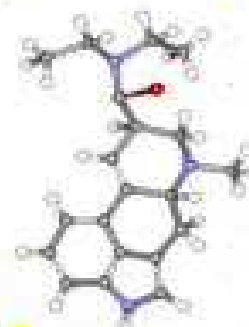


LSD

From Problem Child to Wonder Drug

(A symposium in celebration
of Albert Hofmann's 100th birthday)

Story by Rak Razam



100TH BIRTHDAY



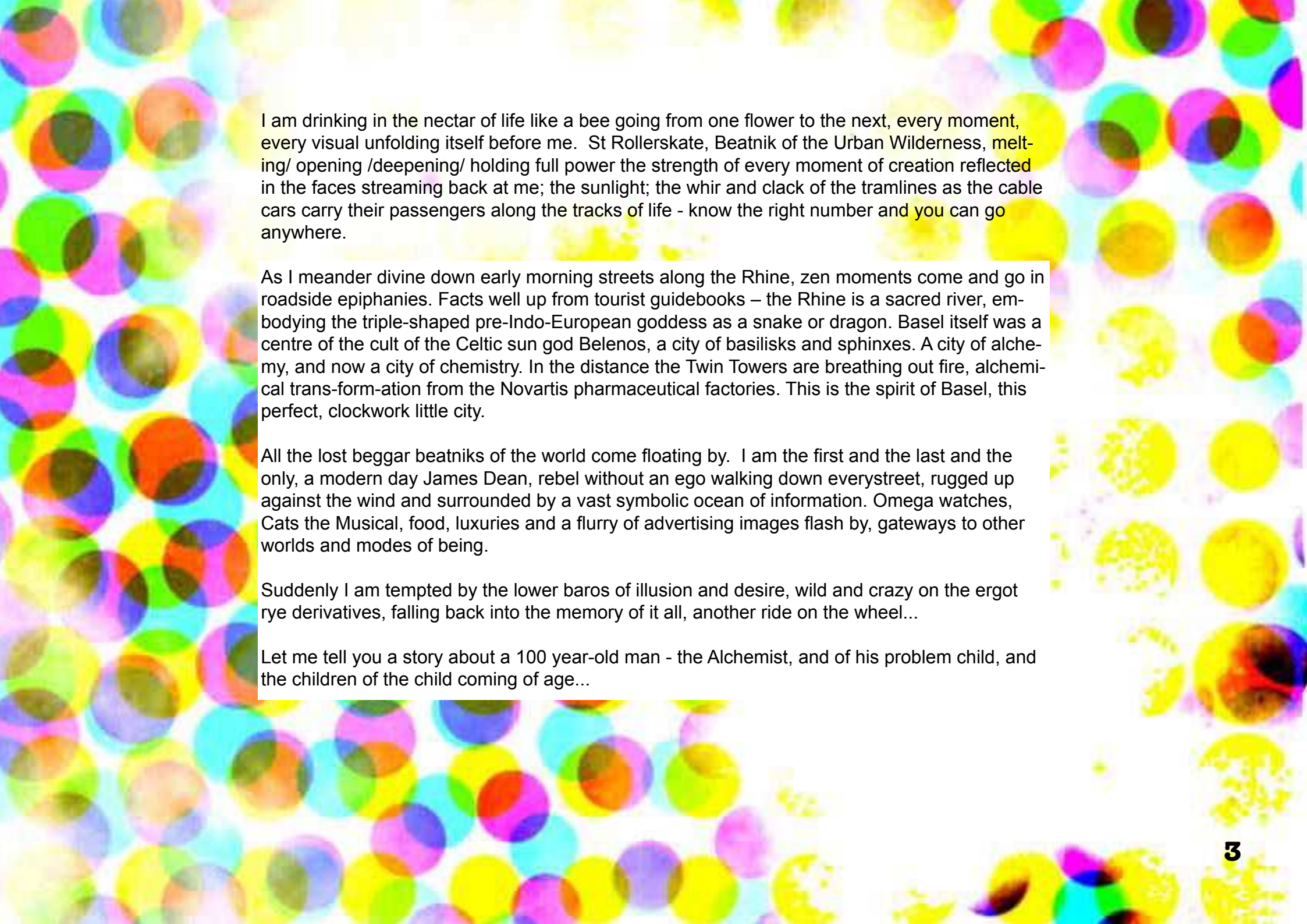
REBIRTH: The Psychedelic Movement Comes Of Age

In the End I was cast out of the alchemists' den, a lost mystic exile from the beats, wandering the naked streets of Basel at dawn and transmitting a lovely fix. I was high on acid, a green tab of Hofmann's bicycle wheel I had reverently acquired from the Californian High Priest nights before, high in the hotel room overlooking the tram depot opposite the Basel Congress Centre. Site of the conference diabolique with Dr. Albert Hofmann, the 100 year old Alchemist that birthed LSD - the 'Problem Child' that switched on the world.

Now: cloudbanks are/ rolling/ blooming/ shifting overhead and as they open up and become for me everything else is doing the same – trees, cars, people - especially people.

These beautiful marionette citizens of Basel, heading off to work, rugged up against the winter chill. They are polite, cool, efficiently progressing through the basic programs of larval life. Light glistens past a woman on the second floor balcony of an apartment block as she shakes out a blanket. Down below, surrounded by layers of white, white snow, a middle-aged man is walking his dog. He waits patiently, well trained, as it sniffs a pole. They are radiating energy signatures that overlap like kaleidoscope pictures and sink deep into me.

You know this feeling, the current. A stream of energy is bubbling within you straight from the source, and the more you let go and let it rise up and blossom in/ from you, the deeper in you go. A million sensory impressions flood the psychic networks. Atomic consciousness in the mocha blend of a Starbucks coffee.



I am drinking in the nectar of life like a bee going from one flower to the next, every moment, every visual unfolding itself before me. St Rollerskate, Beatnik of the Urban Wilderness, melting/ opening /deepening/ holding full power the strength of every moment of creation reflected in the faces streaming back at me; the sunlight; the whir and clack of the tramlines as the cable cars carry their passengers along the tracks of life - know the right number and you can go anywhere.

As I meander divine down early morning streets along the Rhine, zen moments come and go in roadside epiphanies. Facts well up from tourist guidebooks – the Rhine is a sacred river, embodying the triple-shaped pre-Indo-European goddess as a snake or dragon. Basel itself was a centre of the cult of the Celtic sun god Belenos, a city of basilisks and sphinxes. A city of alchemy, and now a city of chemistry. In the distance the Twin Towers are breathing out fire, alchemical trans-form-ation from the Novartis pharmaceutical factories. This is the spirit of Basel, this perfect, clockwork little city.

All the lost beggar beatniks of the world come floating by. I am the first and the last and the only, a modern day James Dean, rebel without an ego walking down every street, rugged up against the wind and surrounded by a vast symbolic ocean of information. Omega watches, Cats the Musical, food, luxuries and a flurry of advertising images flash by, gateways to other worlds and modes of being.

Suddenly I am tempted by the lower bars of illusion and desire, wild and crazy on the ergot rye derivatives, falling back into the memory of it all, another ride on the wheel...

Let me tell you a story about a 100 year-old man - the Alchemist, and of his problem child, and the children of the child coming of age...

Downtown, at the prestigious Congress Centre, the name of the symposium is in two foot LCD letters on a digital billboard, framed by neon stars: LSD up in lights, the problem child made good at last. This was to be the largest international conference of LSD and consciousness issues in history. Who would've thought?



Ah, the Symposium, last outpost of respectable theory. What a trip. You see, I came here to Basel to be a journalist and the rules of that game are simple - you report the facts. And while I might take a while to kick into gear, dear reader, Dr. Razam is most definitely, gonzo.

Not at all like the tall, lanky BBC woman, weighed down by her sound gear and boom, a radio technician at her side as she interviews the experts. She has emailed Harvard already - bloody efficient of her - and gotten permission from Cindy (the media representative that keeps their doctors on very tight leashes) to grill them on the latest word in medical psychedelics.

BBC woman goes through the motions, asks the right questions - the medicine of this, the study of that - and somewhere down the track the word will be broadcast all over the world that LSD is coming back, safely and medically, and septuagenarian Flower Children will perk up from their favourite armchairs and say, "Corr, I wouldn't mind a bit of FREE LOVE then, you remember, ey, Ronnie? You remember the 60s then, LSD, all that? It's coming back, Ronnie."

Let's be frank, shall we?

The Psychedelic Movement is like an iceberg with nine-tenths of it's mass under the surface. As it rises up from the underground it causes ripples throughout mainstream culture. Some of it can be told; most of it has to be felt - action, not theory. And even when it has been experienced, words still slip off the central mystery as we grope towards a knowing beyond linguistics, towards a language of the soul.

I listen to the seminars, I hear the authors, the researchers and the doctors. I sit and roll joints with media from five continents and drink beer and swap footage and the best shots of Dr. Hofmann with each other like trading cards. I know I am a journalist as I have the press pass I wear around my neck that signifies my burden. And this is the great problem. How much do you really want to know? How deep goes the rabbit hole? How many socks have you got to throw down it?

History does repeat itself, sort of, but it's more like a spiral than a circle - the details change and evolve but the underlying energy comes around again. And the times, they are-a-changin'... The history of LSD unfolded in the flesh before my eyes over those three days in Basel, as the trippers of the world all gathered in one spot, neurons in a global brain coming together and transmitting the idea of themselves to the world. Something is blowing in the wind, and it may be your mind...

Because for all the brothers, sisters, lovers, children, parents, grandchildren, DEA agents, hippies and freaks and assorted members of the global Psy-Tribe that attended the symposium, their day had come. It was the 100th birthday of the man who fell from heaven to give birth the sacrament, and the acid veterans, space cases and psychonauts of the Global Village gathered to honor him. Are you ready, then?



HEADS: From the blog of Dr. Razam
Friday 13th Jan, 2006
Basel, Switzerland
DAY ONE: He did ride for our sins

On crutches, he walks slowly into the cavernous San Francisco seminar room to thunderous applause from the thousands of his spiritual children: the chemists and the doctors, the trippers and the psychonauts that his so called problem child has spawned.

They call him "The father of LSD" - d-lysergic acid diethylamide . He is the eldest altered statesman of all, Dr. Albert Hofmann...

He's wearing a blue suit and a tie, always the respectable chemist. His neat white hair is brushed back and there's an energy and vitality in his eyes that belies his years. "In the realm of the mind you have more power than kings and politicians," the President of Switzerland said in his birthday greeting, days earlier. On the big screen behind the speakers they flash Albert's image and he looks, incongruously, like a Nazi war criminal, one of those media images of old men on the dock for crimes committed decades ago.

