being permitted in such settings, smoking also played a role in every hospital fire in the state of Texas that resulted in a patient being injured or killed and many hospital fires there in general<sup>9</sup>. All these disasters were completely pointless and preventable, fundamentally the result of a bad habit being needlessly tolerated.

Nobody really thinks about it, but public smoking may be as great a hazard to smokers as to nonsmokers. Most obviously, smokers are no more immune to being killed or injured in a fire than nonsmokers. In addition, however, it seems likely that secondhand smoke places the health of smokers at further risk than that caused by their smoking alone. This effect would be most pronounced on a light, occasional smoker who is constantly in a smoky environment. Such a person is exposed to significantly more smoke than he would be from his own habit alone. Similarly, people who smoke in their homes, offices, or cars are exposed to tobacco smoke almost constantly, while they are smoking and also in between as they re-breathe the smoke in the air. Smokers also must be exposed to third-hand smoke more than anyone. Even considering a heavy, regular smoker, being around other people's tobacco smoke and his own tobacco residue is still just that much more exposure. It would be difficult to demonstrate the effects of this experimentally, since separating the exposure from smoking and that from passive smoking would be problematic, but the threat is at least plausible. The main difference

---

6 Leistikow, Bruce N., Daniel C. Martin, and Christina A. Milano. *Preventive Medicine* 31 (2000): 91-99. University of California, Davis, 30 July 2000. Web. 29 June 2008. <<http://leistikow.ucdavis.edu/SmokingFires.pdf>>. p. 91

7 "1987: King's Cross Station Fire 'kills 27'" *On This Day*. BBC, 2008. Web. 17 July 2013. <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/18/newsid\\_2519000/2519675.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/18/newsid_2519000/2519675.stm)>.

8 Leistikow et al. p. 94

9 *Ibid.* p. 93

between smokers and nonsmokers as regards secondhand smoke may simply be that nonsmokers, not nearly as used to tobacco smoke, are just more likely to notice and be irritated by it.

As for the idiotic idea that the threat of secondhand smoke is just some kind of myth or grand conspiracy, as some detractors desperately assert, such an elaborate, long-term, worldwide scheme involving innumerable governments, doctors, scientists, and organizations is obviously completely infeasible. Secondhand smoke is so clearly harmful that there is no room to legitimately wonder if the threat is real. Again, this has been proven over and over and is plain common sense anyway. The real conspiracy, in fact, was pulled off by the tobacco companies. It is well-documented that they conspired for decades to cover up the damage caused by smoking and secondhand smoke and subverted attempts to ameliorate it, drawing out the harm everyone had to endure, not to mention the death toll, in order to protect their profits. Judge Gladys Kessler's final opinion in *United States vs. Philip Morris USA, Inc., et al.*, which resulted in a massive ruling against the country's major tobacco companies, outlines and examines many of the industry's atrocities, some highlights of which are given below. Kessler writes

*Cigarette smoking causes disease, suffering, and death. Despite internal recognition of this fact, Defendants have publicly denied, distorted, and minimized the hazards of smoking for decades. The scientific and medical community's knowledge of the relationship of smoking and disease evolved through the 1950s and achieved consensus in 1964. However, even after 1964, Defendants continued to deny both the existence of such consensus and the overwhelming evidence on which it was based.*

Even worse, however,

*...each Defendant also understood that its market position, as well as the financial viability of the tobacco industry as a whole, required the development of cigarettes that provide nicotine in amounts sufficient to ensure that smokers become and remain addicted. Accordingly, each Defendant took steps, over a sustained period of time, to develop such cigarettes.*

Concerning secondhand smoke, the judge later writes that the

*Defendants' initiatives and public statements with respect to passive smoking [being exposed to secondhand smoke] attempted to deceive the public, distort the scientific record, avoid adverse findings by government agencies, and forestall indoor air restrictions.*

And regarding the harm secondhand smoke causes,

*Defendants recognized that secondhand smoke contained high concentrations of carcinogens and other harmful agents. Defendants also recognized that the research from the public health community showing that ETS [environmental tobacco smoke, another term for secondhand smoke] caused disease was persuasive evidence of the harmful effects of secondhand smoke*

and could be adverse to their position. Most importantly, research funded by Defendants themselves provided evidence confirming the public health authorities' warnings that nonsmokers exposure to cigarette smoke was a health hazard.

*Philip Morris had recognized long before the 1980s that sidestream smoke [smoke entering the air directly from burning tobacco, as opposed to being exhaled] contained known carcinogens. In 1961, scientist Helmut Wakeham [a ranking employee of the company] presented a paper to the Research & Development Committee cataloguing known gas and particulate chemicals in cigarette smoke, including those that Wakeham acknowledged had been identified as carcinogens. According to Wakeham's analysis, 84% of cigarette smoke was sidestream smoke.*<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, it would seem likely that, tobacco being its product, the industry would know better and sooner than almost anyone how dangerous it was.

The tobacco companies' conspiracy to keep smoking going strong was perhaps one of the worst crimes ever, considering especially that about 100 million died because of tobacco use just in the second half of the 20th century<sup>11</sup> and how tobacco is set to kill a billion more by the end of this century<sup>12</sup>. How many people did Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot kill? While the comparison sounds sensationalistic, it is reasonable, owing not just to the scale of the death toll but to the premeditation of that horror. Industry leaders knew full well how deadly their product was, yet, at the same time they actively worked to make it more addicting, they engaged in a cover-up and misinformation campaign that ensured tobacco use would remain prevalent, become more so, ultimately have a long and lingering decline, and that many more people would die as a result, users and nonusers alike. That must at least approach the level of a crime against humanity.

And yet the tobacco companies are still battling away in the courts against the tide of history, like to resist the graphic warning labels for cigarette packs supposed to take effect in the United States as part of the *Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act*, alleging in part that the labels infringe upon their freedom of speech<sup>13</sup>. But what kind of nerve does it take to produce a product that kills so many people, and after having conspired for decades to cover up its ill effects, and having been

---

10 United States of America vs. Philip Morris USA, Inc., Et Al. Final Opinion. United States District Court for the District of Columbia. 17 Aug. 2006. University of California, San Francisco Library, 17 Aug. 2006. Web. 2 July 2008. <[http://www.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/litigation/usvpm/FinalOpinion\\_full\\_version.pdf](http://www.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/litigation/usvpm/FinalOpinion_full_version.pdf)>. pp. 219, 561, 1211, 1239.

11 "Smokers 'will Die 10 Years Early'" BBC, 22 June 2014. Web. 19 May 2013. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/health/3826127.stm>>.

12 "Smoking Could Kill One Billion: WHO." *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 07 July 2007. Web. 22 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.smh.com.au/news/World/Smoking-could-kill-one-billion-WHO/2007/07/03/1183351175184.html>>.

13 "Tobacco Companies Sue FDA over Graphic Labels." CBS, 16 Aug. 2011. Web. 26 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/tobacco-companies-sue-fda-over-graphic-labels/>>.

exposed in that atrocity, to then sue the government for imposing more prominent warning labels? Moreover, considering the lethality of tobacco, is it not simply fitting that the labels be striking? Millions are dead, a billion are likely going to die, and society is even entertaining the idea that forcing tobacco companies to put warning labels on their products might violate freedom of speech? How do these companies still have any rights after all the harm they have caused, helped cause, and continue to cause, and how can a corporation—a fabricated entity, not a human being, not having a will, emotions, desires, or an ability to suffer—even be claimed to have rights in any sense? The tobacco companies' assertion is blatant sophistry anyway; they do not give a damn about freedom of speech or any other right except insofar as it affects their profits. This is so obvious that it must simply be out of the desperation of their death throws that the tobacco companies insult everyone's intelligence by pretending otherwise. It is staggering that they are even allowed to exist and that their leaders are walking around free, rather than rotting in prison.

Regarding the industry's biggest allies, the various pro-smoker groups, they, at least in large part, are actually just a front for the industry, and it likewise contrived the concept of "smoker's rights." What a surprise. After the sleaze of the tobacco industry finally destroyed its reputation, it needed a more indirect way to push its agenda and to avert further restrictions being placed against it. Under various pretenses, like general opposition to government regulation, it surreptitiously created satellite groups to work both subtly and overtly toward this end, paid unrelated groups to further the tobacco agenda, and funded other existing groups that had favorable ideologies to fight against smoking bans.<sup>14</sup> Basically, people holding to views that matched tobacco-company interests were suckered in, made, in essence, to work toward helping it make more money for itself. There are people in sex slavery and people starving to death. The whole world is jeopardized by things like nuclear weapons, terrorism, and global warming. So how petty does one have to be, how empty of a life must one lead, to make it one's cause to further the ability of people to smoke where they please?

Tobacco just is not harmful in the same way most other things in life can be. It is intrinsically destructive; its normal, intended use directly kills a large proportion of users, not to mention non-users. Compare this to another dangerous activity: driving. In theory, if cars were always engineered and maintained properly and everyone followed all the rules of the road, there would be no car accidents or at least they would be a very freak occurrence. With this, it can be said that driving is not intrinsically harmful but that it is made that way by poor application. Conversely, no matter how it were treated,

---

14 Apollonio, Dorie E., and Lisa A. Bero. "The Creation of Industry Front Groups: The Tobacco Industry and 'Get Government Off Our Back'" *American Journal of Public Health* 93.3 (2007): 419-27. *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. 13 Feb. 2007. Web. 2 June 2014. <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1805008/pdf/0970419.pdf>>.

there is nothing that could be done to have a decisive impact on tobacco's atrocious effects except to phase it out. To make smoking harmless would be like trying to make bullets harmless, and "safe" cigarettes are just as easy to conceive of as clean dirt or soft concrete. If all the harmful components of tobacco smoke were filtered out, there would be nothing left. Also consider sugars, which, in reasonable amounts, are necessary for life, and yet eating a lot of sugary junk food can cause obesity, diabetes, and other potentially-fatal diseases, though at least people who eat too much sugar are the only ones so affected. Tobacco use, on the other hand, is not like this either, since it has no appreciable positive health effect at any amount.

Well, people do not have to buy tobacco. While this may technically be true, it is not so cut and dry. First of all, millions of people are addicted to nicotine, and once addicted to a substance, choice does not play as much of a role regarding it. Of course, people do quit, but not everyone was provided by nature with the same strength of will, and so not everyone can succeed at this. Still, to get addicted in the first place, people have to start using a drug, and probably in the majority of cases, that was their own fault. However, there can be extenuating circumstances, like the tobacco industry's cover up and deception, which tricked countless people into tobacco use. The majority of tobacco users also started when they were very young and perhaps not able to understand what they were getting into. The other issue is almost everyone is affected by tobacco use even if they are not actually users. It is basically impossible to avoid exposure to secondhand smoke altogether unless you seal yourself away; we are all being poisoned from every direction. So how does choice realistically play into the issue for nonsmokers? Then there are children who live with smokers and the unborn babies of pregnant smokers, who really do have no choice but to be exposed to the poison (again, there is the effect of addiction; with all that is known, no parents in their right minds would jeopardize their own offspring like that). In the end, the tobacco companies are the ones producing, distributing, promoting, and profiting from tobacco, so even if people could always choose whether they would have anything to do with it, how do the companies have no responsibility at all in the matter? It is *their* product. One can imagine morally-conflicted drug dealers easing their consciences by denying responsibility in the same way as the tobacco industry and its supporters.

In light of the facts being so stacked against them, and being so bankrupt of facts themselves, not to mention morally bankrupt, tobacco's supporters have to find all kinds of non-fact-based ways to prop up their position, resorting to the sorts of tactics one would expect from corrupt business interests and addiction-addled brains. One example, while perhaps not overtly denying that smoking or secondhand smoke are harmful, is to try to minimize their effects, like by using somebody who supposedly did fine in spite of smoking as evidence. A person might say something like "My



grandfather smoked, and he lived to be 100” or “My mother smoked like a chimney when she was pregnant, but I turned out okay.” It is just convenient for people to take this attitude because then they do not have to do anything to improve their lifestyles or otherwise face the facts. First of all, note that babies who were miscarried, stillborn, or died shortly after birth are not similarly able to speak up, and people whose grandfathers died horrifically of emphysema or lung cancer are not likely to use them as evidence in favor of smoking, so we get kind of a skewed picture. Yet that is their evidence that smoking is not so bad, and never mind decades of methodical, scientific studies, all of which point to the harmful effects. Individual cases often do not mean anything regarding medical questions. Some people more or less get away with a lifetime of smoking, but others drop dead just from being passively exposed. That is why studies look at large groups. Things can vary from individual to individual, but the overall trend is what reveals what is actually going on, what is *most likely* to happen to an individual, like as a result of smoking.

