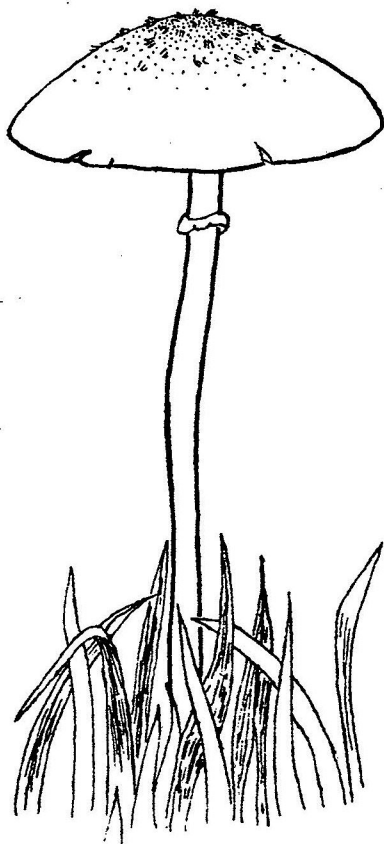
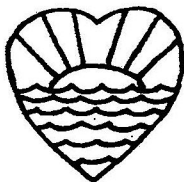


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Peele's Lepiota



An Information and
Communication Exchange
Paper on Psychedelics.

Means to an End:

LSD vs. Insanity--A Personal Account

Thomas Lyttle*

LSD (diethylamide of d-lysergic acid) is a chemical compound first synthesized as the 25th of a series of ergot derivatives by the Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann in 1938 while researching medicines to salve uterine contractions and migraine headaches.** This LSD-25 was shortly thereafter ingested in a small dose by the discoverer during routine laboratory work. Within about one hour LSD was found to be a most powerful non-toxic hallucinogen and neurological "skeleton key" capable of easily carrying Hofmann to the most extreme heights of fantasy and excitement, across psychological and spiritual barriers into undreamed of personal transformations and potentials. To put it simply, Hofmann's mind was blown!

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**Hofmann's first published LSD research paper is a 1947 piece, coauthored with W.A. Stoll, describing LSD and its oxy-toxic effects on the uterus of a rat. However, in 1943, many notes circulated between the two researchers concerning Hofmann's initial LSD trips. Excerpts from these notes have been published in about every major book on the subject of LSD.

Previous to this, psychiatrists had for years been making educated speculations about just such a chemical; one which would allow them free and easy access to the deeper parts of their patient's troubled minds. Early on in his career, the famous psychologist C.G. Jung also spent some time in ponder, wondering if such a chemical key to the unconscious might one day be discovered. He called this hypothetical compound "toxin X." These ideas blossomed for Jung while he was treating schizophrenia and researching the disorder's possible connection to personal chemistry.*

LSD quickly provided such easy access to the hidden repressed thoughts and feelings of its users that it was suggested in 1949 by the psychologist Condrau that LSD be combined with psychotherapy to create a "made in heaven" marriage between the two mind liberating forces. The chance clinical discovery

*"The Psychology of Dementia Praecox" by C.G. Jung; Journal of Neurological and Mental Disease, N.Y., 1906. I would discount this theoretical "glandular" approach for the also theoretical "double-bind" and meta-communications theories of Bateson, Erickson, et al in their original attempts at qualifying schizoid and schizophrenic phenomena. However, a solid scientific proof by either school (as well as others) has yet to be presented as fact.

by Albert Hofmann was here to take root, flourish and blossom into what was to become a most controversial, far-reaching and effective addition to the modern psychiatrist's arsenal.