But there is an air of quiet dignity to this elderly gentleman as he takes to the stage, guided by his friends and colleagues and overseen by a Swiss police guard at all times. He listens to the opening accolades quietly, modestly, a history rehash he's heard a thousand times before. It all started innocently enough one curious Spring day in 1943, as Lucius Werthmuller, one of the organisers of the symposium, recounts from Albert's autobiography, "LSD: My Problem Child":

"On the afternoon of April 16, 1943, while preparing derivatives of lysergic acid I had to leave my lab suddenly. I felt something was happening to me. Whatever I imagined came into my mind as images. It was a horror trip and I felt like the end was nigh. I thought that this was the end. But in the morning I felt re-invigorated, as if new life was entering my body - it was a wonderful feeling. It was impossible to describe how wonderful this experience was."

Hofmann says he had a "strange presentiment" to re-examine this chemical, first synthesised five years earlier then left on the shelf when animal tests proved inconclusive. The psychedelic mythology has it that some higher force guided his hand, balancing out the growing threat posed by the atomic bomb with a psychedelic explosion of higher consciousness.

"LSD came to me - I didn't look for it. LSD wanted to be found, it wanted to tell me something. If I had worked 100% safely and taken all proper precautions then we would not be here today. So sometimes it pays not to be perfect!" Hofmann jokes, telling the story himself.

Down below, in the cavernous 'San Francisco' ballroom, the crowd is hanging off the auric tentacles cast by Dr. Hofmann's 100 year-old presense. They are a patchwork community made up of trancers, pensioners, activists, healers, media, drug nerds, students, parents, consciousness enthusiasts and undercover law-enforcement officials who might just learn something if they stick around long enough. Albert's Swiss security guard is trying to keep a straight face but you can see the subject matter is getting to him.

LSD It is extracted from ergot derivatives, used by midwives for centuries to stop post-childbirth bleeding. Ergot Rye is the fungus that swept the Middle Ages causing mass hallucinations and biblical revelations for millions, St Anthony's Fire they called it. The bike ride this modern shaman went on also helped unlock a 4000 year-old secret first used as part of the Elusian mysteries by the ancient Greeks. It was later revealed to be similar to the active property in morning glory seeds. Initiates of historical note include Socrates, Plato, Sophocles, Aristotle, Aeschylus, Cicero, Pindar, and possibly Homer. And of course, it caused a little stir with the Hippies of the Haight-Ashbury and much of Western culture in the 1960s. Tim Leary, Ken Kesey, Aldous Huxley, Cary Grant, Stanley Kubrick, Elvis...to name just a few modern initiates.


The publisher of Time/Life magazine, Henry Luce, described "chatting up God" on a golf course during an LSD session in the 50s. Perhaps more revealingly, his right-wing ideologue wife, Claire Boothe Luce, believed that LSD was a valuable tool for the intelligentsia, but not for the commoners. "We wouldn't want everyone doing too much of a good thing," she was quoted as saying.

LSD's history is, quite simply, a lurid, explosive affair - a mix between day-glo hotpants, a Jackie Collins novel and a soon-to-be filmed Oliver Stone docu-pic about your grandparents showing gratuitous naked breasts, tipis and communal love-ins. But deeper, remember, the iceberg goes deeper.

"LSD is the closest, the most dense, the most mysterious link between the material and the spiritual world. A hardly visible trace of LSD matter is capable of evoking heaven or hell in the spiritual world, i.e. in human consciousness," Dr. Hofmann said in March 2005, on the occasion of the opening of the Ludlow Santo Domingo Library in Geneva.

Up on stage now, Hofmann tries to explain the point of view of a man with a lot of history under his belt and a unique perspective to share. "LSD is part of the sacred drugs," he says in firm, German tones, translated by our wireless headsets, the wise shaman-elder of this tribe, the prime creator. To see him here at this age, so vibrant, so passionate about his creation and the good that it could do in the world, I kinda get that old time religious fervour. I look around at the others in the crowd and they're all smiling, buzzing off the moment as well. Is this what it feels like to be a believer?

"But very often people did not create the right environment for LSD. On the one hand it was a blessing. On the second hand people weren't careful enough. And it got back to Sandoz and the company was blamed, and they started to regard it as a 'bad substance.'"



Sandoz, now Novartis, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, still value Dr. Hofmann. Despite dropping the patent and the bad press associated with it, they respect the creator, the man who sat on the Nobel Prize committee for years (it is rumoured that if not for the controversy LSD caused in the counter-culture of the 1960s, Hofmann may have received the award himself, for his contributions to chemistry). When the Basel Congress Centre was booked by Novartis for a very different type of drug conference the very same weekend as Dr. Hofmann's 100th birthday, there were some quick negotiations, and eventually Novartis rescheduled. They know the score. They too, have partaken of the good doctor's numinous ways.


But that 'bad substance' of theirs sure got some bad press over the years. By the early 1960s LSD escaped the lab and made its way to the streets of the world. Its medical properties were over shadowed as the drug quickly became a political problem.

"The powers that be wanted to take this sacred drug away from the youth movement," Albert continues, gesticulating strongly. "The LSD laws were written to criminalize this specific chemical, and the rest of the world followed suit," he says, his face coming alive with the spirit that guides him. "But LSD did survive. This shows we will not stop valuing the LSD experience."

Scientific American estimates there are seven million Americans who had used LSD by the time it became illegal in 1966, forty years ago this October. Two generations later, the number is anyone's guess. R.U. Sirius, co-founder of Mondo 2000, says that on the internet, "millions of youths log on to psychedelic bulletin boards. Read through the public conversations, and you'll start to wonder how many young psychedelic chemists conversant in biotechnology, comparative religion and visionary literature, are hiding in the American heartland."

What is known is that the psychedelic community is inter-generational in a direct inversion of the 60s 'generation gap'. And the elders of the Tribe are making themselves known. Serious-minded chemists, doctors, middle-aged academics with flecks of grey hair and wrinkles, dressed with Indian beads and accompanied by indigenous musical instruments - all the old hippies are back, sharing their experience with younger generations hungry for knowledge.

These are the elders of the mainly white, male, intellectual-sacred path. Harvard witch-doctors and FDA-approved shamen, those who legally or illegally travel to other worlds and bring back fragments to illuminate the human condition, or, more likely these days, those who just file reports on the younger psychonauts that do.



And the Grand-Poo-bah of them all is Albert Hofmann, grandfather-child to them all. Shhh, listen; he's recounting his secret origin: "Taking LSD reminded me of experiences I had as a child..." he begins, a twinkle in his eye. He's looking up to the light above, I wonder what he's seeing? "It came back to me taking that first LSD trip. It made me so sure of myself. It brought an inner joy, as well as a gratefulness for this internal sensitivity that few can experience. To be part of the miracle of Creation..."

The Hofmann's were living in a flat in an apartment block in Baden, a small Swiss town exactly 100 years ago when Albert was born. His father was an unskilled worker who became the plant manager for a turbine company. His mother was a washerwoman. Hofmann, in Deutsche, means farmer, or of the land. Hoffmann with two 'f's means truth.

Albert was the oldest child of five children. He describes his childhood as no different than someone who was born 2000 years ago. When the telephone first came to Baden people reacted in the same way long-lost tribes reacted to technology when first contacted by the outside world: They gathered all the neighbours round to listen to the sounds of voices from far away. The paradigm was struck. The curtain peeled back as the 20th Century revealed it's magic.

As he recalls the meadows and the butterflies of his youth, his scarcely wrinkled face lights up. "I was always in nature, you know. I had my first mind expansion as a child, but I didn't tell anyone. But it was so beautiful. I never forgot it."

He spent a lot of time alone, down by the pond or playing around the ruins of a castle nearby. His experiences with nature were as intense as his relations with people, and sometimes, out there in the deep woods, he would spontaneously enter into transcendental states of consciousness. The light would get brighter, richer and deeper; sounds would intensify as the young boy-mystic felt a one-ness with Creation...

"And I wondered," he says, this hundred-year old man. "Is this the secret that the adults know, that they don't tell the children?"

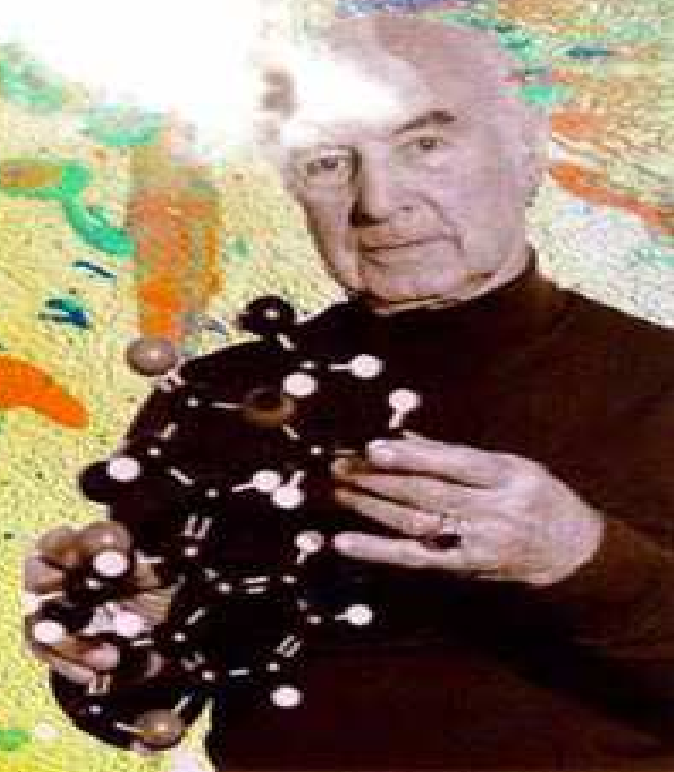
When he was 12, his father was diagnosed with black lung disease and was forced to take a job in the city. The Hofmann's moved their growing family to a tenement. It felt like an expulsion from paradise, a fallen Adam made to leave the garden and live in the dreary city.

With the patronage of a wealthy uncle, Albert was able to attend high school, and excel. When he took the equivalent of his (British) A Levels, he came second best in his class, specialising in Latin and Biology. He found he had a talent for drawing and music, and he also had a mind to be an artist. With such a Renaissance-Man grasp of subjects under his belt, it was much to everyone's surprise that he announced he was going to university to study chemistry.

His teachers were horrified. "Chemistry? Do you want to produce poison for the next war?" they remonstrated him.



LSD (COO11112810)



Prophetic words, as LSD would become illegal decades later, in one of those many next wars waged by nation-states of the Empire. On Oct 16, 1966 in California, LSD was made a schedule-1 drug, seen as having no 'medical or scientific value', despite 23 years of successful testing for rehabilitation, addiction and other mental disorders.

After acid, Albert synthesised mescaline from the sacred cactus, and, of course, psilocybin from the mushrooms. He also produced other legal drugs for Novartis, for the relief of pain and anxiety, and for reducing bleeding in childbirth, patents which still rake in the money today. And then? Well, he retired from active chemistry and took up the skill of living, getting back to the nature he loves so much.

And now, at 100, he no longer has to trip. Dr Hofmann has become a living drug. He has become the child again, transformed by his alchemy, you can see it in the way he carries himself, the energy and the assurance. And the children know the way, they speak the language of the heart.