There are no guarantees in life, but there are actions individuals can take to skew the odds more in their favor. A person might never smoke but still die of lung cancer, and when a particular smoker gets lung cancer, there is technically no way to know for sure that smoking was the cause. The person may have been strongly genetically predisposed and have gotten cancer anyway or have been exposed to some other toxin which actually precipitated it. We cannot rewind the clock, take the smoking away, and see what happens. But at the same time, considering the link that has been established between tobacco use and cancer, it would be very deceptive to claim tobacco had nothing to do with a particular smoker’s lung cancer either. The best anyone can do is act according to what is probable in the larger scheme of things, such as avoid smoking to lower the risk of cancer.

As people can claim their grandfather’s apparent immunity to the effects of tobacco is evidence tobacco is not so bad, I can just as easily point out that not everyone who gets shot dies and on that basis conclude that getting shot is not that harmful. I can go further and find a case of someone who was shot many times and still made a full recovery and then sneer that if getting shot is so bad, why did that person not die? To give a more firsthand example, I have been in several car accidents over the years but was never injured, so car accidents must therefore not be dangerous. All this stuff about people getting killed on the road must be made up, a hoax to sell more safety features in cars, a conspiracy to give the government an excuse to assert itself more in auto safety. It is all exactly the same half-baked logic.

The only reason the previous illustrations seem so ridiculous while similar claims around smoking are generally not openly mocked is that there is no cultural bias clouding the fact that getting shot or having a car accident is harmful. Likewise, no one who grew up in a house full of asbestos and

lead paint and did not get sick from it really argues that asbestos and lead paint are harmless. Nobody had any objection to asbestos and lead paint being banned either, except the companies that produced them. The reason is people do not have an attachment to the insulation on their boilers or the flaking finish on their window trim like they do to tobacco. When one strips away the bias, however, what smoking is becomes obvious.

Taking their rationalizing in another direction, rather than trying to downplay the effects of smoking, apologists also question the sense in doing anything about it, making the throw-up-your-hands kind of statement that “You gotta die of something.” This is not even an argument, just a cowardly capitulation to fate. One might as well say the same thing against wearing a seatbelt, exercising, having elevators inspected, or keeping operating rooms sterile. Sure, everybody dies in the end, but it should happen peacefully, in extreme old age and after having enjoyed a lifetime of good health, rather than slowly and agonizingly of cancer in middle age.

Another way people disingenuously try to minimize the tobacco issue is to say secondhand smoke is just an annoyance, like loud music or any bad smell, another thing people have to deal with as just an inevitable aspect of living in society. But as they like to ignore, it is more than an annoyance but a significant hazard. Tobacco smoke severely irritates, damages, and kills a lot of people, so the comparison makes no sense. Even if it really were just annoying, not really damaging, again, why should everyone else have their eyes tear, noses burn, and be short of breath so some idiot can smoke? I do not like the smell of coffee, but I do not think drinking it should be banned indoors. That is because it is just mildly annoying to me, not harmful or corrosive, unlike secondhand smoke.

The issue is also often minimized by making illegitimate comparisons between it and other health hazards. One tactic in this regard is to try to bring it down to the level of lesser hazards, like by saying something like “Maybe secondhand smoke isn’t good, but look at all the fatty food people eat.” However, an important distinction to make is that eating junk food is simply an abuse of a natural and essential activity, of something the body is meant to do anyway, eat, while deliberately breathing smoke has no natural analog, goes totally against the design of the body. Most of what we call junk food has at least some nutritional value too. Ice cream, for instance, while certainly not healthy, has protein, calcium, vitamin D, etc. What is the positive side for one’s health regarding smoking? Furthermore, tobacco is orders of magnitude above junk food in unhealthiness. Comparing the two is like comparing letter openers to shotguns. Saying that eating junk food is unhealthy along the same lines as smoking is like saying smoking is as unhealthy as shooting oneself. It has been shown, for example, that the weight gain that sometimes results from quitting smoking has much less effect on health than smoking does and generally no effect on mortality, even though, in some cases, the weight gain may be more

than one would expect<sup>15</sup>. Additionally, if I kill myself by eating potato chips all the time, that is my problem. No one is getting any secondhand fat or passive cholesterol. Of course, junk food can result in very serious health problems, obesity is a major health issue, and there is plenty of sleaze in the food industry too. These issues also need to be addressed, but none of it has anything to do with whether action should be taken on the issue of smoking.

As for statements like “People whine about secondhand smoke, but look at all the car exhaust they’re breathing outside,” other forms of pollution, like car exhaust, pose a health threat and should be reduced and hopefully someday eliminated, but again, this has nothing to do with secondhand smoke. The latter is primarily a matter of indoor air quality, where the smoke is concentrated and lingers, and no one is running cars inside restaurants and such. Even outdoors, however, any tobacco smoke drifting around tends to smell much stronger and be more irritating even than the exhaust of passing cars, which makes one wonder which is really worse at typical concentrations.

To say that because one form of pollution exists, like car exhaust, we should not eliminate other forms of pollution, like secondhand smoke, that it is either all or nothing, is ridiculous. Having it readily within our grasp to eliminate one is not nullified by others that are more deeply entrenched. The existence of one does not preclude addressing any of the others. We would never make progress in improving the environment, or in anything else for that matter, with such a mentality; every attempt to reduce emissions or to clean-up pollutants would be thwarted by the existence of pollution elsewhere or in other forms. Anyway, it would be just as legitimate to flip things around and say that because there is secondhand smoke, we should not worry about vehicle emissions, that we should do away with emissions tests, bring back leaded gasoline, and so on. The logic is exactly the same.

There are many problems in the world. If one is going to hold to the reasoning that because related problem Y exists, we should ignore problem X, why not say that we should stop bothering about rapists because there are murderers on the loose? Or why bother wearing a seatbelt in the car when one could fall down the stairs at home? It is a crippling way to look at life; everything becomes pointless. And if smoking is not serious enough an issue to address, why are the apologists for smoking bothering with it? They should not care if smoking is banned in public places or not.

Tobacco itself is a major source of pollution anyway. Every year, more than six trillion cigarettes are burned<sup>16</sup> and release the poison they contain into the atmosphere. Add cigars and pipes, all the cigarette butts that are littered, and the fossil fuels and other resources consumed in raising, processing, and transporting tobacco, and we have an environmental nightmare.

---

15 Sifferlin, Alexandra. “How Much Weight Will You Gain After You Quit Smoking?” *Time*. 11 July 2012. Web. 24 Mar. 2015. <<http://healthland.time.com/2012/07/11/how-much-weight-will-you-gain-after-quitting-smoking/>>.

16 Leistikow et al. p. 92

Another environmental effect of tobacco is the unnecessary loss of forest, cleared to make room to grow it and to provide the seven and a half million tons of wood needed every year as fuel to cure it, the worldwide loss due to tobacco production adding up to nearly half a million acres per year<sup>17</sup>. In a perverse cycle, moreover, the measures taken to increase the nicotine content of tobacco plants, as a way to keep people addicted as mentioned earlier, are more draining of the soil's nutrients and may thus require that fresh land constantly be cleared<sup>18</sup>.

Thanks to tobacco, large swaths of one of the earth's most valuable resources, its farmland, goes to waste at the expense of millions dead from hunger. About two billion acres of the world's arable land are used to grow tobacco<sup>19</sup> when this land could potentially be producing crops like peanuts, soybeans, corn, wheat, sweet potatoes, and cucumbers instead<sup>20</sup>. If the land tied up in tobacco production were in fact used to produce food, theoretically, more than a fifth<sup>21</sup> of the 1.02 billion people suffering from hunger in the world<sup>22</sup> could be fed. Instead of 6 million dying from tobacco use<sup>23</sup>, perhaps 36 million<sup>24</sup> would avoid dying of starvation every year. And to compare tobacco to cotton, which also grows under similar conditions, the land wasted on tobacco cultivation could clothe the whole world many times over<sup>25</sup>. Where is the benefit of tobacco to weigh against all this? Of course, one could debate, for instance, how much food a particular alternative crop would yield when replacing tobacco or whether it would grow as well in a particular area where tobacco does, but certainly there is nowhere on Earth that

---

17 Geist pp. 18-20

18 *Ibid.* p. 19

19 .6 percent of arable was being used for tobacco cultivation as of 1999 (Geist, Helmut J. "Global Assessment of Deforestation Related to Tobacco Farming." *Tobacco Control* 8 (1999): 18-28. BMJ, 7 May 1999. Web. 31 May 2014. <<http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/8/1/18.full.pdf+html?sid=8d4b029a-9d70-4aa5-a57f-88ae0f52d0bc>>. p. 20), and there were 1,383,920,800 ha total arable land in the world the same year (FAOSTAT. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Web. 26 Mar. 2015. <<http://faostat.fao.org/site/377/DesktopDefault.aspx?PageID=377#ancor>>.), which means 83,035,248 ha, or 205,184,566 acres, were devoted to tobacco.

20 North Carolina, for instance, is a large producer of tobacco yet also produces these crops in significant amounts according to "Agricultural Overview - Commodities." North Carolina Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 27 July 2007. Web. 31 May 2014. <<http://www.ncagr.gov/stats/general/commodities.htm>>.

21 considering that one acre could feed one person per year (Bradford, Jason. "One Acre Feeds a Person." Farmland LP, 13 Jan. 2012. Web. 31 May 2014. <<http://www.farmlandlp.com/2012/01/one-acre-feeds-a-person/>>.) and multiplying that by the number of acres of tobacco

22 "Number Of World's Hungry Tops A Billion." United Nations World Food Programme, 19 June 2009. Web. 31 May 2014. <<http://www.wfp.org/stories/number-world-hungry-tops-billion>>.

23 "Tobacco Use Kills 6 Million People Annually: Report." U.S. News & World Report, 25 Aug. 2009. Web. 31 May 2014. <<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/heart/articles/2009/08/25/tobacco-use-kills-6-million-people-annually-report>>.

24 "How Many People Die From Hunger Each Year?" *The World Counts*. Web. 31 May 2015. <[http://www.theworldcounts.com/counters/global\\_hunger\\_statistics/how\\_many\\_people\\_die\\_from\\_hunger\\_each\\_year](http://www.theworldcounts.com/counters/global_hunger_statistics/how_many_people_die_from_hunger_each_year)>.

25 One acre produces about 1.73 bales of cotton—9,800,000 million acres cultivated in the U.S. yielded 17 million bales of cotton on average ("Frequently Asked Questions." National Cotton Council of America, Oct. 2013. Web. <<http://www.cotton.org/edu/faq/>>)—so if the area used for tobacco were instead used to grow cotton, it would yield about 355,932,410 bales, which, figuring 215 pairs of jeans and 1,217 shirts per bale ("The Cotton Story." Cotton Acres, 2014. Web. 31 May 2015. <<http://www.cottonacres.com/cotton.html>>.), could be used to produce almost 77 billion pairs of jeans or over 433 billion t-shirts.

the only plant that could possibly be grown is tobacco. There is admittedly significant potential for variability in the estimates above, but they still give a sense of the scale of wasted lives and resources tobacco represents, not even taking into account the effects of tobacco on both smokers and nonsmokers. The issue is that society values drugs so much more than essentials for survival and a decent life, like food and clothing. For example, farmers, growing tobacco, can make more than three times what they would have growing cotton or almost ten times what they would have made growing peanuts<sup>26</sup>.

