Hunter, Vegas. Let's talk about the basic paradox of a middle-class America which at the same time feeds the rising tide of a drug economy and accepts the legality of wholesale prohibition on the drugs most wanted, with painful penalties, both in trafficking and in use. There is nothing new about the perverse relationship between law and leisure by which whatever a society most wants it makes illegal. But America is supposed to be the land of popular government, government by debate, rule by compromise. Our laws as in effect are stamped with the disclaimer of popular consent: all parties affected have been duly informed, their opinions heard, their interests as citizens all equal, in the eyes of the
The good luck by which they are plunged into narcotic heaven is, after all, good luck. Serious adult individuals, they understand that the chance to burn through a trunk and a briefcase of controlled substances is not a chance to miss. In the pursuit of happiness does not exclude throwing your life away at the tables in Vegas, why should it exclude regulating the blood-flow and chemical interaction of your own body by means of certain drugs. To seize the day... And yet this is all still to miss the first point of Hunter’s exposition, the background
understanding that pervades the LSD cartoon of American life in all its twisted craziness in the Nixon years: Mister Duke and his Attorneys are contributing upper middle-class professionals. It just so happens that they cannot function without certain paradoxically illegal substances.

Yes, there is freedom in America, but also deep uncertainty and much loneliness and isolation, much stress and that strange, uncomfortable feeling of being trapped as a tiny gear in an invisible machine of the public good, a machine which simply cannot pause to take into account your individual success. To remain not a mechanical part but a human being. In the late 60's marijuana was already a middle-class drug, and LSD was
60’s marijuana was already a middle-class drug, and LSD was rapidly becoming one as well. And if not the drugs of the parents, then definitely the drugs of the children. How could it be that there were no deeper reasons than wanton disregard for law and order that hitched up drug use to unprecedented peaks? When a generation grows up to feel that it cannot dwell honestly under the laws of its land, then it is the laws that must bend to accommodate a changing people, or else the entire land falls into great injustice. It took some thirty years and unspeakable pollution of lakes and rivers in the US and for beyond our borders to put half the country on endless medications and “permitted” prescription drugs since Hunter’s book was just published. If more
marijuana, a simple plant, and some portions of LSD are the devil's offerings which as a nation we are so studiously trying to reject, would it not make so much more sense to discuss the matter as reasonable, well-meaning individuals participating in the public self-government of a land whose laws are written by the people and for the people.

If drugs in America answered the needs of even a relatively small proportion of the body of citizens, it would still have been a hideous hypocrisy to fight against the choices of those citizens rather than trying with all zeal to accept them: for whatever happened to the principle of the presumption of innocence? But considering the most obvious fact that we have built a rapid, non-seasonal, dislocating world in which the choice of chemical is paramount to the choice of transporta-
Presumption of innocence? But considering the most obvious fact that we have built a rapid, non-seasonal, dislocating world in which the choice of chemical is paramount to the choice of transportation, what could be more naive or more dangerously out of touch with the necessities of reason than to prohibit the use of vegetable goods only to replace them with dubious synthetics. Point Two: hopped up, closed up, coked up, drowning in acid and flying on speed, with as much mescaline in their nostrils as desert sun in their eyes and drinking rum like paid days lap water from a ditch, the two adventurers are still less sociopathic than the full-time inhabitants of Vegas Strip they meet. These lovely law-abiding (law-enforcing) individuals have learned to get their highs from other people’s lows and get their best kicks out of a boast in someone else’s face—or even in their own face, per
vided it is the right lacquered heel that's kicking. And it is no metaphorical stamping they all have in mind. Fear: the hometown of the American Dream is a terrifying place. Mister Duke and his Titans, legally speaking, the sociopaths of the situation, are also the most vulnerable and the most exposed to Sober People's harm. They themselves do weigh their share of mayhem, but it is exactly this very recklessness which actually keeps them safe amidst people who have agreed to the cut a lifestyle of abuse: passive observers (whether through an easy disposition or through the transubstantiate of heavy drugs) are pressed upon in this crazy place. The drugs keep Mister Duke from turning away in disgust from the crude realities of the city of Vegas. The only way for a conscientious writer to...

