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Drugs: Should Their Sale and Use Be Legalized?

WILLIAM J. BENNETT

William J. Bennett, born in Brooklyn in 1943, was educated at Williams College, the University of Texas, and Harvard Law School. Today he is most widely known as the author of The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories (1993), but he has also been a public servant, secretary of education, and a director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. In 1989, during his tenure as "drug czar," he delivered at Harvard the address that we reprint. Among his recent publications are The Broken Hearth: Reversing the Moral Collapse of the American Family (2001), Why We Fight: Moral Clarity and the War on Terrorism (2002), and A Century Turns: New Hopes, New Fears (2009).

Drug Policy and the Intellectuals

... The issue I want to address is our national drug policy and the intellectuals. Unfortunately, the issue is a little one-sided. There is a very great deal to say about our national drug policy, but much less to say about the intellectuals—except that by and large, they're against it. Why they should be against it is an interesting question, perhaps more a social-psychological question than a properly intellectual one. But whatever the reasons, I'm sorry to say that on properly intellectual grounds the arguments mustered against our current drug policy by America's intellectuals make for very thin gruel indeed.