

## **Rolando Toro LSD Interview**

*This is a translation of the Italian transcript made by Matías Wolff from the microfilm of the Paula magazine at the National Library of Chile and published online here*

<https://criticadelarazoneterica.wordpress.com/2011/03/25/documentos-reportaje-de-revista-paula-al-ld-1968/>

It's March 1968 and we're in Santiago, Chile. Isabel Allende is a young journalist who writes for the magazine Paula and Rolando Toro is a university professor working at the Medical Anthropology Centre of the University of Chile along with Claudio Naranjo and Ludwig Zeller as part of one of the teams identified by Sandoz Pharmaceutical to experiment and test the possible therapeutic uses of LSD.

### **LSD article by Isabel Allende for Paula magazine**

The first part describes a therapeutic experience conducted by R. Toro, who also created the Biodanza system. The second part consists of an interview about the effects of LSD, its uses and the myths that surround it. Toro, who worked with the substance for more than 6 years at the Medical Anthropology Centre of the University of Chile, explains its possible benefits for individuals and societies.

### **LSD: Its magic, its power, its dangers**

It is half past six in the afternoon. In a department in the centre of Santiago, in front of Cerro Santa Lucía, a man and a woman who have been married for 15 years have just ingested a tiny white pill handed to them by Rolando Toro, Professor of Psychology of Learning and of Artistic Expression at the University of Chile. They are alone in their house with the exception of the discreet and solicitous presence of the psychologist who makes notes in his notebook and records what he hears and sees, willing to intervene if necessary, to guide, to learn and to add more to his archive of more than 200 lysergic experiences. What happens between these two people is impossible to reproduce in its entirety because of its complexity and also its size. However, we have selected some parts of their dialogue.

3:00 pm

Yes, we've already taken the pill... we're waiting now.

Woman: I'm a little scared.

Man: You should not be afraid... hold my hand.

4:00 pm

Man: The colours of your dress are 'coming up'... now they are moving away. They have a life of their own. It's beautiful!

Woman: The drug is already having an effect. I feel nothing other than complete relaxation, as if my body was heavy.

Man: You don't see the dancing colours?

Woman: No.

6:00 pm (R. Toro puts the Beethoven's 5th Symphony. The man has had vertiginous hallucinations of shapes and colors. The woman has had them in much lesser intensity. He has totally surrendered to the effect of the drug. She struggled to not lose control of her reason. The music seems to break the last barrier that was preventing her from diving into the subconscious. Now she is crying.)

Man: Why are you crying?

Woman: I feel that my whole life is love... I have not been able to give it. (Cries profusely). I only have love here... In this golden house there is only love. My bones hurt, my skin, my tears, everything hurts of love...

Man: Calm down, maybe it will stop hurting as soon as the effect of LSD stops.

Woman: The drug only helps me to be honest. I have a new Bethlehem in my heart... This birth hurts... Oh my God!

8:30 pm

Man: We have wounded (each other) without mercy. You have given me death. You made me hate life and feel disgusted. I have given you a hard time, every day. We have done our best to destroy ourselves... but now I feel you inside me.

Woman: You have humiliated me in front of your friends. You have left me alone. I feel so abandoned at times! You lied to me... I also lied to you. What a strange thing! I will never lie to you again, my love.

Man: I don't want to humiliate you any more!

10:15 pm

Woman: I would like to be smoke, so that you'd inhale me and get me inside the buds of your fingers, all the way down to your feet... I am going into your eyes through a long path...

(They look at each other fixedly in the eyes, a few centimeters from each other, almost touching each other, for a long time.)

Man: It's like I'm seeing you for the first time... although we've lived together for 15 years. Let me look at you... I'm inside you... I can see myself in your eyes. Your hands, your eyebrows, your armpits... I love those gestures... those movements... that's why I fell in love with you. You are mine... we are one... come...

The dialogue continued like this, sometimes poetic, sometimes incoherent, sometimes monologues, monosyllables, laughter or crying. They continued to look deeply at each other, rediscovering and exploring each other, sharing a strange and luminous world for many hours. And then, after the effect of the drug, they looked at each other with new eyes.

### **Everyone talks about it but nobody knows what it is**

This is the effect that a tiny white pill called LSD or lysergic acid diethylamide has had on this married couple. Nowadays we hear people talking about LSD everywhere. Some believe it is the gateway to Nirvana while others fight it fanatically. They all talk and speculate, although few people really know what it is, and what its dangers, characteristics, and consequences are.

LSD is one of the most powerful drugs in existence. It is hallucinogenic, that is, it produces hallucinations and visions. Generally, one millionth of a gram per kilo of the individual's weight is administered because it is impossible to predict the reaction or resistance to the drug. It comes in the form of a tiny white pill or diluted in a lump of sugar. Its effects begin to be noticed approximately one or two hours after ingested and last about 8 hours, but the lysergic mood lasts until 48 hours after the dose of LSD has been ingested.

This hallucinogen is used in psychology to treat neurosis and character pathologies. It is a chemical compound prepared in a laboratory, extracted from a lower fungus that grows parasitically on rye. Its effects are similar to those of peyote (mescaline) and magic mushrooms (psilocybin), which were known and worshiped by the ancient Aztecs.

Professor Rolando Toro, who administered the drug to the couple, is one of the most experienced people with LSD in Chile. PAULA questioned him extensively about his experiences.

PAULA: In the experience that we shared, the couple had extraordinary feelings of union and love. Is this the general case? Or could the lysergic experience have led the couple to separate by discovering a mutual rejection hitherto unknown?

