



## MYSTIC CHEMIST

### The Life of Albert Hofmann and His Discovery of LSD

by Dieter Hagenbach and Lucius Werthmüller

Foreword by Stanislav Grof

- *Launched on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LSD's discovery*
- *A history of science, consciousness research and psychedelic studies*

Only a few discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have had such crucial and meaningful influences on science, society and culture as LSD. This mysterious and extremely potent substance causes profound changes of consciousness in doses of millionths of a gram. Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann first experienced its remarkable effects during a self-experiment with Lysergic Acid Diethylamide in 1943 at Sandoz Laboratory in Basel. It changed his life deeply, as it also has the lives of millions around the world. His bicycle ride during this first LSD trip became legendary.

Authors Hagenbach and Werthmüller, close friends of Hofmann, take us on a journey through the 20<sup>th</sup> century from his mystical childhood experiences with nature; to his chemistry studies with Nobel Prize winner Paul Karrer in Zurich through his discoveries of both LSD and psilocybin at Sandoz; to his adventurous expeditions; to his many years of retirement devoted to philosophy of nature and a rich social life. The authors reveal the eventful history of LSD, which became the subject of numerous clinical studies opening the way for innovative forms of therapy. It fueled the youth movement of the sixties, influenced developments in computer technology and science and helped spawn a new science of consciousness. Albert Hofmann was voted "greatest living genius" in 2007 by the *Daily Telegraph*. He lived an active life to the age of 102.

"Future generations will see Albert Hofmann as one the most important figures of the twentieth century; a Promethean visionary who helped chart a new trajectory for the evolution of the human species."

*Stanislav Grof, Psychiatrist*

"Taking LSD was a profound experience, one of the most important things in my life."

*Steve Jobs*

**Dieter Hagenbach**, founder of Sphinx publishing house and Gaia Media Foundation, initiated and was the program executive of the international symposium "LSD - Problem Child and Wonder Drug," in Basel, Switzerland, on the occasion of Albert Hofmann's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. **Lucius Werthmüller**, consciousness researcher and parapsychologist, was project director of the LSD symposium. He met Albert Hofmann, a good friend of Werthmüller's parents, as a child and remained close to him until the end of his life.

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## ***What people have said about the book***

“Albert Hofmann's discovery of LSD, the most potent mind-expanding substance ever found, was an event of multiple synchronicities – it occurred in 1943 in Switzerland, a neutral country, within months of the building of the atomic bomb – as if it was to be a kind of psychospiritual healing antidote to the mass death weapons. It occurred in a country with a centuries-long tradition of alchemy, the psychospiritual counterpoint to reductionist material science – and involved a previously unknown substance that could induce integrative expansions of awareness with profound implications for healing, for creative problem-solving, and for cosmological understanding. Albert Hofmann had the scientific and the spiritual insight to recognize the enormous significance of his discovery and spent the rest of his long life exploring it with an ever-widening international circle of fellow scientists, artists and visionary explorers. The authors of this biography have done a marvelous job of pulling together documentation and commentary, not only about Hofmann and LSD but also the socio-cultural and political upheavals of the 1960s, during which LSD and all mind-expanding drugs played an enormous role – and were made illegal. The story of LSD and its potential role in society is however far from over, as Hofmann himself also thought. Please read this book and stay tuned ...”

***Ralph Metzner, PhD***

“The best compendium of the birth and transformative effect of one of the greatest discoveries ever made.”

***Alex Grey, Visionary Artist***

"This book is more than a superb biography of Albert Hofmann, it's the story of LSD and pretty much covers everything of importance in the scientific, social, spiritual and artistic realms that resulted from his epochal discovery."

***Michael Horowitz, psychoactive drug historian, editor of works by Aldous Huxley and Timothy Leary***

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**MYSTIC CHEMIST: THE LIFE OF ALBERT HOFMANN AND HIS DISCOVERY OF LSD****Dieter Hagenbach**

Dieter Hagenbach was born 1943 in Basel, Switzerland. He studied architecture and the arts at the Academy of Fine Arts, Düsseldorf, Germany and was a member of the multimedia team, Cosmic Correspondence, with Jürgen Rahn in 1969, making presentations in the art galleries of Düsseldorf, Baden-Baden, and Basel. He took a study trip to India in 1970, resulting in papers about the Khasi tribe in Assam, and the observatories in Delhi, Jaipur and Varanasi. He took architecture and urban studies in London at the Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprises. In 1975 he founded Sphinx publishing house, with works by Joseph Campbell, H.R. Giger, George Gurdjieff, Jean Houston, Timothy Leary, John Lilly, Terence McKenna, Alan Watts, Robert Anton Wilson, among others. From 1977–1986 he was editor of *Sphinx* magazine and the German language edition of the *Brain/Mind Bulletin*.