When his peers on stage present him with a giant bouquet of roses he gets up from his chair to accept them, overwhelmed with emotion. His face is beaming as he says, translated from the German, "these roses are made of the same matter that makes all of us. We must appreciate the beauty of nature. Science and technology are good, but they move us away from nature, and we must move back towards it." There's a collective sigh from many in the room and a spontaneous outburst of tears.

Whew. After that there's nothing better but to hit the bar. Albert leaves in another storm of tears and applause as the acid paparazzi drown him in the light of a thousand cameras and he slowly exits the hall on crutches, the wounded healer of the Tribe.

It's Friday the 13th and a full moon tomorrow, but the energy is strongest now. There's going to be a boat party with Eat Static and other Trance acts playing tonight. My hostel buddy Maria, a sultry, street wise Portuguese photojournalist is going. She went up to Dr. Hofmann as he exited the press conference and gave him a kiss on the cheek and said, " Thank you, Dr. Hofmann for what you have given us..."

Two hours later I'm mildly drunk at the bar with her, discussing the deep and meaningful of life. Whole generations of the Psychedelic Movement are walking around like at a fun fair, high on the buzz of each other. But the day is young, and there are Heads to meet and there is history to be learned, a cultural mythology to share. Deeper, down under the iceberg we go...

HEADS: From the blog of Dr. Razam

Friday 13th Jan, 2006

Basel, Switzerland

DAY ONE, LATE AFTERNOON: LESS FREE THAN A CRO-MAGNUM

For a good decade or so from the late forties to the early 1960s, LSD was the bees knees, and everybody was doing it.

Al Hubbard was a doctor (nicknamed 'Captain Trips') who had secret connections to the CIA. He indoctrinated an estimated 6,000 people to LSD before it was effectively banned in 1966, sharing the sacrament with a prominent Monsignor of the Catholic Church in North America, plumbing the roots of alcoholism with AA founder Bill Wilson, and gatecrashing the pearly gates with Aldous Huxley (in a session that resulted in the psychedelic tome *Doors of Perception*). It was through Hubbard (who was rumoured to have the biggest supply of LSD in the world after Sandoz themselves) that many of the Beverly Hills psychiatrists turned on actors Cary Grant, James Coburn, Jack Nicholson, novelist Anaïs Nin, and filmmaker Stanley Kubrick, amongst hundreds of others. And it was around here the cultural vector of LSD started charting off the scale, as word of mouth spread to the street and recreational use kicked off.

If the 50s was the era of the bomb then LSD also gave off its fair share of psychic fallout. Underground tests on volunteers by the British and American military were common, and the powers of the time reported that if LSD could be fired in a rocket and released over the Soviet Union "it could at a stroke put the entire Red Army out of action".

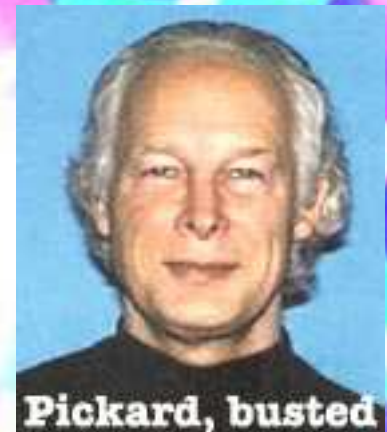
According to Martin A. Lee, author of 'Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD', there was over a decade of legal and illegal testing of LSD by the CIA on its own men, from 1953 - 1966, when they dosed unsuspecting doctors and servicemen - the "CIA Space Cowboys" - to see if the chemical would make an efficient brainwashing mechanism. There were even plans, later over ridden, to dose the punch at the 1954 CIA Christmas party.

After almost 20 years of 'research' with LSD, the CIA gave up their experiments after not only failing to brainwash recipients, but noting that sometimes the dosing increased their psychic tenacity to not co-operate. A recent exhumation of the body of Dr. Frank Olson (who was thought to have jumped from a hotel window in 1953 whilst high on CIA-dosed LSD) has shown that he was in fact, murdered. Olson's son hypothesises that Dr. Olson, who was involved in clandestine American chemical warfare testing, had wanted out and was silenced.

And as the War on Drugs turns 35 this year, LSD busts are still making the headlines. According to the DEA's own press release, the "single largest seizure of an operable LSD lab in the history of the Drug Enforcement Administration" happened Nov 7, 2000 when William Leonard Pickard and Clyde Apperson were busted by DEA agents in Kansas, caught red-handed trying to move their mobile LSD lab from a country grain silo. The DEA seized approximately 41.3 kilograms (90.86 pounds) of LSD, enough to make approximately 10 million doses.

DEA Special Agent in Charge William J. Renton, Jr. stated, "the sentencing of William Pickard and Clyde Apperson brings to conclusion their significant role in the international production and distribution of LSD. These defendants were proven, by overwhelming evidence, to be responsible for the illicit manufacture of the majority of the LSD sold in this nation. The proof of the significance of these prosecutions and convictions lies in the fact that LSD availability in the United States was reduced by 95 % in the two years following their arrest. The Drug Enforcement Administration is proud to have led this historic investigation, and to have had the close cooperation of our partners in state and local law enforcement. I congratulate U.S. Attorney Eric Melgren and his staff for the outstanding prosecution conducted in this matter."

Go, team.



Pickard, busted

In another room, during another seminar about the medical resurgence of legal psychedelics, the War on Drugs is about to drop a smart-bomb on civilians.

Rick Doblin is a short, affable, maker and shaker when it comes to policy reform and getting psychedelics back onto the FDA-approved list of commercial therapeutic tools. As founder and President of MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies), he helps facilitate governments and doctors to produce medical psychedelic research on humans. The snowball MAPS has helped get rolling has seen MDMA, psilocybin, Ibogaine and other psychedelic plants used in current clinical trials for therapy, to relieve pain and in the treatment of addictions. Studies are now underway in Canada, Israel, Switzerland, Spain and in America, including at Harvard where it all derailed two generations ago with Tim Leary.

Doblin exhibits a passion and vigour in his fight for drug policy reform. As President of MAPS he holds a Ph.D in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Perhaps to balance out his mainstream achievements, he's also a certified Holotropic Breathworker practitioner, who trained under Stan and Christina Grof.

But there's something really unsettling about the plasticity of his face and the width with which he can stretch the permanent smile he wears. It's the same smile for the cameras as it is for the hecklers in the audience, so at least you know its bipartisan. Maybe it's the years of practise, because he's had to smile a lot over the last 20 years to endure all the Food and Drug Administration agents and other government bureaucrats he's wooed.



Manuel Schoch (left)
Psychedelic Therapist
and
Rick Doblin (right)
Founder of MAPS

The current wunderkult of the psychedelic medical junta is Dr. John Halpern, a tall, balding, slightly aloof associate director of substance abuse research at Harvard University's McLean Hospital. Halpern has previously conducted legal tests with MDMA. Most significantly, he also recently concluded a study that monitored long-term peyote use by Navajo Native Americans to prove there was no cognitive impairment from their ingestion of the hallucinogenic sacrament. As a result of this his work was presented before the US

Supreme Court in the religious freedom case of the Uniao do Vegetal (UDV) Church, supporting its use of ayahuasca. The UDV won. They had already been declared a legal religious order with a right to their psychedelic sacrament in Brazil in 1992.

So imagine the surprise as a courtroom drama exploded when Mark McCloud, the wry blotter art historian/ archivist (who has himself been busted / and / harassed by the forces of law for his connection with sheets of blotter art) accused this leading Harvard researcher of being DEA informant that led to William Pickard and Clyde Apperson's arrest.

They attack in packs, McCloud interjecting the moment Dr. Halpern takes to the podium to begin his speech, accusing him of being a narc. His partner, an auburn haired woman with a handy-cam jumps up from her seat towards the middle of the room, shouts in agreement and demands Halpern answer their questions. God, this feels just like reality TV, like an episode of Judge Judy.

It's only when you remember the power of the paradigm these people - and we all - live under that you realize why everyone's so worked up here. The War on Drugs has become America's

longest standing single-issue war, older than the War on Vietnam, the War on Poverty, the War on Terror, the War on Nature or even the War on Indigenous Peoples it has so often gone hand in hand with.

But the 'Halpern Flap', as it became known on Heads websites, has since been defanged and put in proper context. For the record, Dr Doblin stresses on the MAPS forums that "Leonard Pickard was arrested over five years ago as a result of an alleged LSD manufacturing operation. John [Halpern] was later questioned by the DEA in regards to what he knew about this operation. Under severe pressure, he decided to cooperate with the DEA. Several other people made similar decisions and chose to cooperate with DEA. John's statements were not considered by the prosecutors to be central to the charges against Leonard and John was not asked to testify in the case. Leonard was convicted almost three years ago on the basis of direct evidence and testimony from others."

What this whole matter does put in context, though, is that this is a culture which is still illegal. The Empire of the day has decreed its sacrament is a crime, just like all previous cultures that used plant interfaces to connect with the Earth. Or, as anthropologist and author Jeremy Narby says, "I'm less free than a Cro-Magnum man." The real enemy here is misinformation and a society too scared to reconnect with its soul. Classic divide and conquer techniques, people.

Dr. Andrew Sewell, M.D, comes on next with strength of conviction, a young bull on the rise, championing the cause. Dr. Sewell is tall and dark haired with a neat black beard and a clear, cultured accent, a trace of the English professor about him. As a Research Fellow in Psychiatry, Dr. Halpern and the Harvard team are applying for the right to renew clinical trials with LSD and Psilocybin for an extreme type of migraine attack called a cluster headache. It's his first clinical trial of this sort and the bright young Doctor is awash with enthusiasm at the prospect, yet to endure a FDA-shakedown or bureaucratic go-slow, much less a media frenzy.

His research is important and could directly ease pain for tens of thousands of people worldwide. Cluster head attacks are a very specific type of headache. They affect men more than women and commonly come in crippling bouts or clusters that cause such intense pain that sufferers have been known to try and suicide.

A British 'clusterhead' in the crowd adds to the talk-show atmosphere by describing his painful encounters with sporadic cluster attacks. BBC Woman pounces on his heartfelt first hand accounts like a beast to her prey, as Dr. Sewell continues his general introduction to the community at large.

The next day I would see him wandering the lobby, standing out from the common Heads in his magnificent Buddhist robe of distinction, quite an eye for the heritage of his Harvard position and the media branding required of the role. Does he or doesn't he? Shades of Jimi Hendrix - are you experienced? Given what went down the last time a Harvard professor started enthusing about LSD, should he? Who knows. All I can say is that Sewell's got some mighty big shoes to fill, and History will tell the tale.

The swirling maelstrom of psychedelic thought continues to batter our consciousness as Dr. Moreau and I wander around this big top of the mind. At a little booth a dozen people are listening to a young, white Christian missionary as he explains how he joined Santa Daimo and took ayahuasca. Jonathon Ott, translator of Hofmann's autobiography and renowned explorer of the inner realms himself, wanders by. It could be the smell of hash, or of burnt out neurons that trails about him. He looks like a middle-aged spacecase with his long stringy hair, his weathered face up for a laugh and beanpole thin frame all conspiring to suggest he's been out there, man, and brought as much back with him as he could.