This unorthodox and notably polemic offshoot of normal psychotherapy involves administering the elixer LSD to prepared psychiatric patients. These dosages range from 25 micrograms to a staggering 1500 micrograms, usually while in a controlled "laboratory setting."* Although initial clinical LSD research was strict in just what an acceptable laboratory setting entailed, more recent sympathetic approaches allow for emphasis on aesthetic, natural environs that support less technology and less artificial structure. These settings might range from "home-like" decorated hospital rooms to a spring garden or semi-secluded woods, etc in hopes of granting what are usually complimentary images for the psychiatrist and patient to work from.**

*There is a wide plethora of good, accessible works in the area of prescribed LSD dosages and their effects: LSD Psychotherapy by Stanislov Grof, Hunter House, 1980; The Problems and Prospects of LSD edited by T. Ungerleider, Charles Thomas, 1972; and LSD, the Problem Solving Psychedelic by P. Stafford and B. Golightly, Award Books, 1972.

**LSD, The Consciousness Expanding Drug edited by D. Soloman, G.P., Putman, 1964; The Use of LSD in Psychotherapy and Alcoholism edited by A. Abramson; Bobbs-Merrill, 1967.

In the lower (25-250 mcg.) psycholytic* doses, it has been voluminously documented that, when used as a precursor to more standard, time-tested techniques, LSD can sometimes remove a patient's restricting memory blocks, stimulate and stabilize related dream and fantasy images and allow for ecstatic heights of insight to bubble up and quench like a newly discovered well-spring. In a strong supportive setting, LSD can offer the room for him or her to "step outside" and watch physical and emotional defenses operate, relieve deep tensions and generally create a transcendence from the rampant over-intellectualization that modern man heavily depends on to communicate with others around about him, and more importantly, that he uses to communicate with himself. This rational, organized way of thinking often prevents a troubled person from making the important conceptual leap from the static, emotionally deadened state that is at the root of many modern mental disorders. This organic link with a more healthy growing and changing self-image is necessary for a true healing to occur; whether it be physical, existential, or spiritual.

The psycholytic forms of therapy are usually reserved for neurotic or psychosomatic patients. However, the most interesting and controversial psychiatric experiments are those involving psyche-

*This term, coined by British researcher Ronald Sandison, from the Greek lysis translates literally as "mind-loosening."

delic* doses (250+ mcg.) of LSD. The effects here are usually overwhelming and transpersonal in nature, leaving the patient unable to carry out any sort of rational, verbal dialogue for any length of time with the therapist. Also, in psychedelic therapy, the LSD trip can be longer lasting, sometimes extending several hours into twice the psycholytic length of duration.**

This form of LSD psychotherapy is designed to overload the normal perceptual circuits of the patient's mind and body and set deep archtypal and spiritual forces free. Usually hidden from our waking view, these unconscious powers are meant to instruct, heal, and transform through personal symbols and eccentric myth-like plays involving the patient at his very best and his very worst. Here the psychiatrist is less the

*This term, (literally, "mind manifesting") was created by a Canadian researcher named Hubbard in 1953 while using LSD to treat alcoholics. It was later popularized by Humphry Osmond.

**This range could vary widely according to personal body weight, chemistry, and also as to whether any adjunctive drugs are used to enhance mood or still anxiety. LSD is often combined with the stimulant Ritalin for this purpose in clinical settings. As well, it was mentioned in PP #5 that various MAO inhibitors unknowingly broken down during a meal could extend the time length of an LSD trip.

authoritative healer as a humble guide or helper limited to aiding or orienting the tripper in the physical realm.

In psychedelic therapy, all the valid, substantial LSD experiences and their results are developed for the most part, on the patient's internal, ethereal planes of experience. Here the psychiatric patient might become, for starters, the wide-eyed spiritual seeker, an extinct wild animal, his mother or his long-dead great-great grandmother, the musical F sharp note, or the current coursing through the electrical wiring in the walls. The secrets of telepathy, astral projection, quantum physics, time travel, life, death, and beyond, are commonly grasped and then lost in a wild swirl of personal images, DNA insights, universal love, or various assorted religious states of rapture.*

*Amazing Dope Tales and Haight Street Flashbacks by Steven Gaskin; The Book Publishing Co., 1980. This is a charming, down-to-Earth hippie discourse on psychedelic esoterica from a true believer.

