



Drugging the Poor: Legal and Illegal Drugs and Social Inequality

Merrill Singer

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Singer offers a fresh set of ideas for understanding how the global socioeconomic system insures that massive quantities of psychotropic drugs reach the poorest sectors of American society. *Drugging the Poor* provides a unified theoretical framework to assess how all drugs, including tobacco, heroin, alcohol, cocaine, and diverted pharmaceuticals contribute to maintaining social inequality among the wealthier and poorer social classes in American society. Singer's analysis rejects conventional approaches that see tobacco or alcohol manufacturers and distributors, on the one hand, and drug cartels and mafias, on the other, as completely different entities. Instead, he shows how legal and illegal "drug corporations" share key features and follow the same economic principles. He also emphasizes that mixing legal and illegal drugs to self-medicate against social discrimination, poverty, and structural violence offers short-term relief, but in the long run, it functions to maintain an unjust and oppressive system. *Drugging the Poor* actively challenges the assumption that how things are is how they always have been or how they need to be.

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