Other acid evangelists spread the good word to the legion of disciples in the lobby. Christian Ratsch is an oriental, German psychedelic scholar, author of the "Psychedelic Encyclopaedia of Plants" and a damn fine funky brother on the side. His ankle-length leopard fur coat sets him out from the hundreds of free radical trippers sitting by the cafeteria, listening to him download a glorious cornucopia of alchemical knowledge - in German.

All that knowledge, but where is the practice?



**HEADS: From the blog of Dr. Razam
Friday 13th Jan, 2006,
Basel, Switzerland
DAY ONE: Friday Night Fondue**

The locals are whispering: "LSD, LSD, look at those trippers..." or the equivalent in Deutsche, loud enough to be heard distinctly. LSD has no translation, it seems, a brand recognition it takes advertising companies years to leverage. I wonder how they know we have been at the conference - the cameras and recording gear, the street feral layering of Maria's ensemble, her green space frog, the big LSD button badge on Liam's coat, or my red and heavy stoned eyelids? A quick look around at the respectable families and couples - upper-middle class fashion and hairdos - ascertains a Level 4. Somatic Intelligence. Feast and Fear reflexes. Best not to upset the locals while they're busy, it's all eat or die for them.

We're at Alexander's, a tres tacky Swiss restaurant. We've been trying to hook up with Raine, Einar, Nils and the European media crew but last we heard they'd gone in search of fondue, so we followed suit. Out here in the mainstream world, without the security of the group mind and the LSD taunts in another language, you really start to see the strength of the Tribal model.

We were lured in partially by the reindeer head on the wall, which we immediately photograph with the space frog hanging cupped in its giant antlers. There is wood panelling all around, tacky pictures of roosters and chicks, and fondue for as far as they eye can see. And large, well-developed Swiss who obviously love their cheese. They look at us from the corner of their eyes and dig into the fondue bowl, still chuckling away over their LSD jokes.

Liam is tall and skinny, like a young David Bowie that hasn't discovered his sex drive yet. He has short blonde hair, a wispy blonde beard and he comes from Norway - he's got the Viking in him. He's also perhaps the only acid virgin at this whole convention and he hopes to take his first trip into the unknown tonight.

Liam's in his late teens and claims to have smoked a lot of pot of the streets. He did mushrooms recently but has never done acid before and he really feels like tonight is the night for it. "The time is right and there's lots of good energy around," he says smiling, still scouring the drinks list as if it will materialise a beer for his own second brain-mammalian reality tunnel.



"This whole room is very funny," he says, reading over the drinks menu for the one-thousandth time, suffering the eternity of a hungry stoner. "Have you read Leary's book – Exo-Psychology? The Eight Circuits of Consciousness, all that? Look at them all, getting so drunk, radiating vertebrate territorial patterns and mammalian emotional politics..." Right now they're staring at us as if they can see something different, like we're TV characters or an ad for something they might want to be, to feel themselves if they weren't holding onto the character and the fear loaded onto their socio-reality tunnel imprint.

As Robert Anton Wilson, another granddaddy of the 60s headspace explains, “To understand neurological space, Dr. Leary assumes that the nervous system consists of eight potential circuits, or “gears,” or mini-brains. Four of these brains are in the usually active left lobe and are concerned with our terrestrial survival; four are extraterrestrial, reside in the “silent” or inactive right lobe, and are for use in our future evolution. This explains why the right lobe is usually inactive at this stage of our development, and why it becomes active when the person ingests psychedelics.”

Liam is pretty well read, or maybe he just came across that comic book of Tim Leary’s “Neurocomics” they’d reprinted in German and was for sale at the symposium. Eventually the beers arrive, and so does the fondue, a four litre metal pot of pure melted cheese that could clog the arteries of a football team. The locals are still looking at us like we’re cannibals, or they are, laughing outrageously at the LSD Heads. Then, out of the blue, they offer us their remaining fondue to top up our own pot, and we gratefully accept. Perhaps they were just trying to size up the strange new Tribe, after all.



Liam plays up all the loose LSD talk, saying he can see the face of Albert Hofmann in a particularly stringy bit of dripping liquid cheese. How perfect. This is like his last supper, this messianiac acid last supper and there he is being dipped into the fondue bowl. It is a good sign for Liam’s first trip. He will go far.

“C’mon, “ Maria says after dinner, rolling yet another ciggie. “I have to catch up with some guys I met to-day, they may be able to help you out.” We extricate ourselves from the locals and head up the road to the hotel-den of the chemical cognescenti.

The High Priest has been living in Switzerland for some time now, but he was originally from America. His long white hair is dreaded with a ceremonial balding spot on top. He's nice, mellow and knowledgeable, a gentle soul, or maybe it's all the hash. A chunk of hash as big as a block of chocolate is on the bed. A dozen drug disciples from all over the world are lounged about in the tiny hotel room with the fake wood panelling, toking on an Indian chillum and passing it languidly back and forth. "Look - that wood panelling, it's...starting to move... like fractals?" a long haired American girl says, shades of Go-Go dancers...

Bom Shankar.

"So like, I've got two types," the High Priest says, rolling out two pages of acid. "The Getafixes are 300mg, really strong, yeah. And this is the freshest batch of Hofmanns, specially created for the Doctor's 100th birthday.

They're 180 mg, real nice. He holds up the sheet to show a white cartoon Dr. Hofmann on profile, riding his infamous bike into the history books against a green Swiss mountain backdrop with a yellow moon and sun. For a second I marvel at the perforated paper, the world's only post-modern, edible artform.

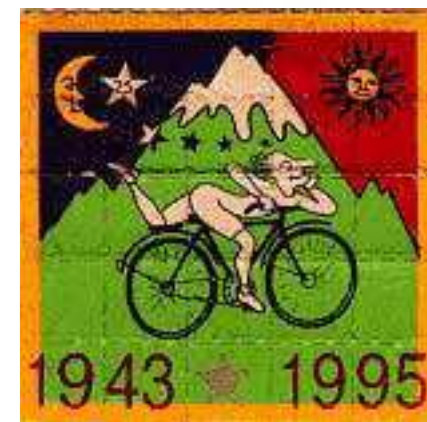
It's been a while since I've done any acid, and High Priest has the Getafixes - the infamous high-powered trips that broke a generation six years ago in Australia. They have the wizard from the French comic strip Asterix on them. In English the wizard's name was Getafix, which always makes me think of junkies. Raine tells me later that in French he is known as Miraculoux, which is much more appropriate. Whatever they're called, they are so strong that I am scared a little. The classic 60s measure was 250 mikes and High Priest says they're 300 mikes - more than most people have ever seen in one tab.

"I'll take a Hofmann. It is fitting, no?"

He smiles and nods, wise eyes. He knows.

"Could I get a bit of the wheel?"

I ask, doing the ritual exchange, time is money is art, and the sacrament is in the palm of my hand. Sorted.



**HEADS: From the blog of Dr. Razam
Saturday 14th Jan, 2006, Switzerland
DAY TWO: And Then We Were All in One
Place**

It's Day Two. I'm living in the Media /Press room in the front left corner of the Congress Centre, my broadband wi-fi womb to the world. It is a secret joy to have Logos Five, my little Mac iBook [here](#), filtering, [ordering](#) and transmitting what's going down. The press room is alive with singing, joint rolling and hi-tech camaraderie. American, Norwegian, German, Austrian, Australian and other media internationale are [here](#). BBC woman is interviewing American doctors as Goa Gill, PsyTrance granddaddy, [gets](#) his photo taken - flash and non-flash version for a French dance culture TV show.

Outside in the street 100 concerned Swiss citizens are protesting, chanting "LSD killer droogen," while the police encircle them to protect us. The rumour is they're Scientologists. They say that LSD is the same as dealers in white coats dispensing a killer drug. They have a megaphone and everything but like Mormons at the Superbowl, I don't think anyone here is listening.

**"You know you're successful
when the Scientologists are
picketing you,"**

says Dr. Charles Grob, Professor of the UCLA School of Medicine.

Still, I wonder what they're REALLY scared about? A quick Google of the history of LSD would reveal over 1000 peer-reviewed medical papers published detailing the successful treatment with LSD of more than 40,000 patients for schizophrenia, depression, alcoholism and other disorders.

That's not to say LSD is for everyone, or that, as LSD enthusiast and actor Cary Grant once said - and has since become part of the folklore - that it should be put in the water supply. Existing mental imbalances, anxieties and inappropriate or unstructured use can cause LSD to adversely affect the user, as can any drug.

But some Heads here would say that LSD can be a holy sacrament, and that like all peoples persecuted for their religious beliefs, the psychedelic community struggles to practice their 60 year-old Western, post-modern archaic religious revival. Western persecution wiped out - via death or cultural integration - millions of witches, shamen, mushroom cults and whole races of indigenous people that connected to the planet with sacramental plant interfaces throughout history.

Yesterday, the man taking photos for Reuters told me how he was held in Washington under anti-terrorist laws for seven months. He was banned from America for reporting adversely on the war on terror and imprisoned before being deported. "The only problem with terrorists," he says of the experience, "is that now they want to control ALL the people to protect us from them...!"

Today he is off covering the anti WTO protest in Bern. He is real media, selling his pictures to the panopticon of control, the angels of communication and the beasts that guard their portals. When he gets back after lunch the conversation turns to the war on drugs, the alleged secret prison camps with room for 20 million in Europe, all wrapped up with barbed wire. Officially the camps are for terrorists, he says, but in practice they're also perfect for drugged out hippies as well as other dissidents when the crackdown begins.

France, too, is changing, the French Psy-TV crew agree, starting with its drug laws. Paul is there with his partner; while he gets the camera footage of the 100 year-old Alchemist with the SONY mini-cam, she breast-feeds their eighteen-month old girl (conceived whilst high on LSD in a sacred set and setting, he tells me nights later on the boat). She chose them to come into the world, just as the psychedelic folklore I'm picking up everywhere says that LSD chose its parent.

So yeah, there is a war on, and as the great Clash of Civilizations touted by the Neo-Con meme-makers splinters out from Christian-Muslim duality to encompass a clash with all outsiders, you can understand why Psychedelic Culture has been underground all these years.

Which is when my housemate from Australia, Dr. Brian Moreau walks in, dressed in a hooded top and trainers, clutching a bag full of one Swiss Franc beers from the take-away deli down the road. That and a single leg of chicken, which he gnaws into fiercely. I snap two bites from it before I've stretched the brotherly bond. Beaut. I crack open a beer and continue to frantically try to get IT ALL down, the then and now and now and then, new riffs scratching in from the baseline blog as the collective media brain chases the moment, the unspoken thing coming into being at this conference...