Dimensions of Dying and Rebirth; A.R.E. Press, 1977. This thin book contains a good, solid scientific paper by Grof which deals with LSD produced personal and transpersonal phenomena. It's entitled "Transitions: Birth, Death, and Rebirth."

See also, Chemical Ecstasy: Psychedelic Drugs and Religion by W. Clark; Sheed and Ward, 1969; The Joyous Cosmology by Alan Watts; Vintage Books, 1970; The Private Sea: LSD and the Search for God, Quadrangle Books, 1967.

It is hoped that beneath all this lies the eternal, integrated and evolved portion of the patient's being which will now come forth to offer redemption, health, and happiness. This type of experience, whether while under a doctor's care or out on the street is a gamble and can be very dangerous, because not much is really known by the scientific community about these little-explored areas.

In contrast, it is often felt by the experienced psychedelists such things must be more than "just" drug related. Perhaps this is the solve et coagula that any shaman or dying person goes through.* If so, such things must surely lie far outside the scientific boundaries of psychiatry and medicine, and rightly so!

* * * * *

The lush, rolling finger lakes area of upstate New York is undoubtedly one

*Beyond Death by Stanislov and Christina Grof, Thames and Hudson, 1980. This oversized paperback is of the coffee table variety but still an enjoyable cross-cultural reference source.

The Psychedelic Experience by Metzner Alpert, and Leary, University Books, 1964. This is a unique manual for combining LSD tripping with imagery from the Tibetan Book of the Dead. It gives instructions for out-of-body navigating after death, or large dose LSD trips, which (it is assumed by the authors) parallel or interface in more ways than not.

of the most gorgeous places in the U.S. for hiking, camping and fishing or just relaxing in nature's over-grown glory. Between thousands of acres of state parks lie thousands of acres of vineyards and orchards heralded for connoisseur wines and the best varieties of apples, corn and watermelon. In the fall this bounty is backdropped by a panorama of changing colors and crisp harvest scents. Right in the center of this horn of plenty, on the upper tip of Seneca Lake, was where I had landed and temporarily settled for a few years to relax, reflect, and have fun. Seneca Lake is the deepest freshwater lake in the country and is a favorite for competitive trout fishing.

Unfortunately, it wasn't until about the autumn of 1977, when I arrived in the Finger Lakes area, that I began serious research and study of the available literature pertaining to LSD psychotherapy. It was then, and still is, hardly publicized outside academic circles.

At the time I was trying to find some feasible psycho-spiritual model from which to gauge my own blackmarket LSD experiences; which had been no ways tame and no ways small in number. Some quite startling reactions during my initial trips in another part of the country had a good part of me convinced that I had glimpsed some higher, eternal realities that had little to do with the drug beyond its role as a stimulant and catalyst. Just the same, I valued my skepticism and was drawn to the psychiatric

models for clues that might help me separate the absolute, immortal wheat from the personal, psychological shaft.

Right around this time I was coincidentally hired as a psychiatric aid by a nearby insane asylum, which was rooted on the banks of Seneca Lake right in the middle of miles of pine forests. My job consisted of becoming the new part of a ten-person psychotherapy team and acting as gofer, caretaker, and general roustabout for fifty or so long term chronic schizophrenics and psychotics.* By pure chance, this gave me the best opportunity imaginable for studying insanity first hand on a one-to-one basis. Being able to relate to the ideas and descriptions in many of my books on psychedelics and the disordered mind, based on my own observations and conclusions, was invaluable.

Some of you reading this might find yourself wondering just what an honest-to-goodness insane asylum might be like; who lives there and why, and whether it might be a better or worse place than the numerous media portrayals. In fact, whether these hostels can at all relate to any media description is a valid question. If you have at all wondered, you can now set your mind to rest. The best thing that you could do to help yourself understand about these places is to forget everything that you have ever learned about them; and the faster

*At the time of this writing I still find myself unsure as to just what these behavioral, medical, and legal labels really mean.

the better! For you see, unless you have had the pleasures of a stay in a house for the insane, my words about them just won't suffice. These places are by nature psycho-spiritual crucibles and are, in all ways, much more extreme than anything a book, movie, or word of mouth could impress upon you.

