

CONFESSIONS OF A

Howard Rheingold

"Somewhere in America dwells a quiet man who is the very image of the eminent scientist. He is respected in his field, but due to the taboos surrounding his specialty, he wishes to remain anonymous. He doesn't even want to disclose what part of the country he lives in. Dr. G., as I agreed to call him, synthesizes substances that have never before existed on this planet, mind-benders of such complexity that an evolved consciousness is required to even imagine their structures."

I wrote these words for Playboy ("Future Highs") in 1978. Dr. G. is still around. His name is Alexander T. Shulgin, and he has some information to impart before it's too late.

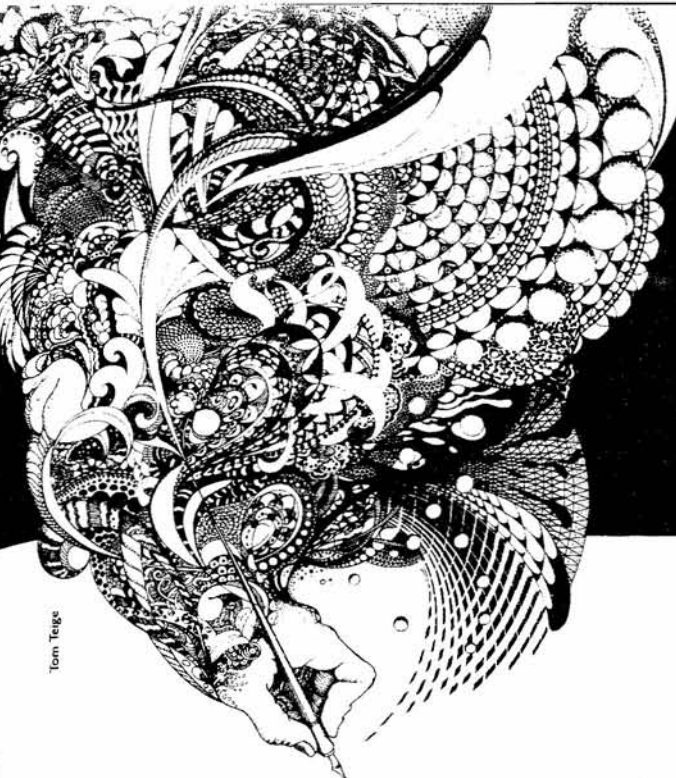
Sasha Shulgin has a fully licensed analytical laboratory. He's been doing what he does — creating psychedelic drugs and testing them — for decades. Until now, he has been quiet about his work. After thirty years of exploring the art and science of building molecules that alter human minds, Shulgin and his wife, Ann, have decided to make their knowledge public, lest it be lost or suppressed. They have written a book that is part autobiography, part metaphysical guidebook, and part cookbook.

Sasha and Ann tell their story as a couple and as the nucleus of a small research group, who have discreetly pursued the potential of new psychedelic compounds for most of Shulgin's career. The systematic analysis and often touching, sometimes hilarious, not infrequently frightening anecdotal descriptions of a large number of compounds are given. The authors also include detailed recipes, for authorized and licensed research scientists, of 179 compounds, many of which Shulgin has created and his research group has tested. Finding a publisher wasn't easy. For some reason, book publishers didn't jump at the opportunity to publish a psychedelic cookbook.

A century from now, if science and scholarship still exist, this part of the twentieth century will be seen as a long dark age in which legitimate research into promising and powerful mind-tools was suppressed for political reasons. You can still publish your own books in this country, and that is what the Shulgins have done. We are proud to present here the introduction to PIHKAL (Phenethylamines I Have Known and Loved), subtitled "A Chemical Love Story."

PIHKAL will be available in September from Transform Press, Box 13675, Berkeley, CA 94701: \$22.95 postpaid (California residents, add \$1.32).

—Howard Rheingold



Tom Terge

PSYCHEDELIC ALCHEMIST

BY
**ALEXANDER T.
SHULGIN**

I AM A PHARMACOLOGIST AND A CHEMIST. I have spent most of my adult life investigating the action of drugs: how they are discovered, what they are, what they do, how they can be helpful — or harmful. But my interests lie somewhat outside the mainstream of pharmacology. The area I have found most fascinating and rewarding is that of the psychedelic drugs (psychedelics might best be defined as physically non-addictive compounds which temporarily alter the state of one's consciousness).