As we all keep our voices down for BBC Woman, who is doing live recordings in the corner, my German pal, Kris, a freelancer for local magazines bounds back in. He's been busily coming in and out of the pressroom all day, rolling joints and discoursing about the existential dilemmas of our time.

He tells me how he used to like staring at the sun, not on LSD, just naturally, y'know, kids testing boundaries and all. And once, he stared at the sun too much and he went partially blind and now he has a permanent scar on one eye, a little blind spot. "But you can absorb the energies, he says, you can drink them in, you know."

I know, I've heard the tale of the Indian Saddhu who has been drinking in sunlight just before dusk for years, and how he metabolises light and no longer eats solid food, according to Indian and American scientific testing. The world is stranger than we would believe...

Then we're joined by Raine, Einar and Nils, Norwegian documentary makers that are staying at the same Head Hostel as me in Basel. We've had some great chats about the cosmic connection, our tribal bonds and why we do what we do, make media, report this gonzo type of stuff.

"We do this because we want to share, Raine says again. "We feel connected to what we have gone through and it is beautiful, you know, so we honour it. And we want to share it with the OTH-ERS... those who do not yet know... We feel this is a good things and we don't want to convert, we want to open it up, to spread the meme..."

At that, Dr Susan Blackmore, author of 'The Meme Machine', who is having a coffee at the next table, joins the conversation. I marvel at her hair, a magpie rainbow of colours, as she discuss the vectors of information and they way they shape our culture. Totally surreal moments and conversations bubble around. A synesthesia of soundbytes, higher consciousness Head-talk.

Stoned, Kris is asking Dr. Blackmore, "But the Meaning of Life, you know, where do I find the meaning?" And if not for the cries of BBC Woman pleading to keep the noise down, I might have heard her answer.

Dr. Moreau: I just saw the trepanation lady.

Dr. Razam: Really!? Did you see her hole?" He means Amanda Fielding, a consciousness researcher from the 80s, Founder and Director of The Beckley Foundation and Internet poster-girl for the ancient art of trepanation - or drilling a small hold in your head - at the right place - to relieve oxygen flow to the brain and get you high - permanently.

Dr. Moreau: Nah. And Joanna Leary, Tim's Leary widow is just outside, spilling her guts about the 60s," Dr. Moreau says. "And I've just done this interview with the MAPS crew about psychedelic activism, and like, you really should get out there, man, you're missing the whole thing!"

But alas, I cannot leave my broadband oasis, all stories must come to me, today. I do pop my head outside the door, though, to see Joanna Leary in a spotlight on the stage outside the press room.

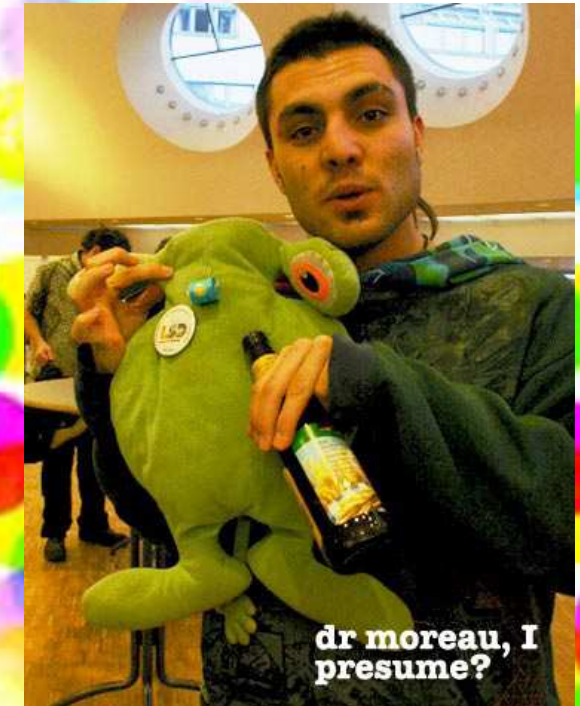
"God, she looks good for her age," Kris says, joining me, probably all horny about now.

"It's plastic surgery, dude, she has to be like, at least 60 but she's got that polished, soft-focus Hollywood half-century glow about her." Kris disagrees vehemently, coming to the defence of the 'First Lady' of acid.

Johann Leary's not even her real name, and she never actually married Tim, I find out later. But she went through a lot for Tim, surviving the American system of 'Justice' and coming through the other side. I mean, he did go to jail for the massive crime of a single marijuana cigarette, for which they were going to put him away for decades.

"I was a DEA informer, but only for two months. And I did it for love," she says without a trace of irony in her voice. No emotion at all. She did it to get Leary out of jail, took his own lawyer down and some others. She finishes to a round of applause.

Maybe there is something going on out here after all. The vibe is rising, its getting very Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, except its all psychedelic, a fluffed up vibe, more Higher Consciousness and Love in Basel. I walk around doing some audio sampling with the i-Pod and checking out the art displays.



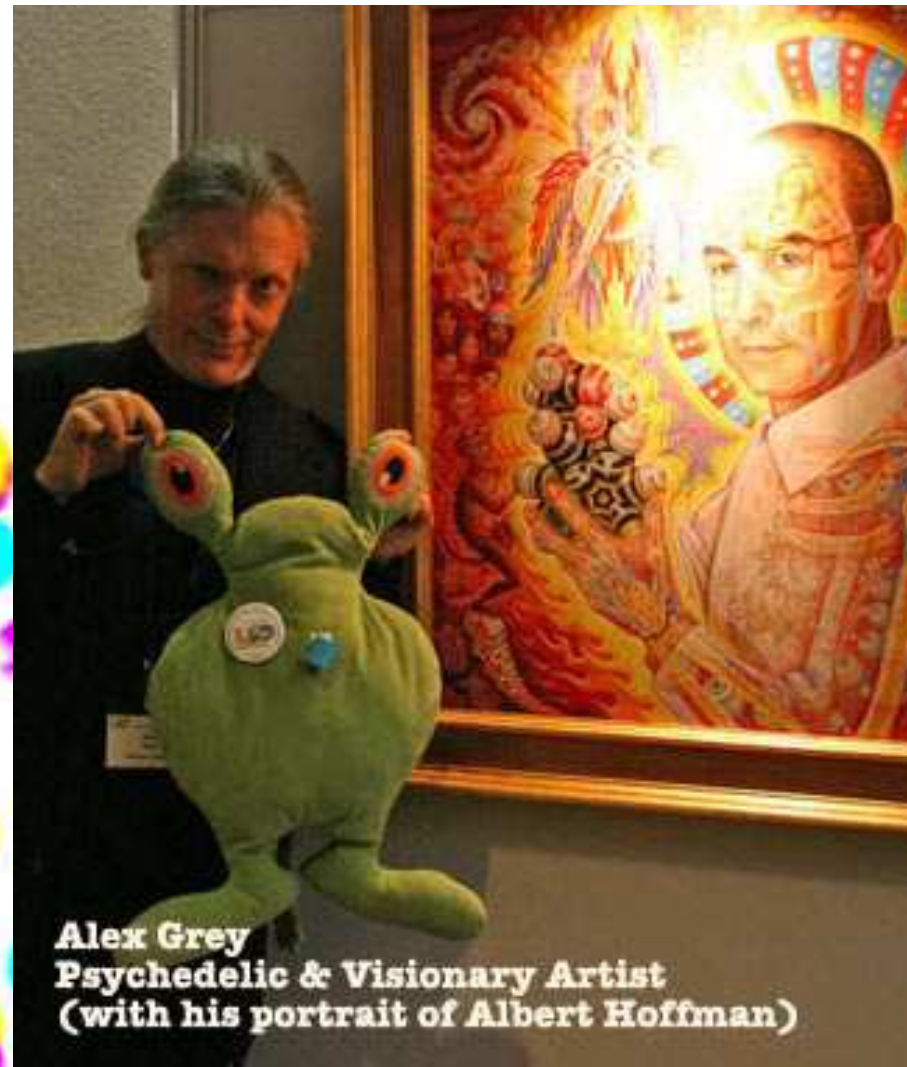
Alex Grey, the famous Psychedelic artist, has done a picture of Albert especially for his birthday. It shows him circa 1943, the hale and earnest young chemist holding up the sacred molecule, but the figure - c'est incredible, circulation vessels and chakra energies, cosmic ecologies are interconnecting with him and out into the hallucinogenic ocean around him. It will probably be made into blotter acid, double or triple dipped by the Alchemists in celebration of this tuning point, this moment when the Heads of the world gather together and transmit the thought of themselves to the world.

Like the electro-magnetic fire in the Alex Grey painting an invisible story is running through the Symposium, through the seekers and the listeners and the world media they represent. The unspoken tale is that the whole world is on drugs, it's just a question of which ones.

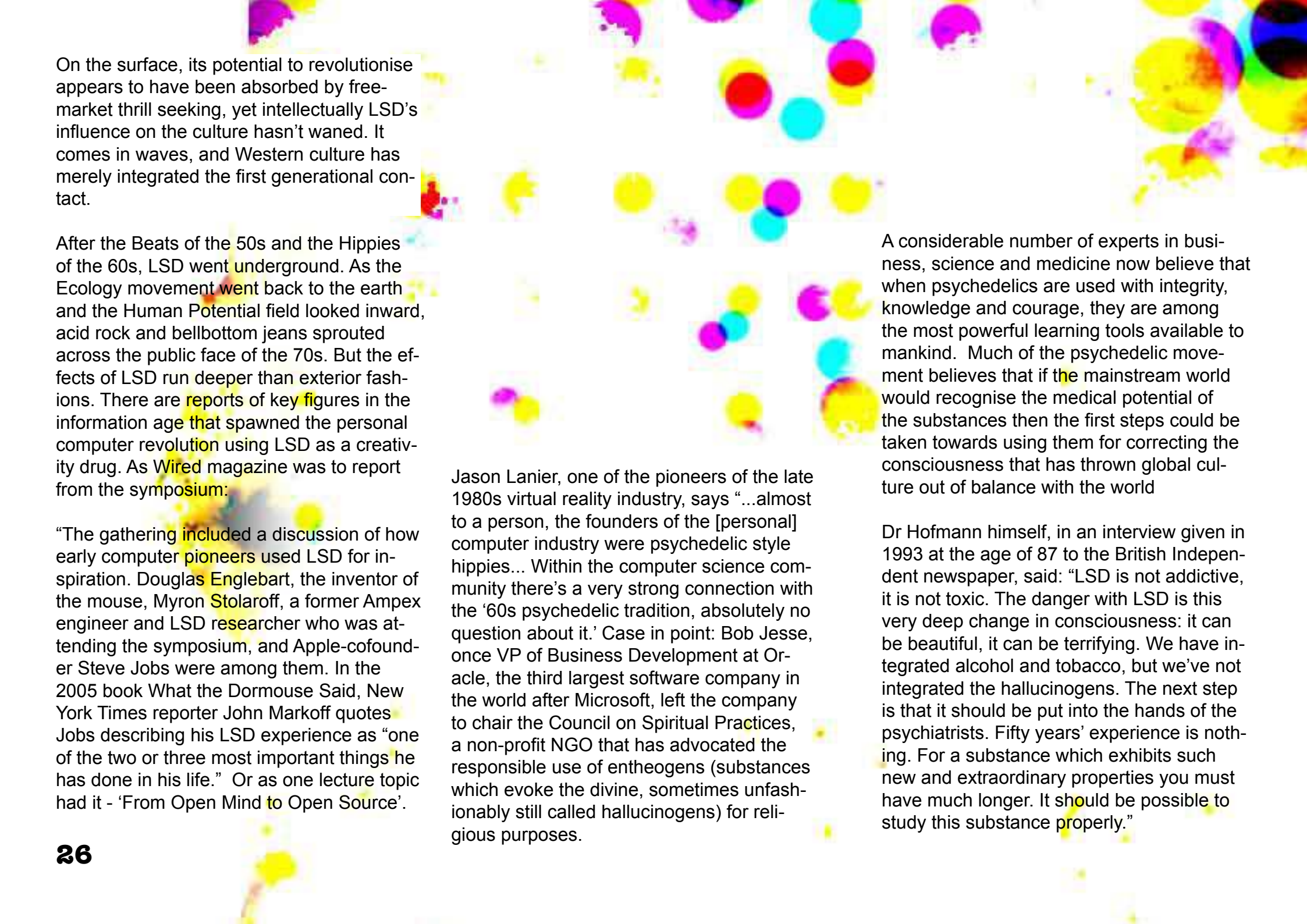
Consider that it's now been just 50 years since Gordon Wasson first approached indigenous shamaness Maria Sabina in Huautla de Jimenez, in the State of Oaxaca, Mexico, looking for a supply of magic mushrooms. She gave him a dose that fabulously broke through the doors of perception and was written up in Time Magazine, May 13 1957, in an article titled "Seeking the Magic Mushroom." "For the first time," Wasson wrote, "The word ecstasy took on real meaning. For the first time it did not mean someone else's state of mind."

