

Second Open Letter to the LGBTQ+ and World Community

Earlier this year, MAPS published my [Open Letter to the LGBTQ+ and world community](#) apologizing for portions of my writings that discuss homosexuality as a psychological disorder. As noted in the Open Letter, these passages were based on my psychoanalytic training in the 1950s and early 1960s when homosexuality was considered a psychological disorder and same-sex activities were classified as criminal in many countries, including Czechoslovakia and the United States. During this time period, referrals for psychological treatment, in some instances, helped people avoid incarceration who faced criminal charges for homosexual behavior. Even in that situation, I never promoted my work or held my work as involving “treatment” for homosexuality.

I have been told that my prior statement was received by some people as equivocal. Again, to be clear, I take full responsibility for the harm my writings have caused, and I support the removal of passages pathologizing homosexuality from future editions of my books. Describing same-gender attraction as a “disorder” or “deviation” was profoundly wrong, and I deeply regret the pain these words have caused. I have long believed that LGBTQ+ identities are a natural, valid, and beautiful part of human diversity. I also affirm the work being done to ensure that the future of psychedelic therapy is inclusive and welcoming to all.

In response to my Open Letter, [An Open Letter Reply to Dr. Stan Grof](#) was published by Alex Belser, PhD; Andrea Ens, PhD; Bill Brennan, PhD; Dee Dee Goldpaugh, LCSW; and Jeffrey Guss, MD. I have had the opportunity to discuss the arguments made in the Open Letter Reply with friends and colleagues.

I now understand better the depth of personal harm felt by some individuals upon reading my characterization of homosexuality as a pathology. For those LGBTQ+ people who found my work a guide to self-discovery and personal freedom, I entirely understand the feelings of hurt and confusion that can arise when I characterized their natural orientation as an illness.

I came to realize that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) removed the classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973, and several of my works have been republished several times with the inappropriate passages inadvertently repeated. **I am grateful that my attention was brought to the fact that these passages have been reprinted in new editions of some of my books, although I should have removed them long ago. My most recent book, *Way of the Psychonaut*, does not contain these passages, and I commit to changing these passages in any new reprints of my previous books. Currently, we are also working on a new corrected edition of *LSD Psychotherapy*.**

Over the years, several statements and writings, including the Open Letter Reply, have asserted a false narrative about the nature of my work and character. While I acknowledge the harm my writing has caused, I feel the need to provide additional context and respond to address these false narratives.

The Open Letter Reply asserts that my Open Letter misstates the time frame in which the writings were made. As previously stated, I originally described homosexuality as a pathology, per the DSM's categorization, when I first started to consider psychological diagnoses in the context of my expanded cartography of the psyche in the late fifties and early sixties. Unfortunately, the reality of reprinting by publishing companies, along with the demands of my professional life, meant that I did not attend closely to reprintings and assumed that my various books would be read in the context of the times in which they were written. In some newer publications, I drew language from earlier works without sufficient revision. I neglected to realize the harmful impact that these passages were having on individuals and the field of psychology. That was a serious oversight. Again, for that, I am truly sorry.

For me personally, and for my family and friends, a very troubling aspect of the criticism offered by Belser and colleagues has been the assumption that I held prejudices against LGBTQ+ people, even continuing into the present. This has never been true. In the writings at issue, I was trying to better understand, in the context of the new psychology I was envisioning, the diagnoses that were common at that time in the field of psychiatry in which I was trained. I was seeking to understand homosexuality psychologically, along with many other human behaviors and orientations, in the context of my work with nonordinary states of consciousness. While this distinction may be difficult to understand by people who do not know me or my work, my approach to all people has always involved unconditional regard and respect. This has been true for me with the hundreds, if not thousands, of people identifying within the LGBTQ+ spectrum with whom I have worked over my long professional life.

In the Open Letter Reply, and elsewhere, Belser et al. have argued that my work constituted conversion therapy – that is, therapy with a goal, expressed or implied, to convert someone from an LGBTQ+ orientation to a heterosexual orientation. The argument was initially stated in a “[Consensus Statement Condemning Psychedelic Conversion Therapy and Suggestions for Addressing Ongoing Harms Against LGBTQIA+ People in Psychedelic Research and Therapy](#),” which seeks signatories and lists my name along with several others as having “advocated for and practiced psychedelic conversion therapy or promoted LGBTQIA+ rejecting practices, causing significant harm.”

This statement that associates my name with “conversion therapy” is deeply misleading about me and my work, and creates a false narrative that is damaging to me and the field of psychology. My work is based on encouraging people to discover their individual inner healing intelligence in a set and setting, inviting a holotropic state of consciousness, and to follow the guidance of that intelligence in movement towards wholeness. It is against my nature and contrary to the heart of my work to try to change anyone based on any preexisting agenda or dogma. Our training programs have always required our facilitators to refrain from imposing an agenda, dogma, or even their own perspectives on those we support in our work. Stating that I engaged in conversion therapy emerges from a

fundamental lack of understanding of my work. There has been no point in my career where I advocated for or practiced conversion therapy.

The vast majority of LGBTQ+ people with whom I worked over several decades were seeking personal growth or professional training not related to their sexual orientation. Their orientation was never an issue for me nor raised as an issue in their work with me. I can recall no more than three or four patients, all early in my work, who presented their homosexuality as an issue in their lives. This was in the context of anxiety or depression, and in at least one instance, compulsive behaviors that put the individual at risk by their own description.

Unfortunately, my discussion of homosexuality as a DSM-categorized pathology in some of my books gives rise to the assumption that I must have held homosexuality as a problem to be cured, meaning any work with me would be toward that goal. I understand my responsibility for creating this impression, though I have never “treated” anyone with an agenda to convert their sexual identity. This understanding of “treatment” indicates a lack of familiarity with the basics of my work, as well as my character.

I fully denounce any attempt to use psychedelics—or any form of therapy—to try to change someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, I support the important work of bringing light to those aspects of the history of psychedelics that require revision and healing. I would recommend, however, that those creating narratives about the history of psychedelics focus more on discernment between the practices of very different prior practitioners simply as a matter of historical fact and integrity of reporting and less on fashioning a unitary argument to support their work. **I strongly request that Belser et al. stop making public statements that I engaged in conversion therapy.**

At 94 years old, my current life circumstances do not allow me to address in depth the specific arguments and references to my work made in the Open Letter Reply. In general, I strongly disagree with the argument that I necessarily engaged in conversion therapy because I worked with people whose sexuality was part of the process they brought to our nonordinary state work.

Due to my age and life circumstances, this is the final written contribution I plan to personally make in this conversation. I will leave further discussions on the subject to people who know me and my work personally.

I write this letter with great respect for all members of the LGBTQ+ community, and I ask to be treated with the same respect in future public statements.

May we continue to build a field rooted in compassion, respect, and love for all people.

Stanislav Grof
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