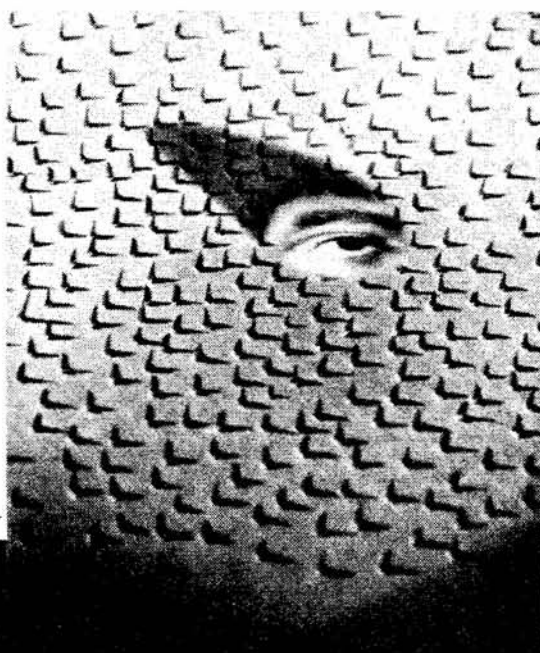
The prevailing opinion in this country is that there are drugs that have legal status and are either relatively safe or at least have acceptable risks, and there are other drugs that are illegal and have no legitimate place in our society. Although this opinion is widely held and vigorously promoted, I sincerely believe that it is wrong. It is an effort to paint things either black or white, when, in this area, as in most of real life, truth is grey.

Let me give the reasons for my belief.

Every drug, legal or illegal, provides some reward. Every drug presents some risk. And every drug can be abused. Ultimately, in my opinion, it is up to each of us to measure the reward against the risk and decide which outweighs the other. The rewards cover a wide spectrum. They include such things as the curing of disease, the softening of physical and emotional pain, intoxication, and relaxation. Certain drugs — those known as the psychedelics — allow for increased personal insight and expansion of one's mental and emotional horizons.

The risks are equally varied, ranging from physical damage to psychological disruption, dependency, and violation of the law. Just as there are different rewards with different people, there are also different risks. An adult must make his own decision as to whether or not he should expose himself to a specific drug, be it available by prescription or proscribed by law, by measuring the potential good and bad with his own personal yardstick. And it is here that being well informed plays an indispensable role. My philosophy can be distilled into four words: be informed, then choose.

I personally have chosen some drugs to be worth the risks; others, I deem not to be of sufficient value. For instance, I use a moderate amount of alcohol, generally in the form of wine, and — at the present time — my liver function tests are completely normal. I do not smoke tobacco. I used to, quite heavily, then gave it up. It was



Vision in Motion

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not the health risk that swayed me, but rather the fact that I had become completely dependent upon it. That was, in my view, a case of the price being unacceptably high.

Each such decision is my own, based on what I know of the drug and what I know about myself.

Among the drugs that are currently illegal, I have chosen not to use marijuana, as I feel the light-headed intoxication and benign alteration of consciousness does not adequately compensate for an uncomfortable feeling that I am wasting time.

I have tried heroin. This drug, of course, is one of the major concerns in our society at present. In me, it produces a dreamy peacefulness, with no rough edges of worry, stress or concern. But there is also a loss of motivation, of alertness, and of the

urge to get things done. It is not any fear of addiction that causes me to decide against heroin; it is the fact that, under its influence, nothing seems to be particularly important to me.

I have also tried cocaine. This drug,

particularly in its notorious "crack" form, is the *cause celebre* of today. To me, cocaine is an aggressive pusher, a stimulant which gives me a sense of power and of being completely with it, on top of the world. But there is also the inescapable knowledge, underneath, that it is not true power, that I am not really on top of the world, and that, when the drug's effects have disappeared, I will have gained nothing. There is a strange sense of falseness about the state. There is no insight. There is no learning. In its own distinctive way, I find cocaine to be as much an escape drug as heroin. With either one, you escape from who you are, or — even more to the point — from who you are not. In either case, you are relieved for a short time from awareness of your inadequacies. I frankly would rather address mine than escape

them; there is, ultimately, far greater satisfaction that way.

With the psychedelic drugs, I believe that, for me, the modest risks (an occasional difficult experience or perhaps some body malaise) are more than balanced by the potential for learning. And that is why I have chosen to explore this particular area of pharmacology.

What do I mean when I say there is a potential for learning? It is a potential, not a certainty. I can learn, but I'm not forced to do so; I can gain insight into possible ways of improving the quality of my life, but only my own efforts will bring about the desired changes.

Let me try to make clear some of the reasons that I find the psychedelic experience a personal treasure.