Another of the tactics the opponents of smoking bans employ, to altogether avoid the question of the harm secondhand smoke does, is to twist the issue around and try to conflate it with civil rights. As already mentioned, the whole idea of smoker's rights was largely fabricated by the tobacco industry to further its business interests. Nevertheless, some smokers try to paint themselves as a persecuted minority, as if they were a marginalized ethnic or religious group, though all that distinguishes them from the mainstream is their enjoyment of breathing smoke. On that note, it should be pointed out how tasteless it is to suggest that not being allowed to smoke in a restaurant is as much an affront as a black person being refused service there. The only restriction on smokers is they cannot smoke in certain places. They still have full access to any place a nonsmoker does, they just cannot smoke there, as their smoking would cause harm to other people who have a right to be there too! Does not allowing a ballerina to dance in the middle of a freeway mean society is persecuting ballerinas? Would objecting to the launching of fireworks inside a crowded shopping mall be a violation of pyrotechnician's rights? Do smokers define themselves so much by their smoking that they cannot conceive of themselves doing any activity without it? If they need it so bad that they have to do it in the park or when they go out to dinner, they should recognize something is wrong.

One can make a better case for public urination than for smokers rights: pissers' rights. After all, what gives the urine-Nazis the right to tell people where they can relieve themselves? Animals urinate all over the place anyway, so why should humans have to hold it until they can find a bathroom? It is inconvenient, and when out and about, it is not always even possible to find a public bathroom when needed. And what about those who are incontinent? Should they be persecuted and discriminated against when they cannot even help when they go? Urination is a necessary, natural biological function, and literally everyone does it, unlike smoking, an activity in which less than a third of the population partakes. Finally, notwithstanding poor aim, free-peeing would pose little secondhand exposure risk, though admittedly no one would be able to wear sandals anymore. To all this, one may still object that

---

26 United States. Department of Agriculture. National Agricultural Statistics Service. *Crop Values 2014 Summary*. USDA Economics, Statistics and Market Information System, Feb. 2015. Web. 2 Apr. 2015.  
<[http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/CropValuSu/CropValuSu-02-24-2015\\_correction.pdf](http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/CropValuSu/CropValuSu-02-24-2015_correction.pdf)>. p. 8

having urine all around would spread disease. Well, so does tobacco smoke! What makes cholera and dysentery so much worse than heart attacks and cancer?

Anyone opposed to activities that spread disease should not be making allowances for smoking, but if smokers' rightists insist on selectively making health issues a concern, what about going around naked? If I feel restricted in clothes, why should everyone else's repressive morals dictate anything to me? At least my going around naked would not affect anyone's health, unless they already had a weak stomach. What it comes down to is that it is only proper rules be put in place for communal spaces to ensure they are safe, usable, and comfortable for as many people as possible, this relates to urinating, to public nudity, and to smoking. Ultimately, smokers, at least those who wantonly expose others to their habit, are the ones who do not respect people's rights and freedom of choice. What about the choice not to take in all kinds of poison? What about the right to have clean, safe air to breathe? It is impossible to weigh the minority's bad habit against guaranteeing that everyone else have one of the essentials of life unhindered, and it is completely absurd to even attempt it. The effects of the freedom of choice of smokers are by no means limited to them.

The smoker is the one affecting the air quality, not the nonsmoker. Breathing air without smoke cannot irritate or harm the smoker in any way and is in fact beneficial to him. Breathing air with smoke, however, can irritate, harm the health of, or even kill the nonsmoker. So it should be pretty obvious who should take priority. Likewise, the ones who want to smoke should be the ones inconvenienced, such as by having to go outside, since the inconvenience is the result of *their* activity. Smokers had more or less free run up to around the 1980s, and they took full advantage of it, with little to no regard for nonsmokers, so what kind of nerve does it take to act victimized now that smoking has finally and rightfully been restricted? Nonsmokers taking a corresponding attitude in the 1950s would have been laughed at, despite that their grievance would have actually been legitimate. And as victimized and marginalized as smokers claim to be, around half the nonsmoking population of the United States still suffers secondhand smoke exposure<sup>27</sup>. In spite of all the places it is restricted, there apparently still is plenty of smoking in public anyway, to get so many people exposed, as anyone walking down a busy sidewalk, for instance, will notice.

What kind of sissy does it take to complain about not being allowed to smoke here or there, about having to go outside for a few minutes? Do not smoke then, or wait for a more opportune time. Even better, how about smokers do themselves a big favor health-wise and learn how to cope without smoking altogether? Otherwise, if they insist on destroying themselves with tobacco, let them do so in their own space or where it does not harm anyone else. Let them just admit that the real reason for their

---

27 American Cancer Society

opposition to smoking bans is simply that they want to smoke unhindered.

When they take their case to the silliest extreme, the opponents of smoking bans often argue essentially that we will find ourselves in some totalitarian dystopia if people are not allowed to spew smoke where they please, that we will eventually reach that state via growing government restrictions, all the while arguing anyone in favor of smoking bans is the fearmonger by touting the actually-proven dangers of secondhand smoke, in contrast to their Orwellian delusions. There is nothing totalitarian about restricting where an activity that harms others can be performed. That is just how living in a society works.

In an attempt to stigmatize the truth, opponents of the bans also bring up that Hitler was opposed to smoking, that Nazi Germany had smoking bans, and that it ran anti-smoking campaigns, as an implicit argument against these things now. But just because an evil group does something does not in itself make that thing evil. Smoking bans are right even if the Nazis also instituted them and for the wrong reasons and even though the Nazis started a world war and tortured and murdered millions of people. The reason, very simply, is that smoking in public creates a large nuisance and hazard; that the Nazis had smoking bans is totally irrelevant. Perhaps the ban opponents who so cheaply bring up the Nazis in this context also believe that all traffic laws should be repealed because traffic laws existed under the Nazi regime. After all, telling people how they have to drive is a restriction on their freedom.

If anyone should be associated with the Nazis, it is the opponents to smoking bans, cut from the same intellectual cloth as Holocaust deniers. Both groups consist of people who take something that has been conclusively established and then dishonestly try to discredit it because it goes against their agendas and ideologies. As it is impossible to even begin to justify Nazism without disposing of the fact that the Nazis systematically murdered 12 million people, it is impossible to sell the idea that smoking should be allowed in public spaces without disposing of the fact that such would endanger nonsmokers.

The view of smoking bans as authoritarian leads one to consider the libertarian position. Such posits that private business owners have the right to run their businesses however they please, to decide for themselves if they will allow smoking or not, and that patrons in turn are able to choose which places to frequent, while employees can choose where to work. One problem is there are more important things than business owners' property rights. An example is that the employees of a business fundamentally have a right to a safe work environment, away from pointless risks like secondhand smoke, regardless of who owns what; that is part of the difference between being an employee and being a slave. Just to say something like "they don't have to work there" is simplistic. What does whether they have to work there have to do with it? What right does the employer have to subject them

to hazardous conditions regardless? What if every place had a smoke hazard, as was essentially the case before smoking bans; what option would there be for workers and consumers then? Regardless of how much autonomy business should have, an entity being privately owned does not cancel all the owner's responsibility for the safety of employees and customers.

People can use private property as an excuse for any hazard. Why make anyone put fire escapes in a building? If you are afraid of being trapped and burned to death, make sure ahead of time that every building you enter has fire escapes, and if it does not, just do not go in. Why have any regulation regarding the conditions in factories? If you are afraid of having your limbs crushed or torn off, do not work in factories. Why should hospitals be legally required to provide sterile operating rooms? If you are so germophobic, take some swabs around the facility before your surgery and make sure for yourself that it is sterile. In reality, one needs to be able to trust that things are being done properly. Daily life in a complex, modern society would be untenable if every individual had to analyze every potential hazard in everything for himself. No one could simultaneously be an expert in the design of buildings, the functioning of machinery, healthcare, and just about everything else. Why have laws at all? If you are afraid of being robbed and murdered in the street, stay home.

Private property aside, it is just an inherently bad idea to have smoking in certain places. One example is the confined, inescapable, pressurized environment of an airliner. Another is a hospital, where extreme cleanliness is essential, contaminating the air is not going to do the ill any good in their recovery, and flammable materials or ones conducive to fire like rubbing alcohol and concentrated oxygen are everywhere. What difference does it make if a particular airplane or hospital is privately or publicly owned? It is still stupid to have smoking there. As for restaurants, does it sound appetizing to have the food everyone has to eat marinating in tobacco smoke?

How would the libertarians feel if, in addition to repealing bans on smoking, such as in restaurants, all the laws regarding food safety were also repealed, so they could perhaps have their food prepared under the kind of conditions described in Upton Sinclair's famous novel The Jungle? Is selling people chemically-treated spoiled meat or dead pig with dead rat mixed in, aside from sounding more disgusting, actually more unsanitary than exposing them to secondhand smoke?

Another perspective a libertarian may take on smoking bans is that they are just not necessary. One could argue that nonsmokers would generally not choose to eat at restaurants where they would wind up breathing tobacco smoke and would instead go to ones that have banned smoking, so the ones that did not would be made to do so by economic pressure. But if that is true, why did it not happen? There was at least some concrete evidence of the dangers of secondhand smoke available for decades leading up to widespread bans, so why in that time did we not see the secondhand smoke threat



disappear on its own? Even today, millions of people still smoke, so there is certainly a niche, to put it mildly, for smoking establishments. If government smoking bans were abolished, plenty of businesses would ban smoking themselves, but plenty would not, and they would still survive. Ultimately, if leaving the choice to a business owner, what assurance would anyone have regarding issues like safety? One could take a job as a waiter in a smoke-free restaurant today and find smoking allowed tomorrow. And why should someone have to be exposed long enough even to walk out the door? In addition, the weight of the law at least provides one more deterrent. For those who do not care what other people think, one is more likely to light up in a smoke-free establishment regardless of what anyone says when there are no potential legal consequences. Even for people who do have some regard, who would voluntarily go outside, there is a tendency to get lazy. When there is no weight behind a measure against smoking, standing by the door or hanging out of it counts as going outside, while going in and out with a cigarette does not count as smoking inside, and smoking inside when no one is around does not count at all, so in spite of good intentions, the environment becomes contaminated all the same.

People simply tend not to do the right thing when there is no oversight, in business especially. The whole history of the tobacco industry is one pretty convincing example, but to look at things more broadly, businesses were basically left to their own devices until the late 19th century. Regulations were scant or nonexistent, so business owners just did whatever they could to make as much money as possible, often took no responsibility, and as a result, a lot of people were killed and maimed, a lot of boys and girls were cheated out of their childhoods, and a lot of damage was done to the environment. Business had decades and decades of little to no government intervention to get its act together on its own volition but greedily chose not to. Because of this disregard, it finally had to be forced to change its ways, the government stepping in, long overdue, to end the horror show in the factories and mines. Given their appalling track record, why would we now decide to go backwards and just leave it up to businesses how they handle smoking? How does it even make sense to give the party with an interest to do things as cheaply as possible and to take whatever other measures it believes will increase profit the power to regulate its own actions regarding things like safety?

While it is often claimed that smoking bans will cause economic harm, ironically, any business owners who want to make money should actually want to ban smoking in their establishments. While research funded by the tobacco industry, which almost never goes through peer review, attempts to further the idea that bans reduce profits, most of the scientific appraisals of the issue show no negative effects, with some even revealing economic benefits from smoking bans. It was found in one such study that when bans take effect, restaurants tend to become more profitable, and bars remain as profitable as they were before. To give a specific example, after Ireland banned smoking in bars and

restaurants, patronage of Dublin pubs increased 11%. Moreover, despite tobacco industry claims that the opposite would happen, employment in the hospitality sector has been found to grow following smoking bans, with profits increasing or remaining the same, and bans do not even seem to affect the profitability of gambling and casinos. As for individual behavior, it turns out people most often maintain their drinking and dining habits in spite of smoking bans, since, in light of them, there is generally nowhere else for smokers to go for such evening activities anyway, and when there is a change in this behavior, it is in the direction of nonsmokers going out more frequently.<sup>28</sup> This makes sense, as nonsmokers would likely rather not have to smell and breathe secondhand smoke and would thus choose smoke-free establishments over smoke-filled ones. Since nonsmokers are the majority of the population, one would also expect any economic effect to be significantly positive. The perception that smoking bans are bad for business is not upheld by the actual data; rather, it is a result of tobacco industry misinformation as well as bans being used as a scapegoat for business troubles that in fact have causes unrelated to smoking<sup>29</sup>.