That's 50 years of plant and synthetic derivative hallucinogens bonding with the Western ID – and its media - while the ID creates mainframes, cyberspace and the largest global pornography industry in history, amongst other things. The times, they never stop a-changing.

And in the different world ages Albert Hoffman has lived through he has seen his child, LSD, go from a respected mind-expansion chemical used by therapists across the world, to a sacred drug of the street for a generation in revolution, to - I dunno, just another kick amongst many in a hyper-medicated world. It's all set and setting, like Leary used to preach.



By the late 1980s and 1990s the set and setting was changing as a whole new generation of partygoers rediscovered LSD on a wave which popularised a variant hallucinogen, Ecstasy, and gave rise to "club culture". However, LSD was eventually seen as just another niche consumable in a cornucopia of mind altering party drugs, including 2CB, mushrooms, ecstasy, speed, cocaine, heroin and other fad variants that sweep the hedonist markets of the world.



On the surface, its potential to revolutionise appears to have been absorbed by free-market thrill seeking, yet intellectually LSD's influence on the culture hasn't waned. It comes in waves, and Western culture has merely integrated the first generational contact.

After the Beats of the 50s and the Hippies of the 60s, LSD went underground. As the Ecology movement went back to the earth and the Human Potential field looked inward, acid rock and bellbottom jeans sprouted across the public face of the 70s. But the effects of LSD run deeper than exterior fashions. There are reports of key figures in the information age that spawned the personal computer revolution using LSD as a creativity drug. As *Wired* magazine was to report from the symposium:

"The gathering included a discussion of how early computer pioneers used LSD for inspiration. Douglas Englebart, the inventor of the mouse, Myron Stolaroff, a former Ampex engineer and LSD researcher who was attending the symposium, and Apple-cofounder Steve Jobs were among them. In the 2005 book *What the Dormouse Said*, New York Times reporter John Markoff quotes Jobs describing his LSD experience as "one of the two or three most important things he has done in his life." Or as one lecture topic had it - 'From Open Mind to Open Source'.

Jason Lanier, one of the pioneers of the late 1980s virtual reality industry, says "...almost to a person, the founders of the [personal] computer industry were psychedelic style hippies... Within the computer science community there's a very strong connection with the '60s psychedelic tradition, absolutely no question about it.' Case in point: Bob Jesse, once VP of Business Development at Oracle, the third largest software company in the world after Microsoft, left the company to chair the Council on Spiritual Practices, a non-profit NGO that has advocated the responsible use of entheogens (substances which evoke the divine, sometimes unfashionably still called hallucinogens) for religious purposes.

A considerable number of experts in business, science and medicine now believe that when psychedelics are used with integrity, knowledge and courage, they are among the most powerful learning tools available to mankind. Much of the psychedelic movement believes that if the mainstream world would recognise the medical potential of the substances then the first steps could be taken towards using them for correcting the consciousness that has thrown global culture out of balance with the world

Dr Hofmann himself, in an interview given in 1993 at the age of 87 to the British Independent newspaper, said: "LSD is not addictive, it is not toxic. The danger with LSD is this very deep change in consciousness: it can be beautiful, it can be terrifying. We have integrated alcohol and tobacco, but we've not integrated the hallucinogens. The next step is that it should be put into the hands of the psychiatrists. Fifty years' experience is nothing. For a substance which exhibits such new and extraordinary properties you must have much longer. It should be possible to study this substance properly."

Someone else who's dabbled in the ancient art of alchemy is Alexander - "Sasha" Shulgin. He sits there at the conference table with his wife of over 25 years, Ann, looking for all the world like the grandparents of the psychedelic movement. And it's not as if they haven't done it all before - Sasha has probably invented half of the consciousness altering chemicals ever taken. The New York Times recently bestowed him with the evil scientist type moniker, "Dr. Ecstasy", which he takes in his stride. I can picture him signing Christmas cards to friends back in the DEA chemistry labs - who have been forbidden from meeting him or even attending one of his talks - "love, Dr. Ecstasy" with a cheesy grin.

Shulgin worked for the DEA itself for many years, legally able to experiment on the fringes of consciousness and make new chemicals like some people go shopping. His wife Ann, was a clinical therapist who used MDMA in therapy. Together they make a formidable couple very much in love with themselves and with life.

In 1976 Shulgin improved the synthesis process for an obscure drug later called 'Ecstasy', which kick started another youth culture revolution. He was quickly disowned when he went public in his book PIKHAL (Phenanalymines I have Known And Loved), which published hundreds of chemical formulae - legal information - that could be transmuted into street drugs. Or used as sacred tools - it's all up to the user.

He jokingly refers to these long, chemical formulas as "dirty pictures", molecular models made real. In truth, they are like a Chinese wooden puzzle, an origami construction folded in on itself, and neatly tucked away behind a valence here, a bromide ring there is the language of the angels - and if you speak it, you will understand what I mean.

They're graciously allowing their photos to be taken; Ann seems to get over it all quickly, but Sasha is always up for another photo, another autograph and another excuse to dazzle us all with his rich

pharmacological history and wry sense of humour.

It's all a bit rock'n'roll, what with everyone lining up to get an autograph or get their book signed, those massive tomes, Pikhal and Tikhal under their arms like earnest students. A fair number of the crowd are young psychonauts - over 18 but under 25, the latest generation of seekers of the mystery, fuelled by the internet, psychedelic chat-rooms and the DIY spirit of their age. The majority are clean-cut, averagely dressed kids, students from America, England, Germany and surrounding Euro states. The Germans are very well represented, perhaps because of their love for Techno - and their dance sacraments.

Still, I wonder what these young students make of all this information, of the 200+ chemical string signatures that Sasha Shulgin has cooked up over the course of his long life, the majority of them illegal to make?



It reminds me of coders a generation ago, the first wave of hackers and crackers taking apart the algorithms of cyberspace and tweaking it for their own ends.

Now this generation of 'psychonauts' is taking up higher consciousness with a passion, tinkering with the very building blocks of life to fuel their journeys into the unknown. And when they start hacking away at the edge of reality from their garages and back room labs across the world, look out.

The parallels between shamanism and cyberspace have been brewing for a while. Roy Ascott, an early "network artist" and figure in Ars Electronic sees the hyperspatial dimensions plant sacraments can take us too as equally valid as cyberspace. The only difference is that the plants are the interface, not computer chips.

After spending time with Kuikuru Indians of the Brazilian Mato Grosso in 1997 and their rituals ingesting hallucinogenic mushrooms, Ascott developed a theory of three planes of reality: Verifiable reality, Virtual reality, and "Vegetal reality."

Ascott says: "Virtual Reality, dependant on interactive digital technology, is telematic and immersive. Validated Reality, dependant on reactive mechanical technology, is prosaic and Newtonian. Vegetal Reality, dependant on psychoactive plant technology, is entheogenic and

spiritual. Vegetal Reality is quite unfamiliar to Western praxis... and is often viewed with fear and loathing by those entombed in Validated Reality. Vegetal Reality can be understood in the context of technoetics, as the transformation of consciousness by plant technology and the ingestion of psychoactive material... "

Not that any of the trippers of all ages here today need an introduction to this concept. With websites like Erowid and Deoxy providing a veritable treasure-trove of historical, medical, legal and first hand knowledge about hyperspatial experiences, an online resurgence in psychedelic culture is underway, hidden amongst the binary code and spreading like wildfire.

And here at his question and answer session, Sasha Shulgin signs away, the charisma of a rock-star indeed, but in this case without the ego. He too, is spreading memes, spreading the word, the language of the gods that Hofmann sees in nature.

"How long before you map a signature and I get to take the drug?" Dr. Moreau asks his new consciousness hero.

"Well, funny you should mention that," Shulgin says smiling, like Santa Claus without the red suit. "About a month." Apparently a new 'dirty picture' he mentioned to a friend was posted

for one week on an obscure website before being removed. Two weeks later the product was shipping from the black labs of China and on sale the next week in Amsterdam.

2CE's his new one, but he has chemical signatures up his sleeve that even the DEA don't know about yet. He's about four years ahead of them, he says, and about now you must remember that both PIHKAL and TIHKAL are classified as works of 'fiction' by the authors and intellectual knowledge isn't technically a crime, yet, although you are now all guilty of subversion at the least.

Dr. Moreau and I break for a late lunch, passing through a generation of Heads and the ideas that drive them, to queue up at the cafeteria. And here we all are out in the open: gypsies, witches, alchemists, shamen and hippies all around. The smell of pot wafts generously through the air, despite the no-smoking signs. Hundreds of people are gathered here to talk about LSD, unified in our common cause, clutching programs and show-bags, books, t-shirts and badges all available from the Head shop in front of the cafe.

And all of a sudden I can see the future, and it's loaded. It feels like we're sitting in the cafeteria at lunchtime at a school for Higher Consciousness. "Are you ready for your excursion on 2CB today? Have you all got your permission slips signed? Good." Imagine, if these days of classes went on, five days a week in a school for higher consciousness - well, what a the generation of shamanauts we'd have then. Ready to guide us to the innerworlds where it's all GO'in ON! Or to help reconnect a global culture with the planet that sustains it. That'd really give the Scientists something to worry about.

