

Edited by Dale Jacquette

CANNABIS

PHILOSOPHY FOR EVERYONE

What Were We Just Talking About?

Foreword by Richard Cusick

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

VOLUME EDITOR

DALE JACQUETTE is Senior Professorial Chair in Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Bern, Switzerland. His many previous works include *Wittgenstein's Thought in Transition* (1998), *Ontology* (2002), *David Hume's Critique of Infinity* (2001), and *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (2005). He has edited the *Blackwell Companion to Philosophical Logic* (2002), the *Cambridge Companion to Brentano* (2004), and the Elsevier volume on *Philosophy of Logic* (2006) in the Handbook of the Philosophy of Science series.

SERIES EDITOR

FRITZ ALLHOFF is an Assistant Professor in the Philosophy Department at Western Michigan University, as well as a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian National University's Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics. In addition to editing the *Philosophy for Everyone* series, Allhoff is the volume editor or co-editor for several titles, including *Wine & Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), *Whiskey & Philosophy* (with Marcus P. Adams, Wiley, 2009), and *Food & Philosophy* (with Dave Monroe, Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

PHILOSOPHY FOR EVERYONE

Series editor: Fritz Allhoff

Not so much a subject matter, philosophy is a way of thinking. Thinking not just about the Big Questions, but about little ones too. This series invites everyone to ponder things they care about, big or small, significant, serious ... or just curious.

Running & Philosophy:

A Marathon for the Mind

Edited by Michael W. Austin

Wine & Philosophy:

A Symposium on Thinking and Drinking

Edited by Fritz Allhoff

Food & Philosophy:

Eat, Think and Be Merry

Edited by Fritz Allhoff and Dave Monroe

Beer & Philosophy:

The Unexamined Beer Isn't Worth Drinking

Edited by Steven D. Hales

Whiskey & Philosophy:

A Small Batch of Spirited Ideas

Edited by Fritz Allhoff and Marcus P. Adams

College Sex – Philosophy for Everyone: Philosophers With Benefits

Edited by Michael Bruce
and Robert M. Stewart

Cycling – Philosophy for Everyone:

A Philosophical Tour de Force

Edited by Jesús Ilundáin-Agurruza
and Michael W. Austin

Climbing – Philosophy for Everyone:

Because It's There

Edited by Stephen E. Schmid

Hunting – Philosophy for Everyone:

In Search of the Wild Life

Edited by Nathan Kowalsky

Christmas – Philosophy for Everyone:

Better Than a Lump of Coal

Edited by Scott C. Lowe

Cannabis – Philosophy for Everyone:
What Were We Just Talking About?

Edited by Dale Jacquette

Porn – Philosophy for Everyone:

How to Think With Kink

Edited by Dave Monroe

Serial Killers – Philosophy for Everyone: Being and Killing

Edited by S. Waller

Dating – Philosophy for Everyone:

Flirting With Big Ideas

Edited by Kristie Miller and Marlene Clark

Gardening – Philosophy for Everyone:

Cultivating Wisdom

Edited by Dan O'Brien

Motherhood – Philosophy for Everyone: The Birth of Wisdom

Edited by Sheila Lintott

Fatherhood – Philosophy for Everyone: The Dao of Daddy

Edited by Lon S. Nease
and Michael W. Austin

Forthcoming books in the series:

Fashion – Philosophy for Everyone

Edited by Jessica Wolfendale
and Jeanette Kennett

Coffee – Philosophy for Everyone

Edited by Scott Parker
and Michael W. Austin

Blues – Philosophy for Everyone

Edited by Abrol Fairweather
and Jesse Steinberg

Edited by Dale Jacquette

CANNABIS

PHILOSOPHY FOR EVERYONE

What Were We Just Talking About?

Foreword by Richard Cusick

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

This edition first published 2010

© 2010 Blackwell Publishing Ltd except for editorial material and organization

© 2010 Dale Jacquette

Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in February 2007. Blackwell's publishing program has been merged with Wiley's global Scientific, Technical, and Medical business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex,
PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services, and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at www.wiley.com/wiley-blackwell.

