

Introduction

This book is dedicated to all whose lives were changed by Albert Hofmann's discoveries.

"Not I, LSD was chosen" succinctly said Albert Hofmann in 2007 when, at the age of 101, he was selected as the most important living genius by a jury from the renowned British newspaper the *Daily Telegraph*. Hardly any other discovery in the twentieth century has exercised greater influence on science, society, and culture than the mysterious, incomparably potent substance that in doses of a mere millionth of a gram profoundly alters consciousness. The chemist discovered its psychedelic effect on April 19, 1943, during a self-experiment on his legendary bicycle ride. This first LSD trip fundamentally changed his life as it later would lead millions of people throughout the world into new directions.

Albert Hofmann's biography takes us on a journey through the twentieth century: From his mystical experiences of nature as a child in Baden, to his study of chemistry with Nobel Prize winner Paul Karrer in Zurich, his discovery of LSD and of psilocybin at Sandoz in Basel, his adventurous expe-

ditions and journeys and the many years of retirement devoted to natural philosophy and an extremely rich social life.

His research into ergot alkaloids led to several drugs that he developed virtually by himself and these earned and continue to earn his former employer billions in sales. Even though Albert Hofmann never earned the Nobel Prize due to the controversy surrounding LSD, he is the best known twentieth-century chemist and the only one with pop star status—as the storm of flashbulbs at his frenetically celebrated appearances on his 100th birthday at the LSD Symposium in Basel clearly demonstrated.

After its fateful discovery, LSD became the subject of thousands of clinical studies for decades as well as obscure experiments by Secret Services and the Military. In the 1960s it left the laboratory and fueled the emerging youth and Hippie movements in the USA that ultimately changed the world—a mass phenomenon that unleashed downright hysteria about LSD, which was

described as the devil's work. The creativity-enhancing effect of this psychedelic substance influenced the development of computer technology just as significantly as it led to pioneering scientific discoveries and a holistic relationship of humans to their environment.

Albert Hofmann remained linked to this molecule for the rest of his life, which prepared the ground for innovative therapy approaches and a new estimation of mystic states, and brought him into contact with such thinkers as Aldous Huxley, Ernst Jünger and Karl Kerényi, as well as countless scientists, artists and counter-culture proponents. He never lost faith in his "problem child" to which he attested the potential of a wonder drug, and he was pleased

when he had the experience in his later years of LSD once more gaining acceptance. The Swiss Federal president of the time, Moritz Leuenberger wrote, "Through your research and writings, Dr. Hofmann, you have helped keep artistic, philosophical and religious questions alive in scientific discussions," as he congratulated him on his 100th birthday.

Albert Hofmann—an extraordinary person, researcher and mystic, maintained his openness, curiosity and love of the living creation up to his last breath at the age of 102.

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