Me? I need a ham sandwich and a beer.

HEADS: From the blog of Dr. Razam
Sunday 15th Jan, 2006
Basel, Switzerland
DAY THREE: REBIRTH/ LET IT ALL
HANG OUT

On the third day Albert rises again, and I eat the magic blotter square with his picture on it. But now it is early morning in the cafe next to the Basel Congress Centre, and Dr. Moreau and I have discovered the hotel buffet with all you can eat breakfast. With croissants at five CF each and coffee the same, the freedom to alter consciousness through starvation has been looking mighty appealing lately. I feel like Elvis let loose at the all you can eat bar in Vegas.

Jeremy Narby is at the table next to us. Ph.D, anthropologist and author of "Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge, he is another of the attendees at this psychedelic bar-mitzvah. He says "research indicates that shamans access an intelligence which they say is nature's, and which gives them information that has stunning correspondences with molecular biology." His theory goes on to posit that there is an active intelligence contained within the DNA of all living things, which is a new tweak on James Lovelock's "Gaia" or whole system theory hypothesis, now embraced by science.

It's all a bit much for this early on a Sunday morning, and despite all the mind-blowing memes percolating around, all I have energy left for is Albert, to get a final audience with the Alchemist.

How will this all end? I imagine the main room closing ceremony, lights dimmed as they hand out the secret stash of Sandoz '43 old gold for a group acid ritual, the culmination of three days of theory and history.

Ralph Metzner, the cosmic trickster takes central stage later that afternoon. Ralph looks like a respectable, bespectacled, white-haired academic, except he has an earthy, swirling Balinese shirt on with a cream vest and indigenous beads around his neck. He moves slowly with a cheeky air, this ex-Harvard consciousness pioneer turned switched-on Head.

He's up there on stage, hand in hand with all the other speakers, elders and seekers of the truth, even Albert's chuckling at this one from his seat on stage, clapping his hands and nodding to the music as the group vibe blooms and the Flower Children and grandchildren sway together.

"To the left... to the right..."

"When I woke up this morning... coming out of the dream... I looked down at the body, lying on my head... and that's when it hit me - tah dah dah dah..."

"I was actually dead..."

Ralph singsongs as the thousand plus crowd begins shimmying to the beat, hand in hand or clapping as we embody the ancient Tibetan mantra for living and dying, all of us here, living and dying and living again...

"All my family and friends... gather in my room...



Ralph Metzner

**Former Harvard Professor
Psychedelic Pioneer**

Ahead there is a tunnel... and a light so white... I keep on moving upward... moving towards the light..."

"I'm coming through the bardo
I'm coming through the bardo..."

"I don't know if I'll make it...
I don't know if I'll make it ...
Or make it through the light...
Or make it through the light..."

"I've got the bardo blues
I've got the bardo blues...
(chorus)

The idea is from the Tibetan Book of the dead, which Ralph translated into one of the first Psychedelic Handbooks with Timothy Leary, whilst still at Harvard in the early 1960s. The idea is to remain conscious and go towards the top level. Go towards the light. If you don't succeed, that's okay, but you'll go back on the wheel of karma and who knows where you'll end up.

The second level is the bardo of illusions, of all the most wonderful and distracting of heavens and hells, and the creatures that inhabit them. In truth, they are all reflections of the watcher. We make our own heavens, we hold them in the palm of our hands for a second, eternity in a piece of blotter paper passed from fingertips to fingertips and a nudge and a wink.

Some Californian Heads whip out their lighters and pass them in the air as a wave of communal awareness sweeps the hall. Ralph continues, relentless with his infectious cheer.

"I saw these tall spirits... as my family looked on...
Some spirits that were angry...
I was struck with fear!
The teachings I remembered...
The middle way was clear..."

"Now rebirth is coming,
I'm aiming for a human life
At the wheel of karma
And as the worlds are turning...
This is what I feel..."

"I'm coming through the bardo
I'm coming through the bardo

"I don't know if I'll make it...
I don't know if I'll make it...
Or make it through the light
Or make it through the light

"I've got the bardo blues
I've got the bardo blues
I've got the bardo blues..."

And everyone laughs. There's shades of a Christian Revivalist meeting, self-parody and collective consciousness all rolled into one surreal, psy-country ho-down good time spiritual jiggy...!

And the secret, it is within us, blossoming and unfolding as Terence McKenna's voice echoes out from a video playing in the lobby; somewhere the psychic cellophane radar rips and the brain pops out of the gravity well of larval consciousness and starts to conjugate, coagulate, parleyvous...

The Tribe has come home and it is in its power. It is the most amazing feeling.

Bom, my brothers, bom, my sisters, bom my lovers and my teachers, my elders and les enfant terrible. Bom to you all as we sit here in the San Francisco seminar room at the Basel Congress Centre, here in far off Switzerland, and in front of my eyes a beautiful Amazonian Head walks by, not with flowers, but LCD lights twinkling in her hair...

And Albert is still up on the stage, under the microscope of a thousand hungry eyes from his chemical grand-children, media angels feasting on his every word, nuance, and reverent glance from the countenance of the divine. He speaks:

"We are creatures of light," he says, drawing us back. "This is not just a mystical expression, as they say with enlightenment – it is also a scientific fact. And thinking energy is fed by consciousness energy, the highest energy transform of all," the good doctor shouts, one hundred years old and still going strong.

"I am grateful for my fate," he begins. "I am the last of my family left alive, but I have my

children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. "I thank the good Lord, Albert says. And I thank you, all my children who have seen the way. You, who have helped turn my problem child into my wonder child..."

There is so much to remember. It feels like the last Supper, like a historic moment, and then there we all are in one place, a generation with our handycams and digital camera, our iPods and our audio recorders, our three-chip cameras and our little note books, archiving the crumbs, speed scrawling in broken English the German translations of our master's voice.



We are all of us his children, we all realize it at this moment, with our father there speaking to us and the light it come from everywhere, and the moment settles, the spirit tightens, and... Albert tells us, asks us, please. "Help my child in this world. Those who know, must do."

And a single tear falls from the eye of St Albert of Basel, catches on the slope of his cheek and glistens in the light of a thousand flashes from the wall of cameras.

And so I try to write this, the un-writeable, the jewel in the crown.

It is if the very soul, the spirit of Basel, has manifested in this city and chosen it's bearers, like children born back onto the karmic wheel of time. And once you have the knowledge, you have no choice but to remember.

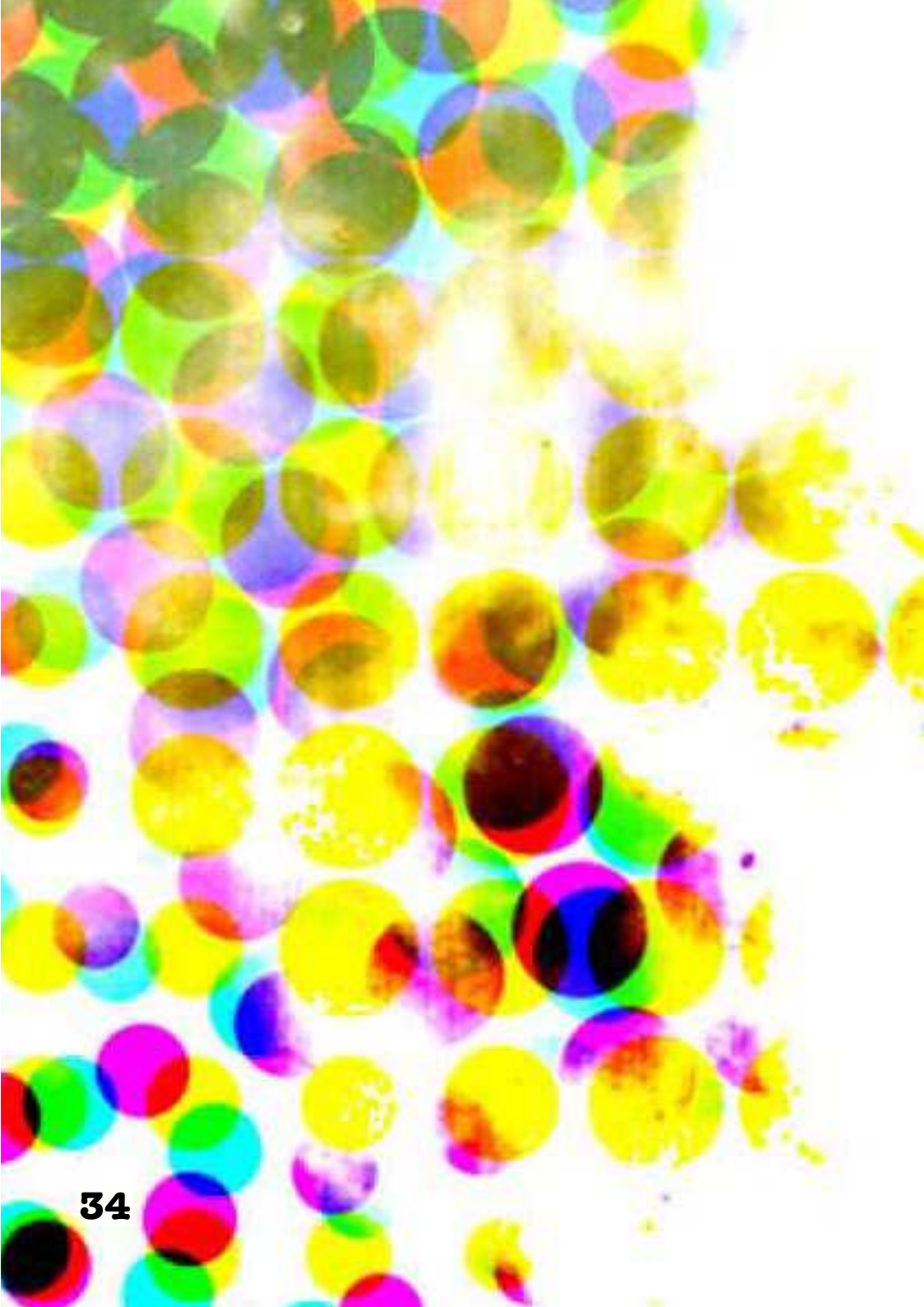
We are all neurons separated by the illusion of time and space. We are connected by the idea, by that which we all experience... And it is all so perfect, so indescribable, I do not think the BBC Woman could publish this, even if it could be put easily into words...

It is an old story, and maybe you have heard it before. It goes something like this:

Underneath, past the origami of our lives, there is a never ending story that is being read in you right now, are you ready to hear it?

*teardrops fall from the grace of the divine
somewhere within it is time again
yes, you know it
you have always known it
The secret passes down
The Word is spoken
it becomes flesh
and it is willed amongst us*

Sacre Bleu.
The sacred.
The divine.