The right of Dale Jacquette to be identified as the author of the editorial material in this work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book. This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold on the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cannabis – philosophy for everyone: what were we just talking about? / edited by Dale Jacquette.

p. cm. — (Philosophy for everyone)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-4051-9967-4 (pbk.: alk. paper) 1. Marijuana. 2. Cannabis.
I. Jacquette, Dale. II. Title: Cannabis – philosophy for everyone.

HV5822.M3C285 2010

362.29'5—dc22

2010004706

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Set in 10/12.5pt Plantin by SPi Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India

Printed in Singapore

1 2010

*For Ed Rosenthal,
pioneer and
political lightning rod*

*If the words “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”
don’t include the right to experiment with your own
consciousness, then the Declaration of Independence
isn’t worth the hemp it was written on.*

Terence McKenna

Live in New York

The Music Faucet

June 20, 1993

CONTENTS

Foreword Richard Cusick	xii
Preface Dale Jacquette	xv
Introduction: <i>What is Cannabis and How Can We Get Some?</i> Dale Jacquette	1
PART I CANNABIS PHENOMENOLOGY	19
1 A Cannabis Odyssey Lester Grinspoon	21
2 Seeing Snakes: <i>On Delusion, Knowledge, and the Drug Experience</i> G.T. Roche	35
3 The Cannabis Experience: <i>An Analysis of “Flow”</i> Andrew D. Hathaway and Justin Sharpley	50
PART II MARIJUANA AND SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT	63
4 Buzz, High, and Stoned: <i>Metaphor, Meaning, and the Cannabis Experience</i> Michael Montagne	65

5	The Great Escape Charles Taliaferro and Michel Le Gall	77
6	Cannabis and the Human Condition: “ <i>Something of the Kind is Indispensable</i> ” Brian R. Clack	90
PART III CREATIVELY HIGH		101
7	Hallucinatory Terror: <i>The World of the Hashish Eater</i> Tommi Kakko	103
8	Marijuana and Creativity Ryan E. Holt and James C. Kaufman	114
9	Navigating Creative Inner Space on the Innocent Pleasures of Hashish Dale Jacquette	121
PART IV PSYCHO-SOCIOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF CANNABIS CULTURE		137
10	Cannabis and the Culture of Alienation Mark Thorsby	139
11	Reefer Madness: <i>Cannabis, the Individual, and Public Policy</i> Tuomas E. Tahko	149
12	Soft vs. Hard: <i>Why Drugs are Not Like Eggs</i> Brian Penrose	162
PART V CANNABIS ETHICS AND POLITICS		173
13	“Smoking Pot Doesn’t Hurt Anyone But Me!” <i>Why Adults Should be Allowed to Consume Cannabis</i> Jack Green Musselman, Russ Frohardt, and D. G. Lynch	175
14	Pot Politics: <i>Prohibition and Morality</i> Mitch Earleywine	192

15 Cannabis and the Good Life: *Needs, Capabilities, and Human Flourishing* 214
Theodore Schick, Jr.

16 Weakness of Will: *The Cannabis Connection* 226
Michael Funke

Notes on Contributors 236



FOREWORD

Three men come up against a locked door. The first man is drunk out of his mind. The second man is tripping wildly on LSD, and the third man is stoned on really good marijuana.

The first man says, “Let’s knock down the Goddamn door!”

The second man says, “Let’s float through the keyhole . . .”

And the third man says, “Let’s sit down and wait for someone to show up with the key.”

After nearly a century of American marijuana prohibition – the first US anti-cannabis law passed in Utah in 1915 – it’s beginning to look as if someone is finally about to show up with the key.

In 2010 there are an unprecedented forty-plus marijuana law reform bills pending in twenty-three states. These encompass a wide range of reform including proposals for medical marijuana, decriminalization, and legalization. In January New Jersey became the fourteenth state to legalize the medical use of cannabis and full legalization will be included on the California ballot in November.