Dieter Hagenbach met Albert Hofmann in the mid-1970s and remained his friend until his death. In 1986 he published Albert Hofmann's book *Einsichten Ausblicke* (*Insight Outlook*). From 1990–2005 Hagenbach acted as a literary agent. In 1993 he launched the Gaia Media Foundation. He was initiator and program manager of the international symposium [LSD – Problem Child and Wonder Drug](#) in Basel 2006, on the occasion of Albert Hofmann's 100th birthday, and was in charge for the program of the [World Psychedelic Forum](#) 2008 in Basel. Since 2002 Dieter Hagenbach has been the editor of the [Gaia Media Foundation](#) website and the monthly electronic *GoodNewsLetter*.

## Lucius Werthmüller



Lucius Werthmüller was born 1958 in Basel, Switzerland. He is a consciousness researcher and parapsychologist. Since 1991 he has been president of the Basel Psi Association with over 1,200 members, the largest organization in the field of the paranormal and the spiritual in Switzerland. He is editor of the *Psi-Info* magazine with a print run of 30,000 copies. In the year 2000 he was awarded the “Swiss Foundation for Parapsychology” prize. For eight years Lucius was project manager of the “Basel Psi-Days,” a congress with the reputation as the most important public congress on “border areas” of science worldwide. Since 1992 he has run an antique bookshop specializing in parapsychology and spirituality.

Lucius is a founding board member of the Gaia Media Foundation. He was project manager of the international symposium [LSD – Problem Child and Wonder Drug](#) in January 2006 on the occasion of the 100th birthday of Albert Hofmann in Basel and of the [World Psychedelic Forum](#) held in 2008.

He met Albert Hofmann while still a child, as Albert was a good friend of his parents, and remained close to him until the end of his life. Lucius has three adult sons and lives with his partner, Sabina, in Basel.

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## SYNOPSIS

*Mystic Chemist: The Life of Albert Hofmann and His Discovery of LSD* by Dieter Hagenbach and Lucius Werthmüller, with a foreword by Stanislav Grof, is an authoritative and richly illustrated biography of the life and work of the legendary Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann, the discoverer of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide). In addition, the book tells the complete story of LSD itself, a substance that famously fueled the hippie movement of the 1960s and impacted culture on a global scale. Originally published in German, *Mystic Chemist* is available now for the first time in English, from Synergetic Press.

Authors Hagenbach and Werthmüller, who were both close personal friends of Dr. Hofmann, begin their story by showing how Hofmann's early childhood fascination with his natural surroundings set the backdrop for his work as a scientist and led to his most famous discovery.

Albert Hofmann, born in January 1906 in the small town of Baden, Switzerland, was the eldest of four children and the son of a toolmaker who worked in a factory. When his father became seriously ill, Albert took on a commercial apprenticeship to support the family and, in 1926, began studying chemistry at the University of Zurich. The young scientist obtained his doctorate four years later and joined the research laboratory of the Sandoz pharmaceutical-chemical company in Basel, where he worked for the next forty years.

At Sandoz, Hofmann pioneers research into psychoactive substances, as well as the active agents of important medicinal plants and mushrooms. The *Mystic Chemist* is specifically interested in alkaloids (nitrogen compounds) of ergot, a cereal fungus and, in 1938, isolates the basic component of ergot alkaloids, lysergic acid. He combines this with a series of chemicals and tests the novel lysergic acid derivatives for use as circulatory and respiratory stimulants, including LSD-25 (the 25th in the series, lysergic acid diethylamide). Ironically, Sandoz pharmacologists lose interest in LSD-25 because the effects fall short of desired expectations.

However, following a "strange premonition" that occurred years after the initial synthesis, Hofmann decides to resume research on LSD-25, and on April 16, 1943, experiences firsthand its mysterious effects. According to the scientist, he is overcome by "a remarkable restlessness, combined with a slight dizziness ... I lay down and sank into a not unpleasant intoxication-like condition, characterized by an extremely stimulated imagination. In a dreamlike state, eyes closed, I perceived an uninterrupted stream of fantastic pictures; extraordinary shapes with intense, kaleidoscopic play of colors." This changes his life completely, as it soon did for millions of people around the world.

This experience makes it clear to Albert Hofmann that a predictable and conventional career track is now upended. While his basic research at the Sandoz Corporation did result in several successful remedies including Hydergine, effective in geriatric medicine,



Dihydroergot, a circulation and blood-pressure stabilizer, and Methergine, used in gynecology, Hofmann focuses a great deal on LSD and becomes involved in its spread around the world.

