

Letter from Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

On The Other Side

I INITIALLY COMPLETED THIS LETTER on April 16, 2008—exactly four years after Michael and Annie Mithoefer conducted their first MDMA-assisted psychotherapy session on April 16, 2004. Coincidentally, sixty-five years before, on April 16, 1943, the world's first LSD experience took place when Dr. Albert Hofmann accidentally ingested some LSD he was synthesizing. I'm now rewriting this on May 1, to note with sadness, and in celebration of a life gloriously lived, that Albert died on April 29, at the age of 102. All MAPS members can take great satisfaction in knowing that Albert lived long enough to see with his own eyes the recent approval of Dr. Peter Gasser's MAPS-sponsored Swiss LSD/end-of-life anxiety protocol—to become the first study of LSD-assisted psychotherapy in over thirty-six years. Albert felt that the renewal of LSD-assisted psychotherapy research was the “fulfillment of my heart's desire.” It was a pleasure to tell Albert several weeks ago that I looked forward to discussing the final results with him in about a year and a half.

He laughed and said that he'd help anyway he could, either from this side or the other side. Now, he's on the other side, as it falls to us to shepherd LSD back into medical use.

Although MAPS' primary focus is on sponsoring research into the therapeutic uses of psychedelics and marijuana—in order to develop them into legal prescription medicines—we believe that these substances are multipurpose tools. They can be used beneficially in contexts other than just medical use such as in religious/spiritual settings, to enhance intellectual and artistic creativity, for scientific studies of consciousness and the mind, for celebratory/recreational purposes, to deepen emotional relationships, or for practical problem-solving tasks.

This special issue of the *MAPS Bulletin* is primarily about psychedelics and technology. It focuses on the use of psychedelics for intellectual and artistic problem-solving and creativity. This issue also features an article about psychedelic pioneer Laura Huxley, who passed away recently, by activist Valerie Corral. (Valerie was a member of a support team that assisted 96-year old Laura in her dying process). It also includes a painting and photos of Laura. Laura's book, *This Timeless Moment*, about how she assisted Aldous Huxley in his dying process in 1962, has been a profound inspiration to many psychedelic activists. Aldous' classic book, *Brave New World*, has also been an inspiration, since it highlights the need for technological advancement to be matched by growth of the human spirit. Psychedelics can help facilitate this growth.

In August of 1966 the last paper in the scientific literature exploring the use of psychedelics for creativity

was published, “Psychedelic agents in creative problem-solving: a pilot study.” This paper, by Harman, McKim, Mogar, Fadiman and Stolaroff—which appeared in *Psychological Reports*—concluded “Tentative findings based on tests of creativity, on subjective reports and self ratings, and on the utility of problem solutions suggested that, if given according to this carefully structured regimen, psychedelic agents seem to facilitate creative problem-solving, particularly in the ‘illumination phase.’” Doses administered were 200 milligrams of mescaline sulfate (the approximate equivalent of 100 mcg. of LSD).

Psychedelic research at Harvard also ended in 1966. After almost forty-two years it resumed on February 23, 2008, in a MAPS-catalyzed study that administered MDMA-assisted psychotherapy to a patient with anxiety associated with advanced-stage cancer. Perhaps the renewal of research into psychedelics and creativity isn't all that far off.

Close at hand is the completion of MAPS' U.S. MDMA/PTSD pilot study, conducted by Dr. Michael Mithoefer and Annie Mithoefer, BSN. This is MAPS' first FDA-approved psychedelic psychotherapy protocol and top priority project. The final experimental session in the study is scheduled for July, 2008, when the 21st subject will receive his third MDMA-assisted psychotherapy session. The study will have taken more than four years to complete. It will end up having cost MAPS about \$1 million to design, obtain permission for, conduct, monitor, analyze, and write a paper for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Most importantly, the study is generating remarkably promising results. We are attempting to replicate these results in MAPS-sponsored MDMA/PTSD pilot studies in Switzerland and Israel. We're also in the development stage for additional MDMA/PTSD pilot studies in Canada, Spain, and France.

The next breakthrough we're working toward is to obtain FDA permission to administer MDMA to therapists who are in training to conduct MDMA/PTSD research. It is our view that therapists administering MDMA to their patients will be more effective if they have experienced MDMA themselves. In order to prove safety and efficacy—and to obtain approval for prescription use—we need to train about twenty to thirty new male/female co-therapist teams to conduct the two multisite Phase 3 studies required by the FDA and the European Medicines Agency.

On behalf of MAPS staff and researchers, our deepest thanks to all MAPS members for your generous support over the years. Together, we have amazing opportunities ahead, on this side, with help from the other side.

 — Rick Doblin, Ph.D., MAPS President