These are heady days indeed. Hyperbolic prohibitionists insist we stand on the high precipice of increased psychosis, and that the metaphorical door is really a gateway to a hard drug hell. Proponents of marijuana law reform oraculate a more positive future filled with fiber, fuel, and fun, of miracle medicine and good vibrations. I suspect the upcoming reality will be far more nuanced than either side is willing to admit. The truth is no one knows what’s going to happen if and when marijuana finally becomes legal in the United States.

Will use rise? Will prices drop? Will madness or laughter prevail? Certainly, over 800,000 American arrests will fall off the radar and that can't be a bad thing. Medical patients will stop worrying about getting busted for medicine, which in itself will have a palliative effect. But will my teenage daughter be more or less likely to take up smoking pot after criminal sanctions disappear? I don't know the answer but I am bedeviled by the question.

Certainly, I worry more about other demons. I tell her that if she takes up hard drugs she may very well die because those vile pursuits have killed so many good people. I tell her to be very careful of spirits – of wine, whisky, and beer – because those habits very nearly killed me when I was young and perhaps the propensity lies nestled in her genes. I tell her that if she smokes cigarettes “I might kill you myself just for being that stupid,” and then I smile (and we'll see how that works out). My many warnings regarding weed, however, are much less straightforward and far more faceted because I don't want to be a hypocrite and because that conversation is necessarily more . . . philosophical.

I believe that marijuana is not for children and as the associate publisher of *High Times* magazine I know something about the subject. I think it should be an honorable widespread activity among responsible adults – like sex or driving a car. I tell my young daughter that she could undoubtedly switch on the engine, put it in gear, and might even get someplace; but without that necessary judgment that comes with experience she might very well cause a terrible accident along the way that will hurt her or hurt someone else.

Then I warn her about driving.

I tell her of the Bashilange: in the nineteenth century, at the time of the dissolution of the great Luba Empire in Central Africa, a number of smaller kingdoms emerged. The Baluba chief, Kalamba-Moukengee, subjugated neighboring tribes at gunpoint and, struggling to unify his new confederation, ordered all the ancient fetishes to be burned in public, and in their place instituted the Bantu custom of smoking hemp to reincarnate the soul. The Baluba men gathered around the fire in the center of the village each night and solemnly smoked cannabis from a huge calabash, and a tribal offender was publicly punished by being forced to smoke hemp until he lost consciousness.

A tribal faction within this new coalition, the aggressive Bashilange led by Moamba Mputt, established the *Ben-Riamba* cult – the so-called “Sons of Hemp” – who quickly put down their spears and foreswore their



warlike ways. The Sons of Hemp quickly gained many followers. The Bashilange became less violent, began to treat with other tribes, and made more laws. The land of the hemp smokers along the banks of the Lulua River began to be called *Lubuku*, which is translated as “Friendship,” and the partisans of *riamba* were widely known as “Friends” and greeted each other with the Bashilangen word for life (*Moio!*).

It’s a pretty tale as far as it goes, but not all was perfect in paradise. Bashilangen women were not allowed to smoke hemp and were consigned to work in the fields, keep the house, and raise the children, while the men made cloth, went hunting or, for the most part, smoked hemp and talked “with incredible fluency.”

I urge my daughter and our readers to remember the Bashilange.

The homespun philosopher Yogi Berra (who knew something about baseball) famously observed that “It ain’t over ‘till it’s over,” which reminds us that anything can happen. It’s possible I suppose that marijuana reform could be repealed instead of marijuana law, but I have my doubts because we’ve mitigated the hype and because Americans can no longer afford to ignore the billions of dollars in tax revenue that marijuana law reform will provide. While I personally believe that legalizing cannabis would encourage a more civilized society, I also recognize that reasonable people can disagree. That’s why this book is so timely and important. There are overblown claims on both sides of the equation and we need to have the more disciplined discourse that philosophy provides. Philosophy, at its best, is the art of reason tempered by the science of thought, and our conversations regarding cannabis need to be more reasonable, more thoughtful, and more civilized – now more than ever. This book is a good place to start. We stand before a locked door or a dangerous precipice – you are free to choose your own metaphor – but whichever you prefer, one thing seems clear. We are about to turn the key or take the jump.