I knew that a lot of LSD research had been done in institutional settings, and although there exists a lot of data from the standpoint of the therapist, little has been printed from an experienced, well versed and literate LSD patient.

It was at this point that I started to put together a plan that would let me watch just such an intoxicated LSD patient trip while he was locked in a clinical psychiatric setting. I thought that being locked up without recourse to an exit would be what any LSD patient in any institution might have to deal with, for starters.

In planning my experiment, I knew I had the perfect clinic; I had the gullible patient (Hi!) and I had some good, clean blackmarket LSD in proper doses.* What I didn't have was the hospital's permission, a reasonable amount of common sense and a good life insurance policy in the event I met the wrong psychotic or violent patient while tripping. Still, I convinced myself that

*At the time I was using the reliable "Sorcerers Apprentice" blotter LSD in various doses. This had Mickey Mouse in his guise from the Disney movie stamped, in color, on perforated squares of paper.

win, lose, draw, or arrest, I was placed in this once-in-a-lifetime position to really learn something about psychiatry, psychedelics, and myself. Also, I secretly wanted to convince myself that tripping on LSD is different than psychosis, whether a lot of expensive scholarly books said so or not.

I worked during the day at the asylum and had the evenings off. During the late afternoon the eight-hour shift of janitors, therapists, nurses, and doctors would change. The night time brought a streamlined, smaller psychiatric crew to supervise a larger number of patients who were under lock and key both night and day for everyone's protection.

Some of the psychiatric wards, which are like army dorms (or any institutional living area) calm down a lot at night and don't need much supervision. In fact, some of the wards would have only one lay person on hand with a key to the oversized wooden doors which all had a small wire reinforced glass portal through which to observe the patients. Nobody else might be around for six or seven hours, except for us nuts.

It so happened that one such night "key man" was a close friend. The ward on which he worked was one where there was no other supervision; where nobody there knew me or had prejudices for or against me. Here was a place that I could spontaneously blend into while tripping and escape the usual "top-dog/underdog" mechanics of the standard therapist-patient relationship. I thought that this type of thing might just get a little weird on an acid trip--as if this

whole thing wasn't going to be weird enough on its own! I simply wanted to watch the inmates interact naturally in their home with their equals, and not adopt the artificial postures that they had learned to use to manipulate the daily authorities.

Rather than set a date and timetable for my experiment I had decided to hang loose, let the right time show up and then let nature take its course. Somewhere in the back of my mind, something told me that I wouldn't have long to wait.

One night shortly after this I was at home relaxing in front of my stereo and enjoying a really stoned LSD trip that was just coming on. In a flash I got up and left my room which was about a half mile from the asylum as the crow flies. This fresh direction in my trip wasn't without purpose. Although no traces of rhyme or reason could be found at the time, I found myself moving on foot across the moonlit grounds of the asylum. Up ahead was the locked psycho ward where my buddy was busy eyeballing and corralling stray patients.

To break up the night time monotony of his job, we had often enjoyed a friendly chillum or two while he was in the middle of his late night shift. I'm a night person, so he was used to my occasional visits to him and wasn't at all surprised when I showed up about 1 a.m. Although I was illegally trespassing while off duty, I knew how to avoid the hospital's a.m. security which went up to, but not beyond, the locked

violent wards of the several building asylum. As usual, his quick glance told me he was grateful for the diversion from a job too long worked. He unpacked a chillum, and I went to get a wet cloth for the mouthpiece.* The water faucet was outside the five-foot-wide, 50-year old wooden door, and my friend opened it by placing a metal key as thick as a tire iron into a keyhole the size of your thumb. (These things were built to last!)

By this time the oversized door was looking like Hollywood's best Transylvanian castle entrance and I was noticing the similarities between the color and grain in this aged wood and the ones that had been in the front door of my parents home as a child. Come to think of it, the glossy waxed linoleum beneath me did kinda resemble my old front porch covered with shiny ice. I had been seeing inappropriate colors for about half an hour now, and the differences in the colors of the two things in front of me were quickly dissolving and becoming moot; then exploding, suddenly becoming striking and unique to the point of inexpressability.