The actual issue is not smoking bans hurting business. On the contrary, it is secondhand smoke that causes economic harm and on a much larger scale than anyone wrongly fears from smoking bans. In the United States, just for a single year, the lung cancer and heart disease alone that secondhand smoke induces in nonsmokers costs \$2.6 billion to treat, while the resulting economic losses add up to several billion dollars more<sup>30</sup>. Overall, tobacco causes \$500 billion in economic losses worldwide per year<sup>31</sup>, so it seems the tobacco industry itself is the only segment of the economy benefiting from tobacco use. All this makes the libertarian concerns discussed earlier something of a moot point, since banning public smoking and curtailing tobacco use in general is in almost everyone's economic interests anyway.

When the other side says that smoking bans should not be instituted owing to economic reasons, aside from their ignorance and dishonesty, they only reveal they are willing to endanger people's health for money, in other words, they reveal what their true concerns are. Any business that does depend on people's drug use and self-destruction to be profitable does not deserve to exist anyway, and the whole idea of economic wellbeing depending on a filthy addiction is perverse. At the end of the day, I could not care less whether smoking bans hurt businesses or not because the detrimental effects of not having

---

28 Eriksen, Michael, and Frank Chaloupka. "The Economic Impact of Clean Indoor Air Laws." *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians* 57.6 (2007): 367-78. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 14 Oct. 2007. Web. 2 June 2014. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.3322/CA.57.6.367/full>>.

29 *Ibid.*

30 Uccello, Cori E. "Costs Associated with Secondhand Smoke." American Academy of Actuaries, 21 Sept. 2006. Web. 29 June 2008. <[http://www.actuary.org/pdf/health/smoking\\_oct06.pdf](http://www.actuary.org/pdf/health/smoking_oct06.pdf)>.

31 U.S. News & World Report

the ban far outweigh any loss of profit. Economies rise and decline, profits are lost and gained, but no amount of money can recover lost health or revive the dead.

Faced with the evidence that secondhand smoke is harmful, the owners of bars and restaurants, for instance, could have chosen to take action and banned smoking in their businesses themselves. Likewise, smokers could have chosen to have regard for other people and smoked outside on their own. In both cases, legislation would have been unnecessary, yet instead, they generally resisted, rejected, and denied the whole issue. In the same way factories, mines, and slaughterhouses had to be regulated for the sake of workers' and public safety due to the greed and neglect of business owners, so too does tobacco use. The danger of secondhand smoke must be addressed one way or the other, and businesses do not have it in them.

While legislation against smoking is an important measure, as things stand, it is not a complete solution on its own. One of the most important things is to get people to understand why smoking should not happen in public spaces. Otherwise, many people will have no qualms about violating the bans when they think they can get away with it or otherwise finding ways to circumvent them. In this regard, the law also cannot provide complete protection from smoking. What do you do, for instance, if your boss or a higher-ranking co-worker is smoking in the workplace in spite of a ban? You could confront them directly, which there is probably a lot of ambient social pressure not to do, but do not expect satisfactory results because if they cared about the rules or how their smoking affects other people, they would most likely not be violating the ban in the first place. In a given country or city, there is probably a legal mechanism by which to complain about workplace hazards, but if you pursue it, do not be surprised if your superiors find an excuse to get rid of you sometime after. Or, not wanting to risk your health any further, you could just quit, but if you had the financial freedom to do that, you would not have been working in the first place. In other words, this is a case where smoking bans do you no good, and you wind up effectively trapped in a smoke-tainted environment.

The positive effects of banning public smoking, nonetheless, are ultimately very striking. For one thing, there are quickly fewer heart attacks and resulting deaths where smoking bans take effect.<sup>32</sup> This is what is most important, this is what it is all about, saving lives, not the imaginary right to smoke. The more the public presence of smoking is eroded, the fewer people—most critically, people who choose not to smoke—get sick and die, with the potential to avert tens of thousands of deaths per year. Whether private establishments should be able to regulate for themselves what activities are allowed inside, whether the government has a right to dictate to them, and whether smokers have rights

---

32 Chute, Nancy. "After Smoking Is Banned, Heart Attacks Drop." NPR, 29 Oct. 2012. Web. 24 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2012/10/29/163889012/after-smoking-is-banned-heart-attacks-drop>>.

relating to smoking are grotesquely petty and trivial questions by comparison. One way or another, the harm caused by smoking just has to finally stop.

Despite all the sense of them, smoking bans are very much a liberal-vs.-conservative issue, maybe not quite as much as always, but still mired in the hot air and hypocrisy of politics. Conservatives more often resist bans and other restrictions on tobacco, downplaying the need for them, or at least advocate for less extensive regulation than liberals, while at the same time insisting that other drugs be dealt with more harshly. Liberals are often all against tobacco, though they tend to want restrictions on marijuana relaxed, as if there is any significant difference. And both sides are vulnerable to the influence of tobacco industry money. Tobacco and secondhand smoke should not be subject to politics. They have been proven to be extremely destructive to public health, and what do someone's political leanings have to do with a well-established scientific truth? Opinions about where the rights of business owners end and the public interest begins are one thing, but any faction that stands in opposition to a demonstrated fact discredits itself. As usual, the truth and what is in the best interests of the most people is not what tends to determine policy but rather political affiliations and business interests.

On the subject of politics, one may consider the supposed compromise of having smoking sections and running air purifiers or exhaust fans, even though the most obvious and the only infallible means of addressing the contamination of the air is not to let it happen in the first place. The release of any other substance as toxic as secondhand smoke would never be tolerated indoors by either law, public opinion, or common sense, with or without such measures, like nothing else as deadly as tobacco would ever be permitted for public consumption. How would the advocates for smoking sections and air purifiers feel if a law were passed permitting the discharge of cyanide gas indoors as long as the building were fitted with a cyanide filtration system? By the way, cyanide is present in tobacco smoke. Also consider how almost as soon as the dietary supplement ephedra was connected to a few fatal heart attacks in the early 2000s, the FDA banned it, despite the subversive efforts of lobbyists, yet tobacco has caused hundreds of thousands or millions of heart attacks, not to mention strokes, cancers, and everything else, and yet it has not been banned.

Even if smoking sections or attempts at the removal of secondhand smoke were effective, and authorities such as the Surgeon General, EPA, and American Medical Association have determined they are not,<sup>33</sup> health risks would still remain. The smell of tobacco smoke can fill a room almost instantly,

33 "Indoor Air Pollution: An Introduction for Health Professionals." The American Lung Association, the American Medical Association, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the U.S. EPA, 11 Feb. 2002. Web.

<<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/hpguide.html#environmental%20tobacco%20smoke>>. p. 5

Szabo, Liz. "Secondhand Smoke Debate 'over'" USA Today. 27 June 2006. Web. 1 July 2008.

<[http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2006-06-27-involuntary-smoking\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2006-06-27-involuntary-smoking_x.htm)>.

and even outdoors, look how far the smell can spread. And yet it takes time for a filtration system to exchange the air in a room, that is, it takes time for the smoke to reach the system's intakes. During this lag, occupants would be breathing secondhand smoke unabated.

Filtering the air of tobacco smoke is not such a simple thing. If you browse, for instance, 3M's website, you will see that many kinds of filters exist and that each is designed for particular contaminants. There are filters to remove the vapors of different poisons, like one type for formaldehyde and another for mercury and chlorine, all, by the way, present in tobacco smoke too. There are filters to remove particulates and different filters designed to remove particles of different sizes and types.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, such filters may be made from different materials in order to handle specific circumstances or to trap certain particles in different ways<sup>35</sup>. In other cases, filters can consist of UV lights to break down chemicals, air ionizers to attract particles, apparatuses for evaporating materials out or distilling them down, and other specialized equipment.

With this in mind, note that tobacco smoke is in fact a tincture of thousands of gases as well as particulates, so designing a filter to remove all of it is completely infeasible if not just impossible. Currently, no filter is able to achieve this<sup>36</sup>. And considering how complex tobacco smoke is, if such a filtration system were built, how could it be proven that it was eliminating everything? Moreover, whether or not the secondhand smoke could be fully removed would do nothing about the fire hazard public smoking presents. Out of one side of their faces, the opponents to smoking bans talk about the supposed economic harm to businesses, but out of the other, they propose filtration systems that would obviously have an astronomical cost if they could be built at all. The bottom line is there is no magic filter that will pull everything from the air and leave behind just oxygen and nitrogen, and considering the number of contaminants there are to be concerned with, it does not seem that there ever will be.

Bans' opponents attempt to refute the ineffectiveness of secondhand smoke removal with the effectiveness of filtration systems designed for special facilities like laboratories. However, the two applications are completely different. How could they expect to filter tobacco smoke out of a bar the same way a scientist filters chemical vapors in a setting as controlled as a lab? Setting aside its high cost, lab equipment is specialized to handle specific contaminants, the ones that are being dealt with in a given situation, not a poisonous soup of thousands of chemicals like secondhand smoke, and dangerous samples in the lab are not even exposed to the air people breathe but are handled in sealed

---

34 "Cartridges & Filters." 3M. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <[http://solutions.3m.com/wps/portal/3M/en\\_US/3M-PPE-Safety-Solutions/Personal-Protective-Equipment/Products/Product-Catalog/~/PPE-Safety-Solutions/Respiratory-Protection/Reusable-Respirators-Parts/Cartridges-Filters?N=5549793&rt=c3&resultsPerPage=60](http://solutions.3m.com/wps/portal/3M/en_US/3M-PPE-Safety-Solutions/Personal-Protective-Equipment/Products/Product-Catalog/~/PPE-Safety-Solutions/Respiratory-Protection/Reusable-Respirators-Parts/Cartridges-Filters?N=5549793&rt=c3&resultsPerPage=60)>.

35 "Laboratory Filtration Selection Guide." Cole-Parmer Technical Library. Web. 03 Jul. 2008. <<http://www.coleparmer.co.uk/techinfo/techinfo.asp?htmlfile=SelectFiltLab.htm&ID=658>>.

36 "Indoor Air Pollution" p. 5

containers, such as glove boxes, or ventilated while enclosed or nearly enclosed under a fume hood, so that the air around the sample is isolated. So maybe filtering the air in a bar could work, if every smoker's stool were sealed in a box with an airlock, though even this could be undone simply by a smoker improperly leaving his chamber and contaminating the common air, while having the airlock operate only automatically would pose the potential hazard of trapping someone inside. Either way, spending an outing to the bar in such an apparatus would not make for a pleasant time.

Smoking sections, meanwhile, are as worthless as smoke filtration. This is a matter of the laws of nature. Gasses, like those in secondhand smoke, always expand to fill the entire volume of their container, here, a place like a restaurant or bar, regardless of the container's size or shape. The only way smoking sections could be viable is if they were completely sealed and isolated from the rest of a building and vented separately. But waiters could not be made to enter this space because that would expose them to the smoke, so patrons would have to serve themselves, and opening a door between the smoking section and the rest of an establishment would contaminate the entire place. Keeping the air pressure lower in the smoking section would be no solution, since the smoke would still drift on the force of people passing in and out, while airlocks would be either unsafe or ineffective as discussed above, so the only remaining option would be to have all exits lead to the outdoors. The cost and hassle of such complicated measures weighed against the dubious goal of accommodating smoking makes no sense at all.

Even if by some magical means, all the hazards of secondhand smoke indoors could be eliminated while retaining smoking indoors, it would be ridiculous to employ it. Even if such were feasible, why not make things so much more straightforward, inexpensive, and foolproof and just not allow smoking indoors? The justification for the risk and the cost of attempting to do otherwise comes down simply to abetting peoples' drug addictions and bad habits, and why should society have to do that?