Before we do, let’s think about that.



PREFACE

This book came about as part of a larger effort to relate contemporary philosophical discourse directly to the interests and concerns of persons outside the tweedy world of professional academic philosophy. No doubt philosophy and the world outside its ivy towers can each benefit from a little positive interaction. But why cannabis? Why weed versus tweed?

Cannabis use is widespread and increasing in worldwide popularity. It is estimated that approximately one out of three Americans has tried or uses marijuana with some frequency. Elsewhere in many parts of the world the percentages of active regular cannabis enjoyment are equally impressive. Cannabis consumption levels are therefore sufficiently noteworthy to draw philosophical attention at the very least as a social phenomenon, and the use, effects, and contemporary prohibition of cannabis raise intriguing philosophical questions.

No doubt it says something interesting about America in the twenty-first century that there exist laws against marijuana, and that so many people continue to risk violating the law for the sake of getting high. The two facts together arguably bespeak a dominant trend in the United States, for a hip and hedonistic part of the population to challenge the Puritanism latent within the culture that goes hand in glove with a severe and often joyless work ethic that seems to have rooted itself into the American grain even after the Puritans themselves had long gone from this earth. The plain fact is that, thus far, not enough responsible adult Americans, even if they smoke pot, have organized themselves politically with any degree of success to revoke the present-day draconian anti-cannabis laws.

Some laggards may reason that pot smoking should remain illegal because, after all, you can still always get it, while in the meantime we should be cautious until we better understand what social impact cannabis legalization might have, say, for the world our children will inherit. Will all of North America start to look like Amsterdam's red light district? Surely not, although some parts of North America could do worse. Nor should we overlook the fact that the Netherlands has friendly non-menacing coffeeshops elsewhere in Amsterdam and all over the country for casual cannabis purchase and use on the premises or at home by responsible, gainfully employed, tax-paying adults, and that the rest of the country does not at all look like Amsterdam's red light district, whatever your opinion of its aesthetics.

Still, what would it be like for the children? We must never cease to ask such questions, it seems, but instead shape all our social policy around the imperative of offering a better future for our eventually ungrateful progeny. What will their world be like if cannabis becomes more freely available potentially in every neighborhood? Even if good models of controlled dispensing are followed, it is axiomatic that cannabis is going to be more freely available if it is legalized than if it were kept illegal. After all, we do not know what it will do to our way of life for cannabis to become no more inaccessible to responsible adults than a visit to the corner liquor store. Things are hard enough as they are, this reasonable-sounding reckoning continues, so let us continue to support or in any case not get active to defeat anti-marijuana laws, and keep things more or less as they are, even if we personally like to smoke and continue to sneak one ourselves from time to time.

This line of argument is no doubt partly to blame for the snail's pace of progress toward cannabis legalization. For all its appearance of good logic, such thinking is nevertheless seriously flawed in one important respect. Parents and other concerned community members need to wonder in practical terms, first, what the probabilities are that their children will someday experiment with and perhaps even come regularly to use cannabis. If the adults in question have also at least experimented with marijuana, then they might understand the attraction, and recognize that their children at some point are more than likely at least to try marijuana for the sake of getting high. If it seems more than likely than not that this will occur, then, secondly, the same responsible-for-our-children's-future adults need to ask themselves whether they would also prefer to have these same children when they're grown up go to jail some day for getting caught holding a little joint. If that does not seem like a good thing, then it appears that persons concerned



about the future of today's youth do not have a strong argument for a conservative stance against relaxing marijuana prohibition.