Somewhere inside me there is a blazing sun, and it is raining, and raining and raining. And I open my eyes, and I see they were already open, and the tears just come pouring out. And I am crying, and Albert is crying, and we are all crying and a little bit of a laugh too, you know, it shifts imperceptibly, it is the joy, not the sadness that we try to ride, to let it be born...

And it's raining on the inside again as the tears streak down the faces, and we all hold hands in the San Francisco ballroom, and we sing this little ditty to Albert: "Happy Birthday to you. Happy Birthday to you. Happy Birthday, dear Albert. Happy Birthday to you." And as we sing we realize the birthday is also our own, as a culture, a community come of age. Happy Birthday then, to the children of LSD. Sixty-three years old, it is time yes. For LSD to grow up. And time for us all to grow with it. And we know this. We feel it in our bones.

A young man comes out from the crowd. I think he has been chosen to represent the spirit of youth. I feel I know him. He is a Californian raver type, you can read it in the alchemical cosmos patterns on his clothes, and he thanks the good doctor. "I love you Doctor Hofmann," he says.

I look up then at Albert Hoffman, this venerable gentleman, this titanic figure from the history books, and yet he is right here now and I am at his feet.

And there, lo behold, Albert's bike wheel is on the blotter acid before me. It has been said that once the gates of perception are open, you don't need auxiliary agents like psychoactives, but I eat it, nonetheless.

And it is good.

Spread the word, true believer. Remember the sacred. The bicycle. Remember the Bicycle and all it stands for.





HEADS: From the blog of Dr. Razam

Sunday 15th Jan, 2006

Basel, Switzerland

DAY THREE: Sunday Night - On the Boat

I saw the best minds of our generation stripped back to bass.

An infinite multi-faceted vibrational knowledge condenses down, reflects itself across the night as on the Boat all the crazies let loose like water released from clouds in a storm.

I see Andrew Sewell M.D., the Harvard doctor in charge of the psilocybin LSD cluster headache study cutting loose on the dance floor, surrounded by dozens of San-Fran Trance geeks and Goa Heads. He dances awkwardly, of course, like a Harvard doctor let loose at a Trance party in the middle of the night, not ON anything, oh God no, but getting into the scene nonetheless.

And I wonder, where are the glam psychedelic poster men and women of this age? Why isn't he in a day-glo lab coat replete with mask? Why didn't he wear the Buddhist robe he had on at times in the lobby of the hotel, playing the part of the up and coming wonder boy of legal LSD research?

Around me people are opening and blossoming like the origami flyers on the bar that trippers spend hours puzzling over, slot A into slot B, a tantalizing mystery of life folded away into the angles for those with the eyes to see.

I hover on the lesser bardos, heavy in the illusion, surrounded by this night of the group mind, the collective consciousness, deep in the psy-dens of the underworld. Deep dark down we go to the belly of the boat, acid trails smearing in the strobe laser light, day-glo tagged mushroom graffiti, leading us down to where Goa Gil is playing his massive 12 hour Trance set. The music, c'est important, but it goes even deeper than that...

We're deep in this sea of fools, are all swaying to the same beat, the bass heavy in our bones and blood, bursting up through the flower that now rests in our heads. You can see it in the diamond sparkle of Chipmunks eye, the madcap Californian acid dealer in the hood. He's growing a thin, weedy moustache-beard wherever there is testosterone to support it on his face, all covered with a generic baseball cap.

He speaks a slow and gentle, slightly wounded Californian accent, complaining that people don't treat each other right, lamenting he didn't bring the amazing acid he had once, liquid acid so smooth you could drop diamonds in it and see them glisten in the light.

He too, is Hofmann's Child.

And all the heads from the conference are their, letting their hair down, and down, and down... until there's nowhere to go but IN...

And round and round and round we go, where we stop nobody knows... Yes, the heads have met. The neurons have bonded and the synaptic pathways set. Nature is moulding its extensions of mind in matter. The alchemy process is reaching critical mass.

It's that magic time of night, deep in the heartlands of us all, where a door opens in our soul. And you know, we all of us knew this door was there, all our lives, but the remembrance, this is why we need the key.

And inside the origami plot, where the spirits live, where we take off our clothes of flesh and bask in the remembrance, the light.

We are the bomb that was dropped sixty odd years ago, revealing the light. Alchemical lapsis. Hypermind. A wall of words to describe the raw act of Creation.

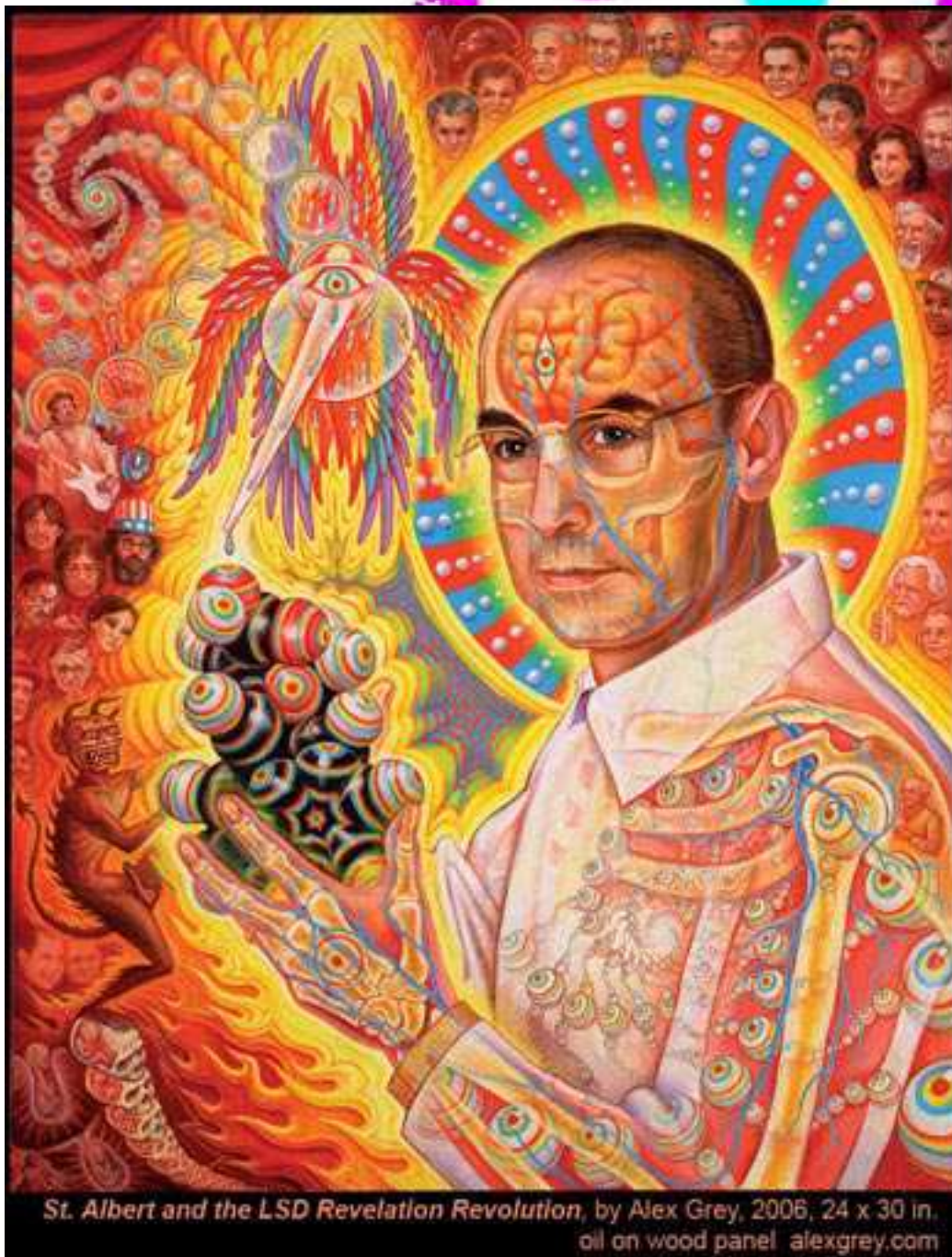
And at dawn my mate Dingo, the Aussie Aboriginal DJ who's been rolling huge spliffs, and the German girl who's coming to Australia one day... all hug in a circle as light comes up through the big boat bay windows, revealing the new day and the industrial chimneys puffing away in this drug company town.

We are reborn. We all feel this, we all know it in our hearts. We know who we are again. We are the disciples of the father, the son, the Holy Spirit. Elusian mysteries practised for over 2000 years before Christ, as fresh as the mint under your hotel pillow in the early morning light.

And as I leave the boat at dawn, the guy before me laughs and says, "You see, Basel - it is Hoffman's nightmare - the Novartis chimney stacks, the pollution, the industrialized cityscape pumping out fumes from every corner of the city." And he is right, of course.

I stand still and like a plane on the runway, something shifts, lightens and opens within me. The acid opens and deepens again and again like I'm coming from the soul and as I reach up to the light like a hungry newborn babe, drinking in the nectar swirling in the ether this very day, the grand circle continues to turn.

And I can still see that tear, falling from the hundred-year old face, so pure no. It is so sweet. Pardon me, while I kiss the sky.



Now: St Rollerskate, Beatnik of the Urban Wilderness steps out into the chill winter day, feeling like Albert did that first trip, so long ago now... On the trip that never stops. For once the doors of perception are opened, everything appears as it is: infinite.

Viva Albert Hofmann, viva LSD, and long live the Heads that connect it all together. We'll always have Basel.

love,

Dr. Razam

The review "LSD Symposium - Problem Child and Wonder Drug" was originally published here and can now be found in an edited version at the High Times website.

<http://www.hightimes.com/ht/events/content.php?bid=410&aid=5>

Click here for other musings on HEADODOLOGY

http://www.dislocated.org/nomadology/user.php?user_id=43

And here to listen to an interview with Rak Razam about Dr. Hofmann's 100th birthday, recently broadcast on JJJ radio.

<http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/hack/notes/s1553830.htm>

And here for an article on the Symposium in the Age newspaper.

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/in-depth/passing-the-acid-test/2006/02/03/1138836410493.html>

Also, join Undergrowth's psychedelic forum and add your thoughts on this topic.

<http://www.undergrowth.org/forum/LSD>

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This booklet can be downloaded for free from:
www.undergrowth.org/rebirth_ebooklet



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A first-person perspective of someone walking on a parched, cracked earth. Their legs, wearing blue jeans and brown sandals, are visible at the bottom. Small, vibrant green plants are sprouting from the fissures in the dry ground, symbolizing resilience and growth in arid conditions.

we need post-modern prophets and ethical profits
multinational cooperatives with corporate robot conduct
decentralised power stations of clean air and water
slow food and recycled wisdoms of the elders
archaic revivals for our complementary medicines,
slow food franchises
with biodynamic herbs for your consciousness
libertarian teachers
taoist seekers
inspiring sonnets to chaos
polygamous gods and goddesses
fucking in the streets
spreading the celestial seeds
of cross cultured creeds
giving birth to new age
churches of liberation
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