I am completely convinced that there is a wealth of information built into us, with miles of intuitive knowledge tucked away in the genetic material of every one of our cells. Something akin to a library containing uncouthable reference volumes, but without any obvious route of entry. And, without some means of access, there is no way to even begin to guess at the extent and quality of what is there. The psychedelic drugs allow exploration of this interior world, and insights into its nature.

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One day, looking into the face of a newborn grandchild, you find yourself thinking that her birth has made a seamless tapestry of time as it flows from yesterday to tomorrow. You realize that life continuously appears in different forms and in different identities, but that whatever it is that gives shape to each new expression does not change at all.

"From where did her unique soul come?" you wonder, "And to where will my own unique soul go? Is there

really something else out there, after death? Is there a purpose to it all? Is there an overriding order and structure that makes sense of everything, or would, if only I could see it?" You feel the urge to ask, to probe, to use what little time might be left to you, to search for ways to tie together all the loose ends, to understand what demands to be understood.

This is the search that has been part of human life from the very first moments of consciousness. The knowledge of his own mortality — knowledge which places him apart from his fellow animals — is what gives Man the right, the license, to explore the nature of his own soul and spirit, to discover what he can about the components of the human psyche.

Each of us, at some time in his life, will feel himself a stranger in the strange land of his own existence, needing answers to questions which have risen from deep within his soul and will not go away.

Both the questions and their answers have the same source: oneself.

This source, this part of ourselves, has been called by many names throughout human history, the most recent being "the unconscious." Freudians distrust it and Jungians are enraptured by it. It is the part inside you that keeps watch when your conscious mind has drifted, that gives you the sense of what to do in a crisis, when there is no time available for logical reasoning and decision-making. It is the place wherein are to be found demons and angels and everything in between.

This is one of the reasons I hold the psychedelic drugs to be treasures. They can provide access to the parts of us which have answers. They can, but again, they need not and probably will not, unless that is the purpose for which they are being used.

It is up to you to use these tools well, and in the right way. A psychedelic drug might be compared to television. It can be very revealing, very instructive, and — with thoughtful care in the selection of channels — the means by which extraordinary in-

sights can be achieved. But to many people, psychedelic drugs are simply another form of entertainment; nothing profound is looked for, thus — usually — nothing profound is experienced.

The potential of the psychedelic drugs to provide access to the interior universe, is, I believe, their most valuable property.

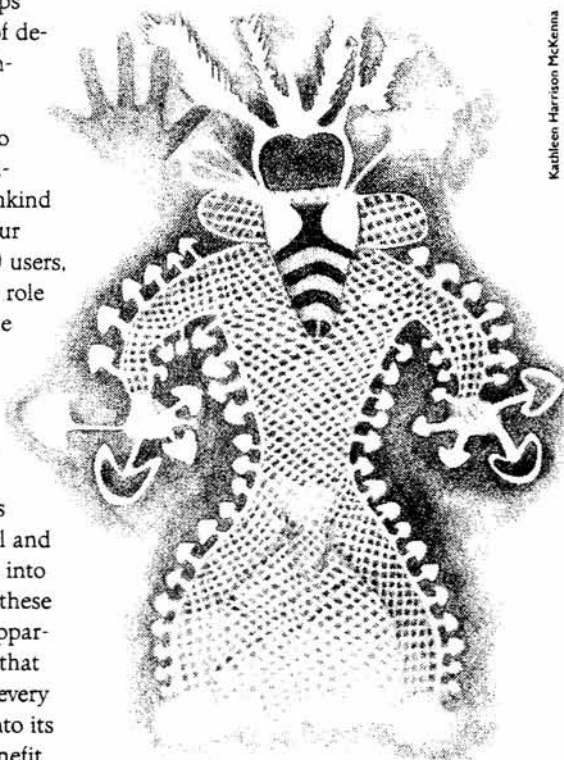
From the earliest days of his time on earth, Man has sought out and used specific plants which have had the effect of altering the way he interacts with his world and communicates with his gods and with himself. For many thousands of years, in every known culture, there has been some percentage of the population — usually the shamans, the *curanderos*, the medicine men — which has used this or that plant to achieve a transformation in its state of consciousness. These people have used the altered state to sharpen their diagnostic abilities and to enable them to draw upon the healing energies to be found in the world of the spirits. The tribal leaders (in later civilizations, the royal families) presumably used the psychoactive plants to increase their insight and wisdom as rulers, or perhaps simply to call upon the forces of destructive power as allies in forthcoming battles.