The drugs keep Mister Duke from turning away in disgust from the crude realities of the city of Vegas: the only way for a conscientious man to look the madness of our American life flat in the face is to become himself a madman. And if you want to look clearly at the most insane place of them all, then you really had better come packing a trunk and a briefcase of the strongest stuff. Until the fear of complete participation in the evils of the world has passed away from before your senses, you will not perceive how terrifying the faces of those who smile at you and use you really are. But the Fear is also the drug user's inalienable fear under influence. This pills and powders do give Mister Duke the consciousness of self-abuse to witness truly the aches of the human beings who surround him. That does not make the substances he brings any the less a brew of poisons. The alcoholic, fully sanctioned by the bu
Often thinks: "What am I doing to myself?" Victim of a powerful compound, the user of a "controlled substance" needs no vague feeling of guilt at wasted potential to spiral down the drain of relapse and abuse; there is no room for doubting: the ubiquitous and frightening drug laws offer full assurance that the poor self-poisoner is a vile, disgusting criminal against the State. Grounds for extra-fascination anyone? Those very powers of Democratic Law and Order which we have all been brought up to believe exist in order to protect us from the evils inherent in even the most well-disposed nations, societies—here to hunt you down: because you yourself have made yourself into a social evil. Or, even the harmless Pot Smoker is known he is in danger. For behold he is a danger and we shall store him to
You give us an antisocial wretched thing, you have made yourself into a social evil. Even the harmless pot smoker knows he is in danger. For behold he is a danger and we shall stone him to death.

So times have changed. Jurisdiction has changed and possession is no longer a criminal offence. In some states, at any rate, it does not change the fact the unfortunately big, big man is the biggest narcotics lord in the nation; he gets to pick and choose what stuff is right or left on his turf. Or would you say that if heroin were rendered legal you would not soon learn to love sympathy for drug addicts after two or three good people whom you know confessed to you that the strange new product helps them keep an open mind? Except of course it would not be called “dirt” anymore. It just
imagine if aspirin becomes illegal. From illegal to immoral is not a leap of faith; it is a logical connection. It would become only reasonable to pause in moral hesitation at the prospect of a migraine.

Well Coca-Cola used to consist of cocaine, wine and kola nuts. What does a Coke consist of now and why is today’s table of contents somehow morally superior to the table of contents of 100 years ago? What is the moral value of a grinding headache? How much damage have we done not only to ourselves but to the land we live on, to the air we breathe and the water we rely on, by trying to replace simple and powerful substances with obvious medicinal effects with other, “legal” compounds? What makes the addictive caffeine base Coke and Pepsi legal except for the fact that they have been complicated from what is all the harm they do?
we try in, by trying to replace simple and powerful substances with obvious medicinal effects with other, “legal” compounds? What makes the addictive caffeine base of Coke and Pepsi legal except for the fact that they have been compounding for a brew which avoids all the currently forbidden substances? What about the complex and expensive pain killer which could be produced more cheaply and with fewer side effects by replacing half the active ingredients with morphine? And how about the uninvestigated benefits of marijuana-based medicines or the frenzied research on LSD, the same inside the Holy Grail of psychiatric therapies? This is the absurd and perverse hide-and-seek game of legal substance today—illegal substance tomorrow is literally something straight from the Dark Ages. We have great power for good and instead we expend tremendous resources in order not to learn how to use it, as if medical research were a case of forbidden knowledge.
Hunter’s adventurers leave Vegas running. And they do turn against one another in their flight. Just as there is no book that will make you live an honest life, so there is no medicine that will free you from the need of being human. I have been putting the words “or trampled substances” into quotation marks for a reason: the legal term cuts with a double edge. Anything powerful in this world is also dangerous misused; but, as the saying goes: “the dull razor will cut you.” Nowhere does Hunter say that the drugs themselves are the final answer. But if there is a principle in your country, that to find happiness in life is a citizen’s right as a human being, then to put a wholesale ban on an entire sphere of self-experience and pleasure is simply not honest. Pretenses aside, Hunter teaches us, drugs are both desired and desirable in the “American state.” “Controlled” is exactly what these substances should be taken in.
self-experience and pleasure is simply not honest. Pretenses aside, Hunter teaches us, drugs are both desired and desirable in the American state. "Controlled" is exactly what these substances should be: taken in reasonable doses, with an understanding of effects. If real war - War on Drugs would be an educational program, front in the endless human war on ignorance. Only in a barbaric world can drug addiction be the basis for moral condemnation. America could become a true star of freedom for the world; but this will not happen until first we liberate ourselves from hypocrisy, from ignorance. From the most blind belief in forcing ourselves to be good.