### **Views of Smoking and Their Basis in the Drug Mentality**

Not only is the idea that smokers are persecuted a farce, but they in fact get way too much consideration. The only reason smokers have any rights at all relating to their habit is that it is so engrained in the culture and has the resources and the influence of huge corporations to prop it up against the tide of medical evidence and public opinion. Fundamentally, however, tobacco use is no different than any other kind of drug use, and the most significant differences between nicotine and any

other drug are simply legality and social acceptability, which the tobacco industry in large part contrived in the first place.

Someone addicted to nicotine is a drug addict, just like someone who is addicted to cocaine is a drug addict, there is just no legal penalty for and much less stigma on the former. It is alarming how many nicotine addicts are in the world and to consider the positions they are in. One example is a surgeon addicted to nicotine who perhaps starts to get a little shaky after hours of surgery and of not smoking. Surely even the opponents of smoking bans do not believe smoking should take place in an operating room, over someone's exposed organs, but then again, I guess I could not put it past them. What about a nicotine-addicted pilot on a trans-Atlantic flight? I would worry about him trying to make the landing a little too hastily. Politicians who smoke may be compromised too, such as by failing to deal simply with the facts regarding any anti-smoking legislation, being that it goes against their personal interests. What other bad decisions could periods in which they lack nicotine result, and is the kind of person who needs the crutch of nicotine as likely as a non-addict to be a suitable leader? Smokers often report that they light up when they answer the phone or get in the car, basically as a reflex, which I find somewhat alarming. Nobody really questions it, but is it a good idea to have anyone under the influence of or dependent on a drug, even nicotine, driving a car, especially people who have an apparent need to take the drug while actually driving? In the same way a person needs to have vision that is close to perfect, or at least that can be rendered close to perfect with corrective lenses, to be allowed to drive a car, their faculties also should not be in the grip of any drug.

As smokers can be drug addicts, those who run smoke shops and other stores that sell tobacco are drug dealers, and the tobacco industry is a cartel, both benefiting from addiction in the same way their illicit counterparts do. They may not be having anyone overtly murdered, at least that we know of, but their sleazy actions have still resulted in very many deaths. Tobacco entails exactly the same scam as all addictive drugs: get buyers hooked, and they become customers for life, however much it may be shortened. Plenty of times, I have seen someone in shabby clothes, reeking of stale butts, counting out change on the counter of a store to buy a pack of cigarettes, literally spending his last pennies on a fix instead of food for instance, the same sort of scene that plays out on inner-city street corners. What drugs are sold where is arbitrary anyway. Presumably, history could have unfolded so that tobacco was the drug sold on the corner and marijuana was sold in stores, not that we would have been any better off. If anything, the comparison between tobacco and other drugs is not fair to illicit drug dealers and cartels, since the scope of their products is so much smaller than that of the tobacco industry. At least the reach of any illegal drug operation only goes so far, but the global tobacco syndicate has its hands literally in just about every human settlement on the entire planet.

Smoking is simply an insane activity. Who would have thought in the first place that breathing smoke would be a good pastime? Who first thought to try it? I think it must have been an accident, that someone was exposed to tobacco smoke in a wildfire or something, was intrigued by the sensation, thought to take the smoke more directly, and it all went downhill from there. It cannot be that anyone, deep down, ever thought such an activity was harmless, but even if some people did, once it was shown so conclusively to be the cause of so much disease, smoking should have immediately disappeared. The fact that it continues and that it is tolerated should be an embarrassment to us all, a testament to the ignorance and inadaptability of the species and the crippling and stagnating aspect of culture. Smokers especially should be embarrassed, engaging in such a ridiculous and deadly activity, especially when inflicting it on other people. How could they not realize how stupid they look exhaling noxious clouds, even choking and gasping away while doing it, or how disturbing it is to see someone pointlessly destroying his own body? The whole thing is obscene. It is also completely absurd that we would allow someone to sit in a public space and burn something. Would a pyromaniac ever have been able to sit in a corner somewhere and burn down matches without at least getting looks? Would someone who likes the smell of incense ever have been able to go everywhere with a smoldering censer? How could it ever have been appropriate to smoke at a meeting or to smoke in the bank? Are those not circumstances for serious business, not people's vices? Imagine someone licking an ice cream cone before the board of directors or transacting business with the teller while going over himself with a personal massager. If these things are inappropriate, how could smoking in such situations ever have been?

The real question is not of "smokers' rights" but of how this whole situation was able to arise in the first place, to be justified by the excuse of made-up rights, of how tobacco was allowed to become so widespread to begin with. For one thing, I would be worried about any controlled substance being used species-wide, such as about genetic damage and whether this damage could be inherited. What about the possibility of critically damaging everyone's fertility? It is a good thing it did not happen with tobacco, at least not to a degree that would threaten the species, but who really could have said at the outset of its proliferation that it would not? Of course, scientific knowledge was much less advanced then, which perhaps reveals how tobacco got its foothold in the first place.

The whole concept of tobacco use is terribly contrived. Tobacco is an acquired taste, that is, people train themselves to like it, make themselves think they like it, or they use it routinely enough that they forget they do not. Then it is just kept afloat by addiction. Regardless of what people think they get out of it, any potential enjoyment of smoking is outweighed by the agony of the diseases it may well cause a person in the future. Ultimately, the tobacco industry probably understands the psychology and sociology of smoking better than anyone, plus it has the most to lose as things turn



against it. Tobacco companies know what to do to keep their product from fading away altogether, having decades of experience promoting it.

Before the early- to mid-20th century, smoking may not have been nearly as restricted as it is today, but it at least tended to be seen more as a vice, the average smoker probably did not use tobacco 20-40 times a day, and there were plenty of places where, while not illegal, it would at least have generally been considered rude to just go ahead in smoke, like in trains, stagecoaches, theaters, or where ladies were present. Eventually, however, thanks in part to mass tobacco advertising, smoking became permissible in more and more places. Look how many early TV shows, for instance, had tobacco companies as sponsors, were loaded with cigarette ads, and depicted smoking throughout the shows themselves, which happened to be around the same time the popularity of tobacco peaked. More old-fashioned individuals often complain about how much sexuality is shown on TV today, but what makes that worse than rampantly and unabashedly glorifying tobacco use, something that kills so many people? Another point to consider is how tobacco use was socially unacceptable for women traditionally. But at least in part as a result of tobacco-industry advertising targeted toward them as well as woman smokers frequently being depicted in often tobacco-sponsored media, a dubious victory for gender equality was achieved. Now women are just as free as men to poison themselves with tobacco.

Thanks in part to the clever and devious ways the industry advertised smoking and otherwise twisted that idiotic activity into something so desirable, the typical image of each side of the smoking debate forms an impediment to progress. Often, the opposition to regulation on tobacco use is seen as the freedom-loving, laid back, cool, defiant side and the proponents of regulation as whiny, moralistic, and puritanical. The truth is that addiction is the opposite of freedom; the desperation of looking for one's next fix is the opposite of being laid back; the repugnance of the stench, blackened lungs, yellowed teeth, and gruesome diseases is the antipode of cool; and acquiescence to entrenched corporate interests is by no means defiance. At the same time, making light of the consequences of smoking is simply an easy way to cope with the prospect of suffering them.

One thing smoking's proponents do to manicure their public image is try to be perceived as the voice of reason, as though some kind of compromise can be reached between nonsmokers' health concerns and protecting the ludicrous concept of "smoker's rights"<sup>37</sup>, unlike when they were in the more powerful position, and smoking was unquestionably allowed almost everywhere, and as if there is any parity between the two positions at all. The whole issue, in fact, is a clear example of a good-vs.-evil struggle. One side is trying to protect public health and the right not to be poisoned, the other is trying to foist poison on the public for profit. Until fairly recently, the latter had it so easy. They only

---

37 Apollonio et al. p. 3

had to flick away the newly-emerging arguments against public smoking, while the opposition to public smoking had to move a mountain, to overcome decades of inertia. Another angle of the voice-of-reason approach is to dismiss, with no argument at all, things like third-hand smoke as just hype and propaganda, which is cheap and easy to do with a concept that is newly-emerging and of which not many people are aware. Their position is so disingenuous, and they have only had to resort to it because they have grown so weak, yet superficially it sounds sensible, and that makes it effective.

Considering the bankrupt ways by which a position may successfully be furthered in popular culture, this situation can pose a serious problem to the anti-smoking cause. For one thing, those who are able to get people to view them as hip are difficult to counter no matter how mindless their arguments are. Someone can competently lay out the case against public smoking, and in an everyday situation, all an opponent has to do to counter it all is say something like “Oh, what are you so worried about? It’s just a little smoke, chill out.” But unfortunately it *is* something to worry about. Everyone should get upset about it. If someone is putting something into the air you are breathing, they are putting it into your body. Such a fundamental, essential thing—the air people breathe, the essence of survival—continues to be compromised; people are literally being poisoned and killed left and right. The side that wants to restrict smoking is just the plain common-sense side, the default position, the side that sees the truth, nothing more, though the way society’s priorities are, and from the point of view of pop culture, that is in large part its problem.

As for the cool image around smoking itself, or what is left of it at this stage, it is a joke. Smoking is not rebellious or edgy at all. It is an act of idiocy, of pointless self-destruction, of conformity. Giving in to peer pressure, such as to try smoking, is the exact opposite of rebellion and so is buying into the lies and exalting the products of gigantic, multibillion-dollar, multinational corporations. Such is also a sign of immaturity, of one’s own will not being advanced enough to avoid succumbing to that of the group. Teenagers who experiment with smoking, for instance, are also only falling into everyone’s preconceptions of them, doing what almost all other teenagers do anyway, what authority figures all expect them to do at some point. On the same token, consider the college drinking culture. The young person, away at school, now engages in “adult” activities often to great excess, but in reality, that just makes him immature, at best a caricature of being an adult. It is the same as a little boy gleefully taking the bottle when he finally convinces his dad to let him try a sip of beer, simply taken to the extreme. If, more generally, people need intoxicants like alcohol to socialize, or if they feel compelled to social smoking, there is something wrong with the way they socialize. If everyone could be comfortable with who they are and free to express what they really feel, there would be no need for “social lubricant.”

If anything, the establishment must on some level want everyone drugged one way or another, to make them more docile. It would much rather people dope their worries away with things like tobacco and alcohol or even pharmaceuticals than consider and dwell upon how unfair the world is, in which case they would be more likely to take action to change it and thus challenge the powers that be. Better that downtrodden workers go get drunk after work than try to form a union. Better they run out for a cigarette during lunch and calm down than stay angry and go to the boss' office to demand proper treatment.

The truly rebellious act would in most cases be to refuse smoking and related activities altogether and for resistance to them to toughen with increasing peer pressure. A true rebel ultimately does his own thing, whatever he wants to do, and everyone else's expectations and their notions of what is rebellious are irrelevant. Contrast this with the kind of morons who post pictures of themselves on Facebook posing in front of a no-smoking sign while smoking, knowing they face little to no potential consequences on the off chance they get caught or the appropriate authority even cares after the fact. Such is a pathetic parody of a true act of defiance, a way for cowards and losers to feel rebellious. What are they going to do next? Post pictures of themselves jaywalking?

This sort of thing is not surprising, since drug use in general can be a sign of weakness and a lack of character. People who cannot deal with life by their own will have to rely on drugs to get through it. But this is futile anyway, as in spite of any artificial periods of euphoria, any problems that existed before will remain. As soon as their heads clear, all drug users find themselves at best right back where they started, and soon enough they wind up worse off. Eventually, the drug itself becomes their biggest problem by taking over from everything else. When addiction sets in, the pleasure users get from a drug amounts to nothing more but relief from withdrawal; the drug becomes an end onto itself. As it continues to take its toll, damaging their health, their ability to function, their relationships, and their finances, users are ruined completely. If we want the world to actually be good rather than have people dulled to its misery, we should strive to create happiness in sober reality. Maybe if everyone were perpetually alert to how miserable their lives are, more people would be working to make things genuinely better.