Cannabis laws are currently in flux, which is arguably a good sign. As I write these words, Mexico has just legalized possession of small amounts of a surprising list of drugs that includes cannabis, and Argentina has ruled that, although its sale is still illegal there, it is unconstitutional to imprison anyone for possession of cannabis. It is indeed and ought to be recognized everywhere that it is unconstitutional to prosecute the possession and use of a little noble bud. The cannabis reform movement has been slower to hit a responsive chord with legislators in the United States, but there are already many places today where you will not suffer more than paying a fine if caught with a personal use amount of cannabis, whatever that means according to local ordinance or state law. Still, why should anyone have to pay a fine, as though they were doing something wrong beyond breaking an astoundingly stupid law? If the only wrong you do is break the – . . . my apologies, not *stupid*, but, let's say, this time, possibly well-intentioned although not impressively competent or morally justifiable, and sometimes even more stupidly enforced . . . – law, then you are being prohibited from exercising what ought to be among the sacred freedoms included as a right of responsible and otherwise law-abiding persons. The pursuit of individually defined happiness that does not harm others, promised by the American Declaration of Independence and its counterpart social contracts for citizens in many places around the globe, ought to stub out antiquated cannabis prohibition legislation like a spent roach.

Why is marijuana prohibition tolerated? Here, undoubtedly, we run smack up against part of the mystery that is twenty-first century America. Why, in the past, was slavery tolerated? Why was alcohol prohibition tolerated? Why is same-sex marriage so emotionally resisted by a heterosexual majority? What's it to them, anyway, and how does it hurt them, if gay and lesbian couples want to tie the knot? Why is the virtually unlimited availability of firearms with all the harm they cause put up with today as a sane and historically accurate interpretation of the Constitution's Second Amendment to the Bill of Rights? NPR (National Public Radio) reported just this afternoon as I was sunning on the terrace that the number of bullets sold across the counter in the United States in 2008 was enough to provide every living man, woman, and child in the country with no less than 33 bullets. With a currently estimated population of 305 million souls, that's an astonishing 10,065,000,000 rounds of ammunition beyond military and police requisitions, purchased in just one year. It makes a person wonder, are there really that many deer and pheasant still running around



uncooked? I myself don't have any of these bullets, nor does my partner, or most people I know, so some greedy individuals are regularly using or stockpiling considerably more than their allotted 33.

Guns and bullets, despite all the damage they cause when people fly off the handle, you can legally buy. A dime of reefer to kick back with nothing else on the burner and get into some Beethoven, Brubeck, or Beck, a Rembrandt exhibit from years ago in a glossy museum catalogue or reruns of *The Honeyymooners*, no. America, like other countries, simply has these quirks. Federal law currently prohibits the purchase, sale, or use of cannabis, even in those states like California that have meaningfully relaxed state and local anti-marijuana legislation. If you use in California, you probably do not risk municipal or California state prosecution, although in theory at least you could still be in trouble with the Feds. So far, the Federal authorities have primarily targeted entrepreneurial medical cannabis dispensaries operating without full legal local approval, but there is no reason why the government in the future could not choose to enforce the Federal anti-cannabis laws at the lowest levels of buyers, sellers, and users. If California or any other state will not enact or enforce subordinate cannabis prohibition laws, then in principle the Federal government might decide that it needs to do so. As things stand today, this would be perfectly legal. In most places in the US, it's unfortunately true that you can still get into a lot of trouble with the law trying to cop a little high.

Nor is cannabis use a particularly new thing. Samir S. Patel reports the following discovery in the March/April 2009 issue of *Archaeology* magazine: "At first archaeologists guessed the two pounds of green plant material, buried with a Caucasian man 2,700 years ago in Turpan, was coriander. Tests revealed the truth – it was cannabis, the oldest-known marijuana stash. Lab work also established that it would have been potent stuff, though it is unknown whether it was used for medicinal or religious purposes." Dope has accordingly been around for a long time and its effects have been understood and appreciated for millennia. It is a sign of the times that the cautious author of this prestigious publication considers only that the Chinese cannabis might have been used for either medicinal or religious purposes. If we read between the lines it is nevertheless not hard to imagine that the owner sent to the afterlife with a lid of good shit in his tomb might have used it primarily for recreational purposes, as is still done today, for the same morally respectable purpose of getting airborne. It also suggests that cannabis was sufficiently available in abundance in the distant Asian past to be considered a desirable grave good.