I was led down the hallway towards the patients social room which was still half-filled from a TV show. As I drew

*This Shivaite style of smoking involves placing lit, tightly wound twine (gundi) atop a bowl filled with bhang. This keeps things cooking and the wet cloth at the other end keeps things cool and sanitary.

nearer I started catching bits and pieces of the TV show and reassembling it in my mind like a Gysin-Burroghs cut-up divination. As these clues mounted, every few steps I made changed my mind concerning what lay ahead: A 3-d fun house, an Eleusis initiation chamber or a Martian meeting the first Earthlings?

All this revelry was cut short as I entered the room and 30 pair of baby blues (and a few baby browns) devoured me like a pack of wolves. It is the same for every new patient (or convict, or buck private) which I knew they would conclude I was. I suddenly became every alien invader from Genghis Khan to Margaret Mead as the lessons of mammalian territorial politics assualted my senses from hundreds of directions at once. The normal territorial instincts of primates would have been hard enough to sort out in my psychedelic state, but here was a cage; a microcosm and inflammation of everything humanly territorial bubbling like a cauldron. This cauldron, however, was madly cracked in a few spots and had been tossed in society's locked closet.

I knew that if I reacted in a hostile or fearful way it would decide my place in this micro-counterculture heirarchy on the spot. The anthropologist in me was smart, but the mystic in me was smarter! I flashed into the realization that no reactive signal from me to these jokers would be the best signal at this time. I immediately let go, let it be, and went transparent; I stopped my brain from organizing what was being collected

from my senses with a neat yoga-like trick that I had long ago picked up and perfected. This let the growing emotional charge within me run out; as with nobody at the controls to cause and effect such things, the emotions tend to discharge and lay still.

After a timeless moment or two I reincarnated and sat dazed, far-flung, and flustered. Some of the more animated oriented schizophrenics started to get hip to me and to the fact that contrary to what I was really (!) going through, it appeared, at least to them, that I was acceptably half-nuts and operating outside of the "sane" dialectics that led them to their own psycho-spiritual predicaments.

A few immediately gave, what was to me, some sense of approval with speechless body movements that were congruous and consonant and contained direct eye contact. This gave me some hint of an irrational bypass system of the brains that schizophrenics, mystics, and acid heads might tap into and out of to establish rapport. This is probably unconscious as it occurs, which is why it remains so well hidden from both its creators and conscious observers. With psychedelics I had access to these usually out-of-reach parts of my mind, at least temporarily. This experience gave a lot of credence to the communications theories of Gregory Bateson and Milton Erickson who maintain that such is off and on in the case with the usually misunderstood quandrum of schizo-

phrenia.*

As if to push me farther along, through and beyond this line of rationale, the two hands of God, wearing gloves that looked like long-term psychotics, approached and pointed to the glowing TV. This set up a chain of synchronicity that was literally out of this world! It was one of those things where the TV started a plot in word or picture; the plot was next picked up by some patient coming around the corner who added to it without even knowing the TV was on. Then the plot would jump back into the TV and continue. Like a story would be on TV about giving flowers, then an oblivious person would come up, bump a table and knock a flower vase over smashing the pot. Then when you glance back to the TV, the first thing you see would be an oil painting of a broken flower vase. You know what I mean, except that it might go for seven or eight glances, each one referencing an unfolding plot that is written both spontaneously and randomly, but would

*Dissonant and/or conflicting levels of body language can be clues to pinpointing similar mental and emotional states according to the science of kinesics. Bateson and Erickson claim that body posture, as well as voice inflection, use of syntax and other verbal and sub-verbal devices for communicating become mixed up during early youth and later blossom into schizophrenia. What I saw was a reverse of obverse; an agreement instead of a tangle at these deep unconscious levels.

make perfect sense, not just to you, but to a football stadium full of people. It's uncanny and has happened to me on a variety of LSD trips.