It is a kind of sacrilege to take the human intellect, unique among all other life forms, and to deliberately numb and distort it. The idea that drugs can lead to "higher levels of consciousness" is pure babble. Taking a drug, ingesting some rude, foreign substance, throws a wrench into the machinery of consciousness, upsetting the delicate processes for perceiving reality that were developed, enhanced, and fine-tuned over eons. One might as well say that a blindfold leads to a higher level of vision or that earmuffs lead to a higher level of hearing.

As for performance-enhancing drugs, not just ones like steroids or amphetamines, but even using smoking to improve one's ability to carry out a task, like to focus one's concentration or to stay awake, they are all just a form of cheating. A task performed with the help of nicotine, for instance, is attributable as much or more to nicotine as to the user. The individual is not the one succeeding, the drug is, succeeding at giving the user the ability to carry out the task, and this cheapens one's own accomplishments while detracting from those of people who rely solely on personal strength and merit.

Smoking in particular destroys everything it gets near. That it destroys so many people's health goes without saying. That it makes people poorer, has them spending money on tobacco that could have been going toward worthwhile and beneficial purposes, is obvious. There is also basically nowhere humans go that is not spoiled by tobacco use. In spite of the supposed oppressiveness of smoking bans to smokers, in almost any outdoor public space, you can count on being gagged by secondhand smoke at some point. As for any interior space where smoking is allowed, one can expect a stale, nauseating, long-lingering stench, which almost indelibly attaches itself to any kind of fabric; yellow and orange walls and ceilings; dirty and reeking ashtrays; stray ash; and burn marks. Especially in a confined space like a car, with all its upholstery, the acrid smell of the smoke can easily become permanent. Finally, pretty much any city street will be littered with cigarette butts. It does not matter how well-kept an area is, if you look out for one, you will see one, even where smoking is banned. Unfortunately, the harm caused by this litter is not limited to aesthetics, as cigarette butts are saturated with toxins which can poison waterways, the tainted water potentially killing aquatic life. Pets and wildlife can also consume the butts directly and be choked or poisoned, even to death. Moreover, of the 14,000 children injured in the U.S. between 2006 and 2008 due to incidents involving tobacco, 90% had consumed either cigarette butts or whole cigarettes.<sup>38</sup>

As for the next logical steps, taking smoking bans to the next level, measures like prohibiting smoking in cars and in outdoor spaces, which we already see happening to some extent, I certainly support this in principle, but I am concerned whether it is practical and will ultimately be beneficial. For one thing, as alluded to above, outdoor bans are already widely disregarded. If, for instance, smoking is banned on the sidewalks, and people just smoke there anyway, and the authorities are not willing or able to devote the kind of resources that would be needed for real enforcement, I am concerned the credibility of smoking bans more broadly will be undermined.

To talk about what would be ideal, however, smoking should at least be banned everywhere

---

38 Novotny, Thomas E., Sarah N. Hardin, Lynn R. Hovoda, Dale J. Novotny, Mary Kay McLean, and Safdar Khan. "Tobacco and Cigarette Butt Consumption in Humans and Animals." *Tobacco Control* 20 (2011). National Center for Biotechnology Information, 13 Apr. 2011. Web. 22 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3088460/>>. pp. 1-2

outside of private yards and dwellings, though even that leaves children potentially exposed to it in the home as well as any workers, like maids, gas meter readers, and plumbers, who wind up having to enter. Condominiums, apartments, or any setting where multiple residences are contained in a single structure would also be an issue, since the secondhand smoke in one could easily contaminate the others, while even single-family homes, in close proximity, are problematic; drifting tobacco pollution does not stop at the fence. Does not the often-asserted right to do what ever one wants with one's own property extend to the neighbors? As the threat of third-hand smoke, moreover, continues to be studied, it may very well turn out that there is no place for tobacco smoking in society at all. At least the typical heroin user injects all the poison right into his own body, but the nature of smoking spreads poison everywhere. It contaminates the air far and wide; coats everything with a toxic residue; and smokers' hair, hands, and clothes transmit it everywhere they go. Even the air exhaled from tar-coated lungs would seem suspect. But I just do not see any real way to eliminate tobacco, at least not until people's attitudes further mature. Rather than legislation, what will ultimately destroy smoking completely, if such ever comes to pass, is for the culture to reach the point that the habit becomes fully socially unacceptable and smokers are embarrassed even to be known to do it. This will happen eventually if the trends we have seen over recent decades are not interrupted.

### **Reviving the Threat Tobacco Posed**

Not surprisingly, some have gotten the idea they can profit from smoking bans and the falling opinions of tobacco use by offering alternative means of ingesting nicotine, like electronic cigarettes, and as such they are trying to sneak smoking back into the mainstream. This kind of idea is nothing new. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as smoking bans became commonplace, R.J. Reynolds, for example, created the alternative cigarette brands Premier and Eclipse, silly concepts that worked basically by heating a tobacco substance rather than directly burning it, thus producing less smoke and odor (though being that smoke was still produced, something definitely was burning). By a similar kind of trick, e-cigarette companies are trying to make a business of undoing the seismic accomplishment of removing smoking from indoor public spaces. In them, I see the old tobacco industry behind a mask of contrived trendiness and sham health-consciousness.

The e-cigarette companies are in fact using a number of tobacco industry tactics, such as appropriating its manner of advertising. A presentation by members of Congress comparing vintage cigarette ads to modern e-cigarette ones revealed them to be unsettlingly similar, both in their artwork

and their message<sup>39</sup>, which convey, for one thing, an obvious attempt to appear glamorous and fashionable. The e-cigarette companies have their work cut out for them, however, considering how going around sucking on a bulky tube—a kind of portable fog machine often with the form factor almost of a clarinet—and blowing out some kind of mist, like one is playing pretend smoking, looks even more ridiculous than the real thing. Actually, leaving aside the more lurid comparison that suggests itself, an e-cigarette can be thought of as a pacifier, a plastic thing to put in one’s mouth as a way to ease tension.

Rehashing assertions very similar to those the tobacco industry used up until the 1990s, a central claim manufacturers, among others, make about e-cigarettes is that they are harmless, or at least much safer than real cigarettes. What a surprise that the people trying to sell the product are the ones insisting it is safe. Another claim is that e-cigarettes can be used anywhere, which violates the spirit of anti-smoking laws even when apparently not explicitly breaking them. However, I would still argue that, in defiance of the corrupt, money-grubbing push to subvert smoking bans, current laws could be applied, since e-cigarettes function fundamentally the same way traditional ones do: heating, if not to the point of burning, a substance, in this case a liquid, to be inhaled, generally to deliver a drug, with the discharge ultimately getting into the air.

E-cigarette emissions are often said to be “just vapor,” but what does that mean? The real question is what is *in* the vapor? Cyanide, for one thing, can exist as vapor. Does that make cyanide harmless? E-cigarette “vapor” contains nicotine, for one thing, which is well-known to be highly poisonous in itself, used as insecticide at higher concentrations, not to mention that it is highly addictive, so right away, there goes the notion of e-cigarette vapor being harmless. And even nicotine alone poses a passive exposure risk; children, for instance, can become addicted to nicotine through exposure to secondhand smoke<sup>40</sup>. On top of this, e-cigarette vapor, including that which winds up in the air, has so far been found to contain a number of carcinogens<sup>41</sup>. One study found that while e-cigarettes had lower levels of some of the harmful components of traditional secondhand smoke, they had higher levels of certain toxic heavy metals such as chromium<sup>42</sup>. The current lack of regulation also means that

---

39 Feloni, Richard. “The New E-Cigarette Ads Look Exactly Like Old-School Cigarette Promos.” *Business Insider*, 5 Nov. 2013. Web. 17 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.businessinsider.com/democrats-link-e-cigarette-ads-to-older-promos-2013-11?op=1>>.

40 “Smoking Parents Can Hook Kids on Nicotine.” *The Calgary Herald*. 30 Sept. 2008. Web. 17 May 2014. <<http://www.canada.com/calgaryherald/news/story.html?id=5b36b985-5706-4e2c-8438-9598b0c1d3c2>>.

41 Glantz, Stanton. “9 Chemicals Identified so Far in E-cig Vapor That Are on the California Prop 65 List of Carcinogens and Reproductive Toxins.” *Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education*. University of California, San Francisco, 20 July 2013. Web. 25 May 2014. <<http://www.tobacco.ucsf.edu/9-chemicals-identified-so-far-e-cig-vapor-are-california-prop-65-list-carcinogens-and-reproductive-t>>.

42 “Study: Second-hand Smoke from E-cigarettes Contains Toxic Metals.” Fox News, 29 Aug. 2014. Web. 1 Sept. 2014. <[http://www.foxnews.com/health/2014/08/29/study-second-hand-smoke-from-e-cigarettes-contains-toxic-metals/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+foxnews%2Fhealth+%28Internal+-+Health+-+Text%29](http://www.foxnews.com/health/2014/08/29/study-second-hand-smoke-from-e-cigarettes-contains-toxic-metals/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+foxnews%2Fhealth+%28Internal+-+Health+-+Text%29)>.

the composition of e-cigarettes can vary from one manufacturer to another, so even if one brand were somehow proven safe, that would not mean all the others are.

Regardless of what anyone calls the substance they give off, e-cigarettes put something into the air, and if it is going into the air, everyone in the vicinity is breathing it. No one has proven this material is safe, while pretty much all we have to support the claims of safety are the assertions of e-cigarette advertising. But at the very least, anyone can easily tell for a fact that the emissions do not consist simply of “water vapor,” as some of that advertising claims. It is just a blatant lie, since water vapor, which is completely invisible, never takes a smoke-like form. Moreover, e-cigarette vapor can have an obvious smell to it, even if not as strong or persistent as that of tobacco smoke, though it can be strong and persistent enough, so that also clearly shows something else is there besides water. And again, if the e-cigarettes are being used to deliver nicotine, as most often they are, then obviously the vapor contains nicotine. As for comparing it to clouds and fog, such are not made of water vapor, and the latter is more of a haze and does not result in billowing plumes like e-cigarette emissions anyway. And even when water is heated to the point of producing steam, which is not water vapor either, such again is not quite like the consistency of e-cigarette vapor. So anyone can see there must be other chemicals in the vapor to get that effect; in fact, most e-cigarettes use a solution based on glycerin and propylene glycol.

Part of the problem is just that e-cigarettes have not been around very long. There just has not been anywhere near the amount of research into them as has been done on tobacco. There is also no way to know yet what the effects of long-term use are; we will only know decades from now—if it turns out e-cigarettes are here to stay—after people who have used e-cigarettes for decades start showing the effects of it. Conveniently for the manufacturers, all this makes their wild claims harder to challenge other than by pointing out that they have not proven their claims; there is just not as much information to go on, the subject has many areas of doubt. I fear that by the time the risks are conclusively established, e-cigarettes may be as entrenched as conventional ones, and I suspect the manufacturers are counting on that.

“Let’s not determine whether the product is safe before we put it on the market,” the e-cigarette companies must have said to themselves in one form or another, “let’s put it on the market right away, and by the time it turns out to be killing people, we’ll have made our money and be retired on a tropical island somewhere.” But as should have been the case with tobacco, it is on them to prove e-cigarettes are safe. If they want this product to be used in public, for one thing, let them show there is no risk of secondhand exposure and demonstrate that the evidence already coming in to the contrary is wrong. Let it fall on them by default, not on the person who objects to having to breathe their vapor. If the whole

disaster of the tobacco industry taught us anything, it is to shoot first and ask questions later on such matters. Why do we have to wait until thousands of people start getting cancer to act? It is largely too late by then anyway.

Another health concern to note regarding e-cigarettes is that people may use them more frequently than they would have used tobacco. If users believe (or convince themselves) that an e-cigarette is safe and that they do not have to go outside to use it, they will have less incentive not to use it, fewer perceived barriers against using it, and thus take more nicotine and whatever else is in the vapor than they would have otherwise. Moreover, in the same way that broadband Internet and having a connection that is “always on” led to people wasting countless hours aimlessly surfing the web, having a nicotine delivery system that is always ready to go, no lighters and ashtrays, may also lead people to use the drug constantly. E-cigarettes are additionally claimed to be a stop smoking aid, which is a clever way to make them seem like a good thing, but is that really what the manufacturers intend the product for, or, more likely, is that just another piece of marketing? After all, they stand to make a lot more money if people use their products indefinitely. And how many have really gotten off nicotine altogether using e-cigarettes as a bridge from traditional smoking as opposed to just using them to replace or supplement tobacco?