R. Toro: That risk would exist if the couple didn't have a genuine relationship of love and lived together mainly because of conventions. The drug would make them boldly see their union, and perhaps they would end up separating with honesty and without violence.

PAULA: Can the drug influence the future behavior and thinking of the subject? And if he is an artist, his art?

R. Toro: After the effect of the drug has passed, the subject remembers in detail what he has experienced while under the effect of LSD. A feeling of purity, plenitude, and connection with everything remains in the spirit for several days after a trip. The subject can work with the psychological contents discovered during the experience in order to stabilize them. In such a case, the effects tend to persist. Otherwise, the lysergic experience becomes another experience in life.

PAULA: Is the experience always positive?

R. Toro: No. The lysergic experience is not always wonderful. It can also be hellish. It depends on the personality of the subject and also of the guide. In the event of excessive distress, chlorpromazine, amphoteric, and others are used as antidotes.

PAULA: In Chile, who has access to the drug? What percentage has taken it? How much is a dose of LSD?

R. Toro: I do not know how many people have ingested LSD in Chile, but there

are not many. I personally administered it to about 200 people when I worked at the Centre for the Study of Medical Anthropology at the School of Medicine of the University of Chile for six years. These experiments were all free. The Sandoz lab no longer delivers LSD so taking it in Chile is almost impossible at this moment. Some researchers are using similar drugs such as psilocybin, mescaline, MMDA and Yagé.

However, many people say that they take LSD. There might be a small market for the drug brought in from abroad, but it would be minimal. The drug people usually take is marijuana. In Valparaiso it is very easy to get marijuana on the black market. With E50 you can buy enough marijuana to make a hundred joints. Its effects are not the same as those of LSD.

PAULA: Nowadays there is a real global campaign against LSD and other hallucinogens. Why?

R. Toro: The newspapers have frequently alarmed people about the harmful effects of this "terrible drug". Such references are based on a few isolated and poorly designed research studies and on propaganda against the use of LSD. There are no serious scientific experiments that demonstrate that LSD produces organic alterations in the nervous system, in the blood or in the chromosomes. I fully agree with the National Health Service's view that the drug should be used under strict control. However, its use surpasses the purely clinical scope and is very important in the fields of anthropological, artistic and philosophical exploration. This has been shown by personalities such as Michaux, Ginsberg, Aldous Huxley and many others.

PAULA: There is much talk that LSD causes leukemia and that there have been cases of deformed children as with thalidomide...

R. Toro: A doctor from a Hospital in Buffalo New York, and doctors from the University of Oregon studied the leukocytes of 8 people and had the audacity to draw "scientific" conclusions and publish them. They observed that two of the subjects had a small chromosome similar to that of leukemia. The extraordinary thing is that while geneticists around the world were denouncing the increase in split chromosomes in the population due to the atomic irradiation in the environment, these researchers attributed it to LSD. Lately, a great deal has also been said about the births of monstrous children with congenital birth defects. The Sunday Evening Post magazine reported that a child in the State of Oregon had a bowel defect and his head was developing grotesquely. But the doctor who examined the child acknowledged that it could not be due to a single dose of LSD ingested the mother. In the United States they have found four newborns with irregular chromosomes of mothers who use LSD. This fact has no scientific significance considering that in that country there are more than 4 million people who have ingested the drug, and that these cases occur in the same proportion among children born to parents who have never taken LSD.

PAULA: They also say that the drug produces abortions and insanity. Is it true?

R. Toro: No one has become insane with LSD. However, some people who were

previously suffering from a pre-psychotic state have had symptoms of psychosis during the LSD experience. On the other hand, the drug has had very positive results in the treatment of neurosis and sexual disorders, such as impotence, frigidity, neurotic homosexuality, etc. There is no data to prove the causal relationship between the observed cases of abortions in lysergic mothers, since the proportion of abortions is the same as in mothers who have not ingested LSD. I personally believe, however, that women who have a tendency to miscarriage are in danger of aborting during the lysergic experience because the drug often produces strain on the abdominal musculature.

PAULA: Every fatal accident caused by the drug comes out in the press. Without going any further, in *El Mercurio* on Sunday January 14, there was an article about 6 boys who were blinded by watching the sun for several hours under the effects of LSD.

R. Toro: Yes. There have been fatal accidents. People have jumped out the window, thrown themselves at cars, and killed in the lysergic state. That is why the role of the guide is so important in a lysergic experience.

PAULA: Does LSD produce habituation like other drugs or alcohol?

R. Toro: No. It does not produce addiction or habituation.

PAULA: There has been talk of the social risks of LSD. What are they?

R. Toro: There is no doubt that LSD poses "social dangers" to the structure of our Western civilization. There are political and economic factors that feel attacked by the effects of the drug. LSD increases the individual's ability to connect with himself and others, and tends to produce an integration of the personality, partially or totally liberating people from the process of collective alienation. It tends to diminish or suppress possessiveness, competitive tendencies, and aggressiveness. If we think that the Western civilization is based on aggression, possessiveness and competition, we'll understand the "social dangers" of the drug.

PAULA: Are you currently doing experiments with LSD?

No. I am currently working on the material that I have accumulated during 6 years at the Institute of Medical Anthropology of the University of Chile. The Sandoz laboratory no longer send us the drug, so it is practically impossible to get it. In Chile this research is very difficult because of the prejudices against LSD and the strong propaganda against it.

*The original article continued with an interview with a young man, Andrés, who related in detail an LSD trip, and ended with an interview with a doctor of the Catholic University on possible LSD risks and calamities.*

*Paula, nº 9, March 1968 (BN: microfilm, RCH 1583), pp. 62-65 y 119-120. By Isabel Allende*