Maybe it's like a junction of parallel universes each containing similar enough elements to effect a reflex quantum composite, sometimes tumbling into "our" dimension and sometimes merging elsewhere...Maybe.

Or perhaps it has to do with some hidden way that we process and organize information; and it is this that backfires and creates the impression that there is causality or synchronicity when actually it is just random bits that get creatively organized during a fluke of brain functioning...Maybe.

By now the whole asylum scenario had mutated into areas that had so little to do with psychiatry and science that I had used as a premise that I gave up trying to force my experiences into this type of conceptual mold. I was leaning in favor of something above and beyond mere science, but was so high at this point that I couldn't begin to organize or fix my ideas in any sort of presentable way. Things were moving right along! At this moment I noticed five patients standing up in front of the TV, blocking my view for no apparent purpose.

For some reason I flashed into some of the ideas that Illuminatus! author Robert Anton Wilson tossed my way when he made me a Pope in the Discordian Society. The results of the Discordian's

confusion contest were enclosed with his letter.* This mail-in contest involved members donating five written words that were meant to cause varying degrees of confusion when read in a row. Trying to make some sense or draw meaning from them would result in an exercise that became an exorcism of the strict modes of normal, linear thinking. Breaking the line (or chain) of association and syntax into more fluid patterns of thought was the goal of the trip here.

It was just this kind of prankish, Dadaistic comedy that the Discordians found effectively pleasant, and able to free up and alternate your way of looking at the world. As a prerequisite to the more important mystical states that these folks trafficked in, it was great fun!

Remembering all this made me laugh out loud in spite of my attempts at playing the serious scientist. I realized that I was in the same perceptual cage as all the psychotics sitting

*Personal letter to the author from Malaclypse the Younger (Greg Hill) and Mordecai the Foul (Robert Anton Wilson) dated around 10-75. "The Discordian Society is now completely discordian (decentralized). Greg Hill and I are both too busy with other projects to do anything about serving as central clearing house for Discordians," pronounced a 10-81 letter to me from Wilson. The Discordian bible, entitled Principia Discordia, is back in print from: Loompanics, P.O. Box 264, Mason, MI 48854.

around me and standing in front of the TV set. The five psychotic syncopators now left the TV for the more up-to-date fascinations of the room's steam radiator, which had just come to life with a slow hiss.

Taking everything into consideration, I felt that I was still ahead in this crazy game, since I could laugh openly and easily. Laughter was, to me, still the lowest common denominator in most human communication.*

While I was still giggling uncontrollably over all this, I heard a familiar but distinctive sound from down the long hall that I had earlier in the evening entered. As the footsteps got closer and closer, I knew that it would soon be time to leave this place and go my way back into the world of the sane.

Although I felt that I had missed or forgotten a lot during the last couple of hours in this magic theater, I wasn't at all disappointed. I knew that what I did retain would nourish me for years to come. Whatever else I might pretend after all this was over wouldn't keep these very important insights from returning to me again and again.

As I recount, I find that too many parts of this unusual trip have been

*...unlike smiling, which is a much more complicated celebration and expression of emotion. Some theorists claim that while schizophrenics can easily laugh, they have a much harder time organizing the complex emotional information represented by a simple smile.

carried alone and undigested by me for too long a time...far too long, I fear. I grow impatient to be done with them, write them to their conclusion and go on to other more important lessons of the mind and the spirit. Lately, during these recent times, I might think a lot about such things.

In closing my way to you, I have humbly confessed what are, in truth, dire needs and obligations. With this article I have let them loose to run away. The images have been known elsewhere, in part, by many people, including William Burroughs in his instance, and others, uttering and petitioning me from my cassette deck to the jazz riffs of Kaiser Marshall's 1926 "Once or Twice".....

Fade out overtakes image
in subliminal slow sheets

Dripping out of the tape
recorder

--1962-68 Burroughs, from
The Ticket That Exploded

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