Rather than making smoking safe or curtailing it, the e-cigarette companies are simply making it easier to get away with. Their nicotine-laced, chromium-laden, carcinogenic vapor is just more readily concealed than smoke. The points companies tout in their advertising, like that the vapor dissipates quickly (in reality, it can linger somewhat and even build up in the air) that the smell is mild or nonexistent (though actually it can persist a long time, especially in confined spaces), are not qualities that have anything to do with how safe it is but just how likely anyone is to notice it.

Smokers, meanwhile, are falling for every claim the e-cigarette companies make, because they want to. The reason smoking is so difficult to curtail is that smokers are so determined to find any way to keep doing it. This is a likely explanation for why e-cigarette users tend to be so intolerant and defensive about any criticism of their new habit and dismissive of the evidence of its harmfulness—e-cigarettes are the answer to all their problems. Now, supposedly, smoking is safe. Smokers do not have to go outside anymore and can forget about all the trouble of quitting. It is also claimed that e-cigarettes are cheaper in the long run, another big selling point considering how heavily taxed traditional cigarettes are, but really, that will depend on the individual’s smoking habits. With all this, the e-cigarette manufacturers are quite exploitative and manipulative, not dissimilar to their mentor, the tobacco industry, hitting the smoker in all the right places. E-cigarettes can be seen simply as another sign of the nature of addiction, how it enslaves the individual. Some smokers need nicotine so bad that



they cannot wait for an opportunity to go outside. They need away to get it right now, and e-cigarette manufactures seek to profit from this demand. It should also be noted that the same kind of naive people have about e-cigarettes exists around marijuana, as will be discussed shortly.

It is disheartening to see people have not learned anything, even after all the revelations about the tobacco industry. Especially in light of so many disturbing, blatant similarities, who, with normal judgment, would trust e-cigarettes? Who is really behind them? It would certainly be naive to think the traditional tobacco companies have not taken a serious interest and are not heavily involved in e-cigarettes; in fact, tobacco companies do have their own e-cigarette lines. What exactly is in these things, and how exactly is the composition of that substance changed when it is transformed from liquid to its inhaled form? Certainly, material is being deposited in e-cigarette users' lungs as tar is deposited in those of conventional smokers; not every trace of the vapor will be exhaled. What is the effect of this residue, does it build up over time like tar does, and what is the impact on the lung tissue of long term exposure to it? In the end, taking e-cigarette discharge into one's lungs—designed for breathing, not ingesting drugs and vapor—cannot be good, unless it happened only to consist of nitrogen-oxygen atmosphere.

If people want to breathe in mystery vapor produced in some Chinese sweatshop, I suppose that is up to them. My biggest concern is that others will continue having to deal with secondhand exposure and in ever-larger numbers if manufacturer's sleazy marketing campaigns succeed at making e-cigarette use acceptable indoors. Who else is saying one can use e-cigarettes anywhere? Legal experts, lawmakers? No, just the companies who make them, as if they are the authority. What gives their assertions credibility? Nothing, they are just trying to sell a product. Who else says e-cigarettes are safe? Certainly no medical authority. But again, smokers want it to be true, so a lot of them are taking it seriously. On the one hand, companies advertise that e-cigarettes are essentially a perfect analogue to traditional smoking, yet they then claim e-cigarettes can be used indoors, that in fact, they are not so much like real smoking. Which is it? If e-cigarettes are so much like real cigarettes, why should the same laws that apply to cigarettes not apply to them? On that note, how are advertisements for e-cigarettes permitted on TV and on the radio when those for tobacco are banned? Even though the delivery methods technically are different, the active ingredient, the actual drug, is exactly the same—nicotine. E-cigarette manufacturers want to have their cake and eat it too, and they are getting away with it.

E-cigarettes have become popular surprisingly quickly, unlike the previous attempts at alternative smoking, all of which basically fell on their faces. It has developed into its own subculture and even tries to present itself as a movement, which is pretty strange. Why not also try to make a

movement out of drinking beer or huffing Wite-Out? But as a result, the e-cigarette business has become substantial and will be harder to curtail. At this stage, however, it is still difficult to say where it is ultimately heading. E-cigarettes may just be a fad that will soon fizzle out. Perhaps they are a last gasp for smoking, a final burst of desperation as it tries to stay alive, tobacco's Battle of the Bulge, and once it is beaten back this one last time, smoking will be defeated forever. It may also be that e-cigarettes will stick around or become more widespread. With this, they threaten to undo some of the progress that was made against smoking over the previous decades. But what will probably happen is more and more ill effects of e-cigarettes will be discovered; the evidence will pile up, followed by lawsuits; the e-cigarette companies will try to PR their way out of the whole mess and destroy any credibility they have in the process; and generally not being as entrenched as or having the level of resources as the mainstream tobacco industry, they will start to falter.

However they themselves wind up, e-cigarettes are a glimpse of the future of drug use. Burning a plant and inhaling the smoke is a very crude way to ingest a drug. And while e-cigarettes may be somewhat more sophisticated, a point also played up in their marketing, again, it is still the same basic idea. Perhaps some decades from now, people will instead be taking some reengineered variant of nicotine—rendered more intense and, of course, more addictive—with miniature jet injectors, or maybe they will use devices that electrically stimulate the brain to produce drug-like sensations. We would all benefit much more if the ingenuity of man were instead directed toward advancing the species beyond drugs and making reality pleasant enough that people would no longer feel the need to escape from it. For the time being, however, maybe the e-cigarette companies could start adding albuterol to their vapor, so smokers can get their emphysema treatment at the same time they get their nicotine.

In a very similar sense to e-cigarettes, the legalization of marijuana would be a move against the direction of human progress. People have been predicting for decades that marijuana was soon to become legal. If it really is this time, there are many alarming prospects to consider. One of the most vexing tactics of the pro-marijuana lobby is that it insults everyone's intelligence by claiming marijuana is "natural" and essentially harmless. In reality, however, the effects of marijuana use are not fully understood, though it has been shown the drug can lead to respiratory and heart disease, potentially cancer, effects on circulation that could result in stroke, reduced brain development in adolescents, reduced intellectual capacity, memory loss, addiction over the long term, psychosis in certain individuals, schizophrenia, and possibly anxiety and depression<sup>43</sup>. In terms of reproductive effects, children born to marijuana users have an increased risk of suffering low birth weight and

---

43 Volkow, Nora D., Ruben D. Baler, Wilson M. Compton, and Susan R.B. Weiss. "Adverse Health Effects of Marijuana Use." *New England Journal of Medicine* 370.23 (2014): 2219-227. 8 July 2014. Web. 28 Mar. 2015. <[http://www.coleman-pediatrics.com/marijuana\\_article.pdf](http://www.coleman-pediatrics.com/marijuana_article.pdf)>.

delayed development, while links to other alarming effects on the developing fetus remain inconclusive.<sup>44</sup> Proponents of legalization cheaply spin the uncertainty about marijuana's impact on health to try to indicate that it in fact causes no harm. In reality, however, it makes much more sense to proceed cautiously, as though marijuana is, for instance, carcinogenic, perhaps to find out later it is not, rather than assuming now that it is not and winding up with many cases of cancer to treat later on.

People can debate about whether marijuana has as many ill effects as or ones that are more severe or less so than those of other drugs, whether it is addicting in the same way or to as great an extent, how its medicinal properties may be put to use (though the idea of smoked medical marijuana is pretty odd; what other medication is smoked?), and whether it should be legalized, but do not give me any nonsense that it is natural and harmless. Users and other proponents can fool themselves about it, do what they want to themselves, but let them not poison society, either with the drug itself or misinformation about it.

Marijuana is no less a plant than tobacco, so it is no more natural, and that something is natural does not mean it is safe anyway. How would smoking poison ivy work out for instance? Snake venom is natural too; one could even say it is organic, yet a person would have to be insane to call it safe. Recreational use of marijuana still generally entails burning a plant and inhaling the smoke, an unnatural activity that, in time, is certain to lead to similar kinds of respiratory damage regardless of the plant in question; fundamentally, smoke is smoke. For this reason, I would be surprised if smoking marijuana ultimately turned out not to cause cancer. One of the differences that is often claimed is that marijuana users tend not to use their drug as much as tobacco users use theirs. If that is really the case, will it still be if marijuana is ever widely legalized, available in stores, and socially acceptable? Either way, the amount used is a matter of the individual's habits; some will use less, and others, more.

Probably everyone has heard about how tobacco smoke is composed of thousands of chemicals, including all kinds of carcinogens, that it is full of nasty things like acetone, benzene, and formaldehyde; such was also mentioned previously in this essay. Running with these sorts of facts, marijuana advocates like to contrast their "natural" drug with tobacco and its apparently artificial, chemical-laden nature. For the most part, however, the tobacco companies are probably not directly adding chemicals like that themselves. Sleazy as they are, they do not want their customers to die because the dead cannot buy cigarettes. The chemicals introduced as part of the manufacturing process, such as to alter the flavor of the tobacco, may actually be benign in their original form but are then

---

Hall, Wayne, and Louisa Degenhardt. "Adverse Health Effects of Non-medical Cannabis Use." *Lancet* 374 (2009): 1383-391. 14 Oct. 2009. Web. 28 Mar. 2015. <<http://mobile.legaliser.nu/sites/default/files/files/Adverse%20health%20effects%20of%20non-medical%20cannabis%20use.pdf>>.

44 *Ibid.* Hall et al.

rendered toxic when consumed through smoking, while other poisonous chemicals make their way into the tobacco as a result of agricultural treatments on the crops<sup>45</sup>. Additional toxins, moreover, may either arise naturally in the plant or be created in further reactions precipitated by burning. At least some of the same toxins, therefore, must find their way into the marijuana that is consumed, if not some of its own as well. In addition, being that almost all the world's marijuana production is currently underground, what substances growers may be adding to it is anybody's guess, and if marijuana is ever legalized, especially if production ever takes place on a scale like that of tobacco, it would be very naive to think additives would not be employed, such as to produce a more uniform product or to doctor inferior crops. Cannot those supporting legalization at least be honest, drop all these duplicitous assertions about the drug being natural, and just say something like "Marijuana is harmful, but people should be allowed to use it if they choose to?"

A report from ABC's news program *Nightline* illustrates many of the things wrong with the movement to legalize. The show follows a young mother who is also an entrepreneur in Denver's newly-established, legal marijuana trade. The focus of the story is her striving to remove the stigma from marijuana use and to make it socially acceptable, even upscale. She also asserts that marijuana legalization is about to become widespread and that this is an opportunity for the empowerment of women, since they can get into this new business at the outset, unless the stigma on marijuana prevents them.<sup>46</sup> But in reality, she is not just this really cool mom with liberal attitudes about marijuana as she tries so hard to portray herself, she is a businesswoman. Being that she is trying to make a business of marijuana, she stands to make a lot more money if it becomes socially acceptable, since she would then have many more potential customers. The tobacco industry was aware of the same thing decades ago as they were so heavily promoting and normalizing the widespread use of their product. As for empowering women, that seems more like a tactic to make the whole thing sound like something noble, as opposed to drug dealing. More generally, it further intimates that she sees an enormous potential for profit, for herself at least as much as for all womankind, by which this empowerment can take place. In the end, no matter how it is dressed up, business is business. It makes no difference if it is some grim old man with a suit and a smoker's cough at Philip Morris or a pretty young woman at the head of a hip startup. It is all still just about making money, as much money as possible, and damn everything else.