Many plants have been found to meet specific human needs. Unwanted pain has been with mankind forever. Just as we today have our heroin (or Fentanyl or Demerol) users, for centuries past this analgesic role has been played by opium of the Old World and datura of the New World, mandragora in Europe and North Africa, as well as henbane, belladonna and mandrake, to name a few. Countless people have used this way of deadening pain (physical and psychic), which involves escape into a dream world. And, although these tools have had many users, it apparently has been only a minority that has abused them. Historically, every culture has spun these plants into its daily life, and has had more benefit than harm from them. We have, in

our own society, learned to deaden physical pain and debilitating anxiety with the medical use of drugs which have been developed in imitation of the alkaloids in these plants.

The need to search out sources of additional energy has also been with us forever. And, as we have our caffeine and cocaine users, for centuries the natural sources have been maté tea and the coca plant of the New World, the khat plant of Asia Minor, the kola tree of North Africa, kava-kava and the betel nut from Eastern Asia, and ephedra from all parts of the world. Again, many kinds of people — the peasant, stooped under a bundle of firewood, trudging for hours on a mountain path; the doctor on emergency duty for two days without sleep; the soldier under fire at the front, unable to rest — have sought the push and prod of stimulation. And, as always, there have been a few who have chosen to abuse these aids.

Then there is the need to explore the world that lies just beyond the immediate limits of our senses and our understanding; that, too, has been with mankind from the first. But in this case, our non-native North Amer-



Kathleen Harrison McKenna

ican society has not given its acceptance to the plants, the chemicals, that open up our seeing and feeling skills. Other civilizations, for many hundreds of years, have used the peyote cactus and the psilocybin-containing mushroom, the ayahuasca, cohoba and yaje of the New World, the harmala, cannabis and soma of the Old World, and the iboga of Africa, for this inquiry into the human unconscious. But our modern medical profession, as a whole, has never acknowledged these tools for insight or for therapy, and they have remained generally unacceptable. In the establishment of a balance of power between those who heal us and those who govern us, it has been agreed that the possession and use of these remarkable plants shall be a crime. And that the use of any chemical compounds which have been developed in imitation of these plants, even though they might show improved safety and consistency of action, shall also be a crime.

We are a great nation with one of the highest standards of living ever known. We are proud of an extraordinary Constitution that protects us from the tyranny that has torn apart lesser nations. We are rich in the heritage of English law that assumes our innocence and assures us our personal privacy. One of the major strengths of our country has been in its traditional respect for the individual. Each and every one of us is free — or so we have always believed — to follow whatever religious or spiritual path he chooses; free to inquire, to explore, to seek information and pursue truth wherever and however he wishes, as long as he accepts full responsibility for his actions and their effects on others.

How is it, then, that the leaders of our society have seen fit to try to eliminate this one very important means of learning and self-discovery, this means which has been used, respected, and honored for thousands of years, in every human culture of which we have a record? Why has peyote, for instance, which has served for centuries as a means by which a person may open his soul to an experience of

God, been classified by our government as a Schedule I material, along with cocaine, heroin and PCP? Is this kind of legal condemnation the result of ignorance, pressure from organized religion, or a growing urge to force conformity upon the population? Part of the answer may lie in an increasing trend in our culture towards both paternalism and provincialism.

Paternalism is the name for a system in which the authorities supply our

century, as the cause of murder, mayhem and insanity among the shiftless American Indians. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was determined to stamp out the use of peyote (which it consistently confused with mescal and the mescal bean in its publications), and one of the most consistent pressures behind its efforts is made clear in this partial quotation from a letter written by the Reverend B. V. Gassaway in 1903 to the BIA: "... The



Daryl Hutchinson

needs, and — in exchange — are allowed to dictate our conduct, both public and private. Provincialism is narrowness of outlook, social unification by the acceptance of a single code of ethics, the limiting of interests and forms of experience to those already established as traditional.

However, the prejudice against the use of consciousness-opening plants and drugs has the major part of its origin in racial intolerance and the accumulation of political power. In the latter part of the last century, once the Intercontinental Railway had been built and the Chinese laborers were no longer needed, they were increasingly portrayed as subhuman and uncivilized; they were yellow-skinned, slant-eyed, dangerous aliens who frequented opium dens.

Peyote was described, in various publications of the late nineteenth

Sabbath is the principal day for our preaching services and if the Indians are first made drunk on mescal (peyote) they cannot then be benefitted by the gospel."

