

INTRODUCTION to *Fourth Edition*

By *Albert Hofmann*

On my 102nd birthday, I feel a profound sense of satisfaction and peace to be able to witness while I am still alive a budding renaissance in legal psychedelic research. The culmination of this quiet renewal, which has been building since about 1990, is the resumption of LSD psychotherapy research, which has now been approved for the first time in about 35 years. LSD is the most stigmatized of all the psychedelics and is the last to reenter the laboratory.

As I reflect on all the LSD and psilocybin research that has been conducted to date, I'm most appreciative of the work of Dr. Stanislav Grof, author of *LSD Psychotherapy*. If I am the father of LSD, Stan Grof is the godfather. Nobody has contributed as much as Stan for the development of my problem child. Not only does Stan have more direct experience than anybody else sitting with patients under the influence LSD, but he also has cultivated a clarity of intellect and a strength of emotion that enabled him to develop a theory and a method of LSD-assisted psychotherapy. In this superb textbook, Stan describes in detail a method of therapy that hasn't been practiced for decades and painstakingly explains how his theories of mind grew out of the empirical observations that he made during his LSD research studies. *LSD Psychotherapy* is a powerful, sustained and persuasive argument for the renewal of psychedelic research.

LSD and psilocybin are not drugs in the usual sense, but are part of the sacred substances, which have been used for thousand of years in ritual settings. The classic psychedelics like LSD, psilocybin and mescaline are characterized by the fact that they are neither toxic nor addictive. It is my great concern to separate psychedelics from the ongoing debates about drugs, and to highlight the tremendous potential inherent to these substances for

self-awareness, as an adjunct in therapy, and for fundamental research into the human mind. In all of these areas, Stan has been an outstanding pioneer.

Alienation from nature and the loss of the experience of being part of the living creation is the greatest tragedy of our materialistic era. It is the causative reason for ecological devastation and climate change. Therefore I attribute absolute highest importance to consciousness change. I regard psychedelics as catalyzers for this. They are tools which are guiding our perception toward other deeper areas of our human existence, so that we again become aware of our spiritual essence. Psychedelic experiences in a safe setting can help our consciousness open up to this sensation of connection and of being one with nature. The elegance of Stan's approach to LSD psychotherapy is that it blends psychotherapeutic with existential insights, as in the days of old when therapy and religion were co-mingled.

It is my wish that a modern Eleusis and a modern psychiatry will emerge, in which seeking humans can learn to have transcendent experiences with sacred substances in a safe setting, and in which LSD and other psychedelics become once again tools for psychotherapeutic healing and for discovery of the breadth and depth of the mind. When that day comes, Stan will have laid the cornerstone and his classic work, *LSD Psychotherapy*, will be the jumping off point for further developments and refinements.

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FOREWORD

By Andrew Weil, M.D.

It seems astonishing that almost half a century after Stan Grof began using LSD as a tool in psychotherapy, the drug remains off limits for therapeutic purposes and even for medical research. In purely physiological terms, lysergic acid diethylamide is the least toxic drug known to science. It does not kill, even in massive overdose, and despite producing dramatic changes in consciousness, has no adverse or lasting effects on the body. Numerous case reports testify to its positive potential in psychotherapeutic use – for the treatment of addictions, neuroses, and anxiety disorders — and there are suggestions of further usefulness in treating chronic medical illness, including pain syndromes. Nevertheless, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, LSD remains a demonized drug in most societies, officially declared to be both dangerous and devoid of therapeutic value.

The reasons for this irrational state of affairs are several. One is that LSD has kept “bad company” in the past: with hippies, revolutionaries, rock-and-roll fanatics, and other elements of society perceived by the dominant culture as antisocial and subversive. It is also, by law and necessity, now forced to keep company with other “drugs of abuse,” including cocaine and heroin, whose dangers are obvious and frightening. Furthermore, LSD has a reputation as a kind of stealth drug, since it produces its effects in amounts so small as to be invisible. The ease of smuggling and concealing it fuels fantasies of its being slipped to unsuspecting victims, even put into water supplies to render whole populations psychotic and helpless. It was this characteristic of LSD that made it attractive to the military and the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1950s as a possible tool for purposes far from therapeutic.

For medical and psychiatric professionals, LSD is problematic in

another way. Its effects are highly variable from person to person and exquisitely dependent on set and setting, that is, on expectation and environment. LSD sessions can be trips to heaven or hell, and the apparent unpredictability of the direction they take has scared off both researchers and therapists.

In fact, the chance that an LSD reaction will be hellish is not so unpredictable. It increases with dose, with lack of preparation of the subject, and with lack of attention to environmental factors that promote anxiety or security. In the hands of a skilled and experienced therapist like Stanislav Grof, LSD was quite safe, and the reactions it produced were manageable and useful, even if intense. “Experienced” in this context must include having had personal experience with the drug.

This is not an easy point to explain to the medical community. Doctors value drugs that work as magic bullets – that have precise, predictable actions, relatively consistent from person to person and explainable in terms of specific biochemical mechanisms, not in terms of practitioner experience or patient expectation. Psychiatrists and others who read published reports of early therapeutic successes with LSD and attempted to use it as a magic bullet without attention to set, setting, or their own experience failed to reproduce the desired results. Almost half a century later, with traditional psychotherapy largely replaced by overwhelming prescribing of psychopharmaceutical magic bullets (the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor antidepressants accounting for a lion’s share of the prescriptions), the chances of psychiatrists and others understanding the subtleties and artfulness of LSD psychotherapy seem smaller than ever.

Nonetheless I believe it remains worth the effort to try to increase that understanding, because the therapeutic potential of LSD is undiminished. Perhaps, now that recreational use of the drug has subsided and stabilized and authorities are much more worried about other psychoactive agents, the time is right to reopen the conversation. I can think of no better way to do so than to publish this ground-breaking book in a new edition. *LSD Psychotherapy* is a classic work in both the psychotherapeutic and psychopharmacological traditions, and I very much hope that Stan Grof’s experience and wisdom will find a new and wider readership in the new century.

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