Anyway, it is not a bad thing that marijuana use is stigmatized, since it is a harmful activity. Marijuana is associated with laziness, for instance, because one of the effects of the drug is laziness, or at least lethargy. Like alcohol, marijuana makes people act like idiots, so how should it be viewed, as

---

45 Novotny et al. p. 1

46 "Pot-Smoking Moms Unapologetic About Getting High." *Nightline*. ABC. 24 Sept. 2014. Web. 17 Mar. 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MubYMz4FZdw>>.

having a positive influence? It is too bad alcohol and tobacco are not equally stigmatized because then maybe there would be less use of those substances too, and maybe fewer people would be destroying themselves and others, like through secondhand smoke and drunk driving. On that note, at least tobacco is not intoxicating, unlike marijuana. In one sense, however, marijuana is even less stigmatized than tobacco, as more and more it is coming to be seen as less of a health hazard, while tobacco use is seen basically as bad all around; almost nobody tries to claim tobacco is good.

This contradiction is similar to the common views of alcohol vs. tobacco. Almost everyone drinks at least a little, and for the most part, no one who keeps his drinking within reason is likely to be criticized for it. But not even the smallest amount of tobacco use tends to be excused in the same way. To look at things objectively, however, the implicit idea that drinking is not as bad as smoking is dubious at best. People opposed to smoking bans like to point out, and with some legitimacy, that drinking is an unhealthy activity and that bars are unwholesome places even without smoking bans. Indeed, people who like to see smoking banned in bars so that they can breathe clean air as they drink themselves silly are sort of missing the point. Tobacco and alcohol are both drugs, and they are both damaging. But just because alcohol is treated more leniently, is the proper action, therefore, to try to have tobacco viewed again now as it was in the 1950s? If not, why should marijuana lose its stigma?

The mom featured in the *Nightline* segment answers every single objection the reporter raises to marijuana by saying in one way or another that alcohol is bad too. We hear this argument constantly from the pro-legalization side, that alcohol and tobacco are just as bad or worse than marijuana, and yet they are legal, so marijuana should be too. But what kind of reasoning is that, that because we have one bad thing, we should bring in more bad things? If someone were going to take to this way of thinking, the logical conclusion would be to say that all the bad things should be abolished, not that they should all be adopted. To look at it another way, it is simply a new form of one of the arguments made by those opposed to smoking bans, that because people are exposed to other hazards like automobile exhaust, smoking should be allowed in public, as discussed and debunked earlier.

Still, in this regard, the pro-marijuana faction is at any rate on the right track. To at least be fully logically consistent, all recreational drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, should be either banned or legalized. If one person is allowed to smoke cigarettes, why should another not be allowed to smoke marijuana? And if one person is allowed to smoke marijuana, why should someone else not be able to smoke opium—or crack? One can say that crack is in a totally different class, considering its severe effects, but listening to the pro-marijuana people talk about their drug of choice, is that not all about prejudice? And really, to continue this line of thought, medications that currently require a prescription should be made available without one. Instead, warning labels could be placed on them that say “You

should not be using this drug except under the direction and supervision of a doctor.” After all, if other people can just go to the store and buy alcohol or marijuana, why can I not go to buy prescription-strength eczema cream or dandruff shampoo? If I hurt myself using a prescription drug on my own, that was my choice and is my problem. In the end, the thing people have to recognize is that recreational drug use is not just about the individual but deeply affects society at large, playing a great role in things like domestic violence, prostitution, crime in general, poverty, and homelessness.

Legalization could so easily get out of control. The *Nightline* segment concludes at an outdoor concert given by the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, in part sponsored by the marijuana enterprise discussed in the story (again, the advocates are trying to make marijuana use seem sophisticated), which of course gets many more cheers from the audience than the other sponsors, since making money off the desire to inhale noxious fumes from a formerly-illegal plant is so laudable. The reporter observes that “the air is thick with the smell of pot...” even though, while recreational marijuana use is legal in Colorado, it is banned in public. Yet that is actually a pretty fair and reasonable policy. If people want to use marijuana, they can, they just are not allowed to inflict it on others, to flaunt their vice among society. But apparently, it was not enough for the marijuana users to have their drug legal; they will not be happy until it is everywhere and polluting everything just like tobacco. It is almost as though they think they deserve credit for their drug use, as opposed to acknowledging it is something to keep to oneself, that a vice reflects a personal failing and is not something to be proud of. Never mind children having to see and be exposed to it. Never mind people who are drug tested regularly for their jobs, who might have traces show up resulting from secondhand exposure. Never mind all the people who just would rather not have drug use inflicted upon them as they go about their business. They do not count for anything as long as marijuana users are able to get high whenever and wherever they get the urge.

Presumably, a greater proportion of those who support legalization than of the general population are also marijuana users; people are more likely to get involved in something in which they have a direct interest. In that case, as far as places where marijuana is still illegal, is it not somewhat cheeky of them to advocate the legalization of a substance they are already using anyway? On the other hand, one has to suspect that some users of marijuana do not want it to become legal because then it would lose its mystique and, as the novelty of legal marijuana wore off, it would become as banal as tobacco.

Much of the above gets at what is most worrisome about marijuana edging toward legalization on a wide scale—the creation of a whole new tobacco industry. It took so long and was so hard to knock back the one we have, and it still has plenty of fight left in it, and now it looks like we may be on

the verge of raising up a replacement, maybe just in time for it to take the reigns. In the marijuana lobby, we see the same kind of deceitfulness and duplicity that was and still is so prevalent in the tobacco lobby. Further indications of how a large-scale, legal marijuana industry will behave can be seen in the downplaying and dismissal of marijuana's negative side or in the attempts to glamorize the drug, tactics that are unsettlingly familiar. As the *Nightline* story strikingly illustrates, this industry will be in an elegant and trendy shroud, unlike the tobacco industry now, totally exposed in all its sleaze.

Sure, as opposed to this possible alternative, the drug cartels are bad enough, but except through the ill effects of drug use itself, which would not change with the provider, they at least do not have an ability to influence society on the scale that the tobacco industry did and so destructively. And how could anyone be so sure the cartels would go away? As the pro-marijuana lobby, among other factions, likes to point out, the cartels are run by really nasty people who do really nasty things. So do they expect the cartels will just bow out if marijuana or other drugs become legal? On the contrary, they will find other things to get their hands into, or they will keep on with drugs; cigarettes are legal, yet there is a large illegal trade in them, such as to evade taxes. The same thing could happen with marijuana. Legalization would be more a capitulation to the cartels than the deathblow proponents want us to believe it would be, an admission that society was unable to stop the poison from flowing in. And how much better off would we be really having "legitimate" businesses sell people the drugs they use to destroy themselves rather than drug dealers selling people the drugs they use to destroy themselves?

At the end of the day, there is no safe alternative to tobacco smoking. Nicotine is an inherently dangerous and addicting drug regardless of how it is delivered, other forms of smoking also cause health issues, and other drugs have their own dangers. Someone who is worried about the health effects of smoking just has to quit. It is no solution just to replace one bad habit with another, since the underlying problem, the desire to continue the habit, continues to be fed.

At least as important as what happens with the law is that attitudes about smoking change. It is one thing for smokers to potentially face a fine if they get caught defying a ban, it is another if they constantly draw the scorn of everyone around them. One way to reach such a cultural shift is to stop being so nice about people's smoking and instead to refuse to accommodate it at all. For example, if someone smokes in your house or even asks if he can, get offended, make a scene about it, and then maybe he will be hesitant to do the same with someone else later on. Forget about how people generally handle such situations now, either too afraid to object at all to the smoking or disallowing it timidly and apologetically, because that just encourages smokers to keep doing the same thing. Let *them* be hesitant instead. Let the smokers be ashamed of themselves. *They* are the ones in the wrong.

Of course, there is something to be said for not taking this too far, for not outright alienating less zealous opponents who might have been made sympathetic to one's position, but still, one's fervor should match the gravity of the issue. As for the tobacco industry or smoker's rightists, it is pointless to reason with them because the evidence does not matter to them; they are only interested in furthering their profits and pro-smoking agenda, and most of them must know that all their assertions are nonsense anyway. Ultimately, if people want to put poison into their own bodies, let them make sure they are the only ones who suffer any consequences. If this had been society's position from the beginning, perhaps secondhand smoke would never have been the problem it became, and a lot of people who suffered and died for nothing would still be with us.

When trying to combat smoking, telling people about all the diseases it causes or showing them graphic pictures is totally the wrong approach. Everybody already knows what smoking can do, but nobody thinks it will happen to them, at least not for a long time, and everyone expects to have quit by then anyway; people have known for decades how deadly smoking is, and millions still do it anyway. Going on about the health effects also just bores people and comes off as obnoxious and intrusive, and everyone ignores it the same way they ignore street preachers or the brochures full of slaughterhouse photos handed out by animal rights activists. Almost invariably, it comes off like one is telling them what to do or judging them rather than trying to convince them of the danger they are in and how they are endangering others. The right approach is to focus on addiction, how one's individuality and freedom are compromised by tobacco use; to focus on the scam of the tobacco industry, how its whole business model is based on getting people hooked for life on nicotine; and to focus on the industry's history of sleaze, greed, callousness, and disregard. Instead of trying to make tobacco companies print graphic photos on cigarette packs, photos that everyone has already seen and everyone ignores, make them print descriptions of their misdeeds, such as excerpts from Judge Kessler's final opinion, quoted toward the beginning of this essay.

Addiction is not a pretty thing. Cocaine and heroin, for example, completely destroy users' lives, so it comes as no surprise to hear about the appalling health effects of those drugs, and there is no strong push to legalize them. Nicotine, however, is a drug that does not prevent one from functioning normally per se, and that is what makes it so much more insidious and sinister. That normal functioning obscures and yet contrasts grotesquely with the way the drug compels a person to continue ingesting it along with the other toxins that generally accompany it while knowing this is slowly destroying his body. It is like watching someone choose to commit suicide, and by burning himself alive or some other slow and painful method. But at least even that is over in moments. In a way, it is even worse to watch someone choke and gag and retch and deteriorate over the years until he finally succeeds in



suffocating himself. Regular smokers, whether they are aware of it or not, go against every impulse in nature to have a regard for one's own life, and their habit defies all common sense. Being that so many people find it hopeless to quit smoking on their own, considering how powerfully addicting nicotine is, addiction to it needs to be taken more seriously. Rehab centers should be established for inveterate tobacco users in the same way there are such centers for cocaine and heroin addicts. The latter are not simply told to set a quit date, to take deep breaths, or to chew gum and then left to their own devices.

Regardless of the role of addiction, however, there is no justification for inflicting tobacco use and all its ill effects on others. Certainly there should be no tobacco smoking in public spaces, but rather than focusing on that in any legislation, such should simply prohibit any form of drug use or similar activity that discharges anything into the common air supply, especially indoors. This would cover cigarettes, e-cigarettes, marijuana, and any other trash that comes along in the future. While the sun may well be setting on the traditional tobacco industry, the kind of threat it posed carries on in new areas, and this has to be resisted, never allowed to again achieve the foothold tobacco once had and from which it has yet to be fully ejected or else the whole struggle will have to start all over and with no guarantee the same ground can be regained. Smoking being banned here or there may be the least of the smoker's concerns, as the coexistence of smoking and nonsmokers is starting to look impossible, thanks to the threat of third-hand smoke.

What unknown health effects there may be from any form of recreational drug use are in some sense irrelevant. At this point, doing drugs is so plainly known to be unhealthy. Always being able to add one more disease to the seemingly endless list of horrifying health risks is not very productive. Instead, the funding now devoted to the medical side of the question should go more to the sociological side to find out the quickest way to destroy the contrived social acceptability and profitability of any drugs, the power of the self-interested factions that push them on society, and to putting what is learned into practice, while the predominant medical question should be how best to break drug addiction. Hopefully, there will eventually be a true accounting for the tobacco companies and their imitators, and they will all finally suffer a complete collapse. Maybe someday, instead of just having to pay out lawsuits, which adds up to a fraction of their profits anyway, tobacco-industry power players will be standing in the dock. Hopefully, the tobacco plant will someday be given back to the wild. It is not something humans need by any means, and we would be better off without it.

The most important question to examine is how to get beyond drug use and how to achieve real happiness. This is a much loftier goal than looking for some form of transient joy through chemically-induced delusion. But sometimes being unhappy is valuable as well, as it motivates people to make

changes that increase happiness in grander ways, while part of being an advanced life form, part of having a mind, is sometimes feeling badly.