Leaving the trail of cannabis along ancient trade routes aside, what attitude should contemporary philosophy take toward cannabis? Like other phenomena related to popular culture, philosophy has an opportunity if not an obligation to consider these matters carefully and with all its conceptual analytic tools. There are many philosophical questions raised by the use of cannabis for medicinal, religious ceremonial or sacramental, not to mention for fun and purely recreational, purposes. What is it to get high? How does cannabis alter straight patterns of perception, judgment, and reasoning? Is it morally wrong to use cannabis? Is it morally wrong for legislators and law enforcement officials to prohibit cannabis sale, possession, and use? Can philosophy help us to understand the psychological, phenomenological, ethical, and social implications of cannabis intoxication? Can cannabis, as some users believe, constitute an ally in artistic creativity or in the philosophical pursuit of wisdom?

The essays collected in this book are intended to provide a lively philosophical look at the problems of marijuana use and abuse. The reader should expect many different answers, not always in harmony. It is an essential part of philosophical understanding to collect conflicting arguments relevant to a topic, and to sort through them all carefully and critically, looking for enlightenment in spite of disagreements among the experts, and concerning precisely those matters about which they disagree. We should no more anticipate consensus between writers with philosophical interests reflecting on the nature, cognitive effects, and moral and legal status of marijuana than we would in any other field. Therein lies the philosophical intrigue and whatever philosophical insight we can reasonably hope to attain about this popular and increasingly appreciated but socially still very controversial drug.

I am grateful to Fritz Allhoff for inviting me to edit this volume for his new Wiley-Blackwell series, *Philosophy for Everyone*, and to Jeff Dean, philosophy editor at the press, for nursing me through some of my early moments of editorial denial. I thank the authors for their superb contributions, and the production team at Wiley-Blackwell for helping to bring this volume to completion with such flair. I am indebted above all to my wife Tina for her encouragement, and for sharing with me all these years her invaluable anecdotal perspective on the vagaries of herbal aviation.

Dale Jacquette
Sydney, Australia



INTRODUCTION

What is Cannabis and How Can We Get Some?



Are You Anywhere?

Cannabis is a psychoactive product of a naturally occurring plant belonging to two main species, *sativa* and *indica*. Cannabis is ingested primarily for the sake of the effects of the active THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) it contains, liberated from the dried resin-bearing plant flower buds and leaves under carbonizing heat for absorption into the bloodstream. There it finds its way like spawning

salmon to the grateful brain, where special cannabinoid receptors have evolved in several mammalian animal species, including our own, in parallel with the weed's botanical evolution over millions of years. We, human beings and pot, were biologically made for each other.

The effects of cannabis are varied and variously reported. They depend to a large extent on the kind and strength of the drug, how and how much of it is ingested, psychological and other physiological, as well as circumstantial environmental, factors affecting the experience. Users talk about getting *stoned* or *high*, terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, sometimes distinguished phenomenologically, and sometimes associated respectively with cannabis indica versus cannabis sativa. Words fail, though much ink has been spilled, trying to describe what it is like to get high or stoned, or even, for that matter, what burning marijuana smells like. What, to recall Thomas Nagel's famous philosophical

conundrum about the nature of consciousness and the impenetrability of alien subjectivities, is it like to be a bat? What is it like to be high? What is it like to be a bat high?