As society's attitude towards psychedelic drugs becomes more controversial and politically charged, Albert Hofmann becomes a philosopher and critic of modern culture. He believes his discovery will one day be of great benefit to humanity. Meanwhile, he wins recognition for his scientific work, receiving honorary degrees from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETHZ), the University of Stockholm, Berlin Free University, and he is nominated for the Nobel Prize.

The authoritative biography, *Mystic Chemist*, begins at the start of the twentieth century as the Swiss town of Basel is evolving from a popular health spa into a major industrial city, and concludes more than a century later, after Albert Hofmann's celebrates his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. It tells the unique story of a scientist before his fame, highlighting the academic journey and the research at Sandoz, then reveals Hoffman's notoriety as the discoverer of LSD, depicting his many meetings and interactions with illustrious writers, artists and thinkers from all over the world, each sharing a common interest in the new wonder-drug.

Luminaries like Aldous Huxley, Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert become woven into Hofmann's life as he begins a prolific correspondence with these and other interested parties. Sometimes he sends a sample, other times he reads of their "trips" on LSD or other psychedelic substances, like mescaline or psilocybin. From the start, Albert takes a positive view towards efforts by physicians and psychotherapists to include LSD in new approaches to the treatment of illnesses and sees the "psychedelic" potential of this "wonder drug" as beneficial to all.

Over the next twenty years, Hofmann begins to travel far and wide, enjoying many meetings with experts and colleagues, correspondents and friends; sharing stories as well as crucial information. One exchange leads to another as the intrepid scientist learns more and more about the mysteries of human consciousness and merges his inner and outer journeys. In September 1962, for example, he goes to Mexico and meets *curanderas* (female shamans) who initiate him into their secret psilocybin rituals. Later, in 1984, he flies to California to attend a conference on consciousness at the Esalen Institute, and during his visit to the beautiful California coast, Albert "tums on" with some of the other presenters.

Back home, on the Rittimatte outside Basel, Albert Hofmann welcomes a steady stream of notable visitors, each making a pilgrimage to consult the inventor of LSD. In this "paradise," as he once called it, Albert is close to the great outdoors and his beloved plants, even claiming: "The Rittimatte is my second most important discovery."

But back in the culture at large, the LSD-fueled euphoria of the hippie and flower-power generation begins to trouble the Establishment and the drug is demonized by a mass media that is only interested in sensational, half-invented stories. LSD is soon criminalized and consumption is completely prohibited, even for the therapeutic and research purposes. In 1967, LSD-exponent Dr. Timothy Leary leaves Harvard University and becomes a colorful advocate of the widespread use of LSD, famously suggesting that everyone should "Tum on, tune in,

drop out." Leary is branded by president Nixon as "the most dangerous man in America," and forced to flee the United States.

Albert Hofmann realizes that his "wonder drug" may have also become a "problem child" and never abandons a critical stance toward abuse of LSD by the hippie and flower-power generation. But he also never tires of emphasizing the basic difference between LSD and other illicit drugs. Even if used repeatedly, LSD is not addictive and does not reduce one's awareness. As well, LSD is completely non-toxic when taken in normal doses.

Hofmann never understood the demonizing of psychedelics by governments around the world. For him, there was no reason why mentally stable people shouldn't be allowed to enjoy LSD. The scientist did not see psychotic delusions in LSD-induced states of consciousness, but rather an access to a higher reality; true spiritual experiences revealing the magnificence of all creation. "The one-sided belief of the scientific view of life is based on a far-reaching misunderstanding," says Hofmann. The *Mystic Chemist* believed that LSD could help people discover a world other than "materialism, estrangement from nature, the lack of professional fulfillment in a mechanized, lifeless world of employment, boredom and aimlessness in a rich, saturated society ...," and he stood by this belief until the very end of his life.

On his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, at an international Symposium held in Basel, in 2006, entitled 'LSD: Problem Child and Wonder Drug,' Hofmann observes that, "after this conference my problem child has definitely turned into a wonder child." Shortly before his 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday, Hofmann is told that the tide may at last be turning as a new human-based study of LSD study receives approval from the Federal Office of Public Health in Bern, the Swiss capital. He calls this the, "fulfillment of my heart's desire."

Hoffman expresses his conviction that mystical experiences and trips to other realms of consciousness are the best preparation for that final journey which he and every last one of us must eventually make. At the age of 102, Albert Hofmann dies at home. His vitality and open mindedness stay with him until his last breath, providing a testimony as to how one can remain physically fit, mentally clear, and spiritually aware on into a great age.

*Mystic Chemist: The Life of Albert Hofmann and His Discovery of LSD* tells the story of Albert Hofmann's life and the parallel story of the wonder-drug, LSD. The book runs to 408 pages and contains over 500 color and black and white photographs, illustrations and drawings; some of them never published before. With a foreword by world renowned Czech psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, *Mystic Chemist* will be published in June 2013, and is available in hardcover and softcover editions.