It was only with tremendous effort and courage on the part of many people of conscience that the use of peyote as a sacrament in the Native American Church was permitted to continue. There is now underway, as you may know, a renewed effort on the part of our present government to eliminate the religious use of peyote by native Americans.

In the 1930s, there was an effort to deport Mexican laborers from southern agricultural states, and racial prejudice was again deliberately encouraged, with the Mexicans being described as lazy, dirty, and users of that dangerous stuff called marijuana. The intolerance of black peo-

ple in the United States was aided and abetted by stories of marijuana and heroin use among black musicians. It should be noted that nobody remarked on such drug use by black people until their new music, which they called jazz, began to attract the attention of whites — at first only white night-club patrons — and there began the first stirrings of awareness of the indignities and injustices being suffered by black Americans.

The government and the Church decided that psychedelic drugs were dangerous to society and, with the help of the press, it was made clear that this was the way to social chaos and spiritual disaster.

What was unstated, of course, was the oldest rule of all: "Thou shalt not oppose nor embarrass those in power without being punished."

We in this country are all too painfully aware of our past sins in regard to the rights of various minorities, but we are less conscious of the way in which the public attitude toward certain drugs has been manipulated. New positions of political power and, eventually, thousands of new jobs were created on the basis of the perceived threat to public health and safety posed by plants and drugs whose sole function was to change perceptions,

to open the way to exploration of the unconscious mind, and — for many — to allow a direct experience of the numinous.

The 1960s, of course, delivered a powerful blow to the psychedelics. These drugs were being used as part and parcel of a massive rebellion against governmental authority and what was believed to be an immoral and unnecessary war in

Vietnam. Also, there were too many loud and authoritative voices claiming that there was a need for a new kind of spirituality, and urging the use of psychedelics to make direct contact with one's God, without the intervention of priest, minister or rabbi.

The voices of psychiatrists, writers and philosophers, and of many thoughtful members of the clergy, pleaded for study and investigation of the effects of psychedelics, and of what they could reveal about the nature and function of the human mind and psyche. They were ignored in the clamor against flagrant abuse and misuse, of which there was more than ample evidence. The government and the Church decided that psychedelic drugs were dangerous to society and, with the help of the press, it was made clear that this was the way to social chaos and spiritual disaster.

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I have stated some of my reasons for holding the view that psychedelic drugs are treasures. There are others, and many of them are spun into the texture of this story. There is, for instance, the effect they have on my perception of colors, which is completely remarkable. Also, there is the deepening of my emotional rapport with another person, which can become an exquisitely beautiful experience, with eroticism of sublime intensity. I enjoy the enhancement of the senses of touch, smell and taste, and the fascinating changes in my perception of the flow of time.

I deem myself blessed in that I have experienced, however briefly, the existence of God. I have felt a sacred oneness with creation and its Creator, and — most precious of all — I have touched the core of my own soul.

It is for these reasons that I have dedicated my life to this area of inquiry. Someday I may understand how these simple catalysts do what they do. In the meantime, I am forever in their debt. And I will forever be their champion. ■

The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology

The orthodoxy of the behavioral and mental sciences, from Freudians to Skinnerians to neural-networkers, is devoted to understanding how the human mind functions, mostly by examining the way it malfunctions. The science of mental functioning, for the most part, derives from analysis of mental malfunction.

*The systematic study of more fully human behavior, of optimal and more-than-optimal performance, of better-than-healthy mental functioning, has not disappeared, although it has been relegated by many to the world of touchie-feelie self-indulgence. From the depth psychologists, the Jung and Campbells, to the myco-Dionysians, the Wassons and McKennas, a healthy stream of counterthought continues to flow; a few serious thinkers have resisted the New Age-ization of transpersonal knowledge. You'll find their discussions of psychoactive substances, Eastern spiritual teachings, shamanism, peak performance, spiritual emergencies, death and dying, brainwaves and trance-channeling, in **The Journal***

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—Howard Rheingold

The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology

Miles A. Vich, Editor

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• One often encounters statements such as: "Since the beginning of the 1970s, there has been little new research into psychedelic substances." . . . Despite the virtual ban on their use in research with human subjects in the U.S. and elsewhere, there has been a major resurgence of research activity in the past ten years. New discoveries in neurochemistry, anthropology and transpersonal psychology have led to significant new findings in many areas, but especially in ethnopsychopharmacology and archeopsychopharmacology. The use of psychoactive substances to assist psychotherapy has continued in Europe. The latter research has been disseminated primarily at conferences and not in the major journals; hence it is unknown . . . outside this network.