Descriptions of the drug's effects include mild euphoria, a sense of wellbeing, intensely concentrated attention punctuated by occasional distractions from immediate tasks and disturbances of short-term memory, increased libido or enhanced pleasure in carnal pursuits, including an elevated appetite, a peculiar sensitivity to the humor and absurdity in situations that are otherwise underappreciated when straight, and sometimes remarkably vivid paranoia. It used to be parlance for knowledgeable cannabis users to ask, "Are you anywhere?" meaning simply, in the code language to which persons pursuing an illegal activity are sometimes driven or naturally inclined, "Do you smoke pot?" The implication is that otherwise you are figuratively nowhere. Nowheresville is perhaps the original archaic idiom, back in the day when all hip guys wanted to have a goatee and everyone owned a pair of bongos, daddy-o.

Spark up a thumb of white widow, then, a Jack Herer hybrid, super skunk, Shiva Shanti, or haze. Imagine the cluster bud of baby-sized leaves and stamens at the top of the plant when it was harvested, oozing with rich red cannabinoid-laden resin and gorgeous feathery yellow tops as seen in head shop magazines and hydroponics calendars. Reflect on the fact high, if you will, that such a beautiful flower can be burned and the vapors open up your mind to new ideas, and you can quickly find yourself deeply enmeshed in conceptual subtleties and endlessly absorbing unexpected chains of association that might keep you philosophically entertained for about as long as it should take you to read this book. The main thing of philosophical interest about cannabis is its effect on thought, altering one's state of consciousness in what are usually pleasurable, sometimes surprisingly vibrant and rewarding ways. If users are right, then cannabis can take us outside our normal modes of experiencing the world, and amplify subjective reactions to prevailing conditions both within and beyond the mind.

That, in a gleaming bong bowl, may convey some sense of what cannabis is, for readers entirely new to the drug. Verbal description is nevertheless no substitute for trying and reflecting on first-hand acquaintance with cannabis. This, however, is not lightly to be recommended, because the answer to our second question – How can we get some? – is, unfortunately, almost everywhere in the world at the present time, by breaking the law and risking the brunt of some potentially very unpleasant forensic consequences. The publicized threat of such penalties is supposed to



dissuade people from using marijuana, and perhaps in another thousand years or two, when there are more people in jail than on the street looking for harmless kicks, it might actually start to work. Accordingly, today, I can candidly give anyone who's interested in experimenting one very good reason not to smoke marijuana: it's illegal. Contrariwise, after much deliberation, I cannot offer even one good reason why it should be illegal.

Dormroom Confessions of a Casual Cannabiphile

Let me wax a little autobiographical, then, and briefly recall some of my own first cannabis experiences. Reflection takes me back to my Midwestern US college days in the early 1970s, when an evening's lecture by a psychology professor was announced as: "Auditory Masking, or Hearing Simple Sounds Stoned." Could a person actually get degree credit for this? I wondered. Well, no. But it was better than the sepulcher of library stacks for an evening's entertainment. Back then, researchers in cognitive studies, pharmacology, and medicine could still easily obtain government grants for collecting data on cannabis-drugged students. These days my impression is that governmental controls have clamped down rather stridently. I remember on the occasion in question that they had to turn people away at the door.

As a student, I appreciated the occasional free institutionally sanctioned high, which I considered indeed to be not only manna from heaven, but a legitimate part of my education. My problem was that I was too cheap, and, actually, I didn't have any money, to buy my own stuff. I was leery of buying from strangers on the boulevard, and I didn't have a clue how to score unless the stuff presented itself miraculously to me, as often enough it did. What this typically amounted to in practice was sponging dope off my friend, Steve Rosenberg. Steve is a good guy and in those days was and probably still is an excellent air hockey player, straight or high, although I sometimes kept him busy. As a general thing, however, he did not have very good smoke. It was many years later through a series of accidents that I discovered what cannabis at its best can and should be like. By that time, I had developed a preference for *majoun*, a substance made of roasted cannabis dissolved in heated butter, and featured as the star ingredient in a variety of confectionaries. These include the legendary space cake of Amsterdam, and the notorious, too



easily underestimated, party pot brownies, to be absorbed into the bloodstream more slowly but also more powerfully through the stomach than by capillaries in the lungs. Or made into the quaint little green pastilles that lyrically stimulated Charles Baudelaire.

