

Madness – or worse.

Some comments prompted by Jamie Bartlett's article in the *News Review* section of *The Sunday Times* of 20 July 2014.

John Raven

Version date: 24 July 2014

Jamie Bartlett has provided a useful account of some aspects of the situation which exists in relation to the criminal activity of viewing “sexual images of children”. He correctly notes that most of those viewers are no more likely than other people to do any harm to anyone. He notes that huge agencies have been set up to catch them and that law enforcement agencies have a habit of employing Gestapo-like tactics to arrest them. As is also the case in the enforcement of the laws relating to cannabis smoking, and, until very recently, homosexuals, the lives, livelihoods, and families of those who get caught in the net are essentially destroyed, with a significant number committing suicide. He notes, but does not comment on, the fact that, contrary to what most people who are concerned about “sex with children” assume, “sexual images of children” means “sexual images of anyone under 18 years of age”. In the course of reporting on his interviews with one individual arrested for possessing such images and another considering entering the detection service, he notes that “levels” of depravity contained within such images have been defined. But he does not tell us where to find the definitions. In this case, how are viewers to know where the lines are, and how is the public to conduct any rational discussion about them. He does not tell us who, and on what grounds, made these distinctions. He notes that there are, internationally, thousands of websites concerned with the production of such images - so the chances of doing much about any harm that may be done to the young people involved in their production are slim ... while the harm that is likely to be done by self-righteous “law enforcement” agents in an effort to pursue them is likely to be considerable.

At the very least this situation offers grounds for concern. Personally, it seems to me at least mad, paralleling the situation which, until a few years ago, would erupt if I happened to have a copy of Michelangelo's David in my possession.

One wonders through what mental process the establishment and continuance of these policies and procedures can be justified.

But this is only one illustration of this process in operation. The same applies to the persecution and harassment of organisations and individuals selling one or other of the huge variety of sexual experience. To the persecution of one religious group by another. To the incarceration political or religious “heretics”. To the persecution of those willing to help people to choose when and how to die. To the enforcement of years of compulsory, destructive, “education”. In the imprisonment of parents who wish to bring up their children in “non-standard” ways and the removal of the children involved from their families.

What is common to all these examples is the fervour and self-righteousness of those who go out of their way to generate the necessary legislation and to enforce it via such things as midnight raids and sting operations.

I have to say that I personally wonder what is wrong with those who choose to get involved in such persecutory activities. Why do they insist on refusing to let other people lead their lives in their own ways? What is it that leads thousands of people, given the opportunity, to invent ever more extreme, vicious, and destructive ways of advancing policy agendas which have been set by other people – whether those aim to persecute and eliminate “paedophiles”, homosexuals, Jews, or non-believers or to advance causes like “privatisation”, “communism”, or “democracy”.

Yet, in truth, if one thinks about it, it turns out that these are only two of a number of extremely undesirable human traits. Taken together they amount to a disposition to Fascism. It would seem that the task of constraining those who are strongly predisposed to engage in such moralistic and vindictive activities is much more difficult, but much more important, than advancing the causes those concerned purport to embrace.

Promoting “the public interest” seems to be mostly a façade to conceal unbelievably obscene behaviour.

Taking action to promote life, liberty, and evolution thus appears to be even more difficult than might have been imagined.