What I remember more lucidly about smoking dope back in the golden days of my bacheliorate were the occasional “smoke-downs” in my dorm. I think then that everybody was getting high on a regular basis, and I was the innocent with respect to whatever my more urbane contemporaries were up to, trying against my better judgment sometimes to get with the program, usually struggling more than just a couple of years behind the curve.

A smoke-down, I learned, not wanting to overlook an opportunity to socialize with my dorm mates, was when you sit around in a big circle on the floor of an activity room and pass a bong loaded up with grass, or, in the case of the first one I went to, hashish. From Turkey, as it turns out, courtesy of one of the dorm directors, a stunning, impressively statuesque female African-American senior. You had to take a hit when the bong circulated round the group, or you had to leave the circle. This event, bear in mind, was announced with xeroxed notebook-sized pages scotch-taped to the glass dorm doors. In some sense it had the dorm’s approval and, by implication, that of the college. You didn’t want to leave the circle because you were meeting people and they played excellent music, there was free food going around on trays, and it was not something you could explain to your mom (not my mom, anyway), or anybody else who wasn’t there. It was something unusual and it was genuinely fun.

The circle by design becomes progressively smaller whenever somebody decides that they’ve had enough. This implies that your turn becomes increasingly more frequent, and soon you realize that you too, virtual cannabis virgin that you are, have now inhaled rather more than you need to get the idea, and that it may now be time to enjoy the rest of this exhilarating feeling by yourself, out walking in the cool night air. If only you can manage to unwrap your legs from one another and stand up gracefully with some confidence in front of your peers without ruining your pathetic social life for the foreseeable future, without having to consider transferring schools. Complicated movement, allowing sheer muscle memory to take over instead of conscious direction, turns out not to be as difficult as anticipated, although you can easily become over-amazed at your sudden unexpected locomotory abilities. You may want to make the world slow down, or to slow yourself down, experience



all the nuances of this otherwise inconsequential transaction, and share with people around you the wonder of finding your shoes, feeling for the first time just how properly they fit, and being able to walk a few steps to the toilet, where it seems to take an eternity to pee. Some brilliant jazz guitar by Joe Pass or Herb Ellis over the headphones, and then it's bedtime. In the morning, beyond a few selective droll memories, it's as though it all never happened. And yet you have been transformed. Now you know that your mind can seek out another quite interesting place with an interesting new outlook. That was a vintage college smoke-down, unmolested by the police and in some sense supported by the dorm with dorm facilities and funding. I doubt that there are many institutions in the United States today that still condone quite such a literal application of the concept of higher learning.

The other incident I remember as though it were yesterday took place in a so-called physics for poets class. We had a great but as far as I could tell completely square physics teacher who taught a watered-down concepts of physics course for persons innocent or scared to death of mathematics. The professor did brilliant demonstrations to show us the forces of physics at work, word of mouth about which was one of the things that had attracted me to the lectures. One day the professor was explaining the properties of a number of inert gasses, all sealed in large glass tubes with copper contact wires protruding. These he hooked up one by one to a dry cell battery in order to excite the gasses in each cylinder, producing an impressive bright color as electricity passed through. In a completely darkened room we sat in the little lecture amphitheater, where each gas had its chance to shine with a touch of the battery to its electrodes. There was appreciative polite applause such as normally followed a successful experiment. The professor must have thought he had finished the presentation at that point, because he started putting his equipment away and was going for the light switch, when a student's lazy gravelly voice called out from the pitch dark: 'Wait . . . do *argon* again.' An immediate silence fell, a pregnant pause interrupted at first only by audible intakes of breath, and then a chirping from the audience as more people joined the chorus: "Yeah. Do argon," "Do argon, man."

That, in retrospect, was the exact moment when I realized that large numbers of my classmates were probably having a different college experience than I had previously essayed, and were certainly enjoying more of a particular kind of fun than I had otherwise imagined. Was I overlooking the obvious here? Could there yet be something of wit in this *marijuana*?

