



# Outfront

Terence McKenna has never met the good doctor, but some call him the new Timothy Leary.

## On Drugs

**W**HEN TERENCE MCKENNA HEARS TODAY'S all-out antidrug rhetoric, he just says whoa. Via seminars, taped lectures, and two books, McKenna stakes out the pro-psychedelic position: "What people object to about drugs is that they cause an unexamined, obsessive, and destructive behavior. This is precisely what psychedelics mitigate against. They dissolve behavioral patterns, bring habits and unexamined attitudes forward in the consciousness to be looked at." We need to better define "drug," McKenna argues. Until then, "a relatively harmless substance like marijuana is inveighed against, while extremely insidious drugs like television, alcohol, and cocaine have been allowed to take over the American psyche." Better, he says, to fully inform kids about each drug, "and

**His eyes have seen the coming of a new psychedelic technology.**

then let them decide." What about those too desperate to make a sound choice? "In a caring society there would not be this tremendous desire to dull ourselves."

Which leads to McKenna's big claim: Psychedelics can enable us to create a caring society by "dissolving boundaries" in our minds, thereby freeing us from "male dominance and rationalism." Drug and computer technologies will merge in the next few decades, says the 41-year-old sometime hacker. "It will lead to computers that you place under your tongue." Will that lead to mind control or mind expansion? McKenna won't bet yet: "That's why drug education is so key." Meanwhile, he offers his own drug test: "Does it occur in nature? Is it already close to compounds naturally present in the human brain? Does it have a history of human usage for thousands of years? Mushrooms do. Mescaline does. LSD and Ecstasy don't."

—Kathryn Olney

**INTERVIEW**

**TERENCE K. MCKENNA**

*An Interview by*

**David Jay Brown & Rebecca McClen**

**T**ERENCE K. MCKENNA, author and explorer, ethnobotanist and shamanologist, is a silver-tongued rapper, and when he speaks, all are held spellbound by the hypnotically poetic stream of words that roll off his tongue. We like Terence because he's hip, scholarly, surrealistically imaginative, and a wonderful story teller. Creator of the interactive computer software program *Timewave Zero*, and co-author (with his brother Dennis) of *The Invisible Landscape*, *True Hallucinations*, and *Psilocybin: The Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide*, Terence is heard regularly on late-night radio shows talking about new maps of hyper-space, communicating with elves and extraterrestrials, psychedelics, the nature of time, and regularly gives lectures and workshops at new age mating grounds like Esalen and Ojai.

Terence has spent the last twenty years researching the ontological foundations of shamanism and the ethno-pharmacology of spiritual transformation. After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley with a distributed major in Ecology, Resource Conservation, and Shamanism, he traveled extensively in the Asian and New World Tropics, becoming specialized in the shamanism and ethno-medicine of the Amazon Basin. He currently lives in Hawaii and California, and is the founder of Botanical Dimensions, a tax-exempt, non-profit, research-oriented botanical garden and gene bank devoted to the collection and propagation of plants of ethno-pharmacological interest.

The following interview is an edited version of the original interview. We chose to use excerpts that dealt with this special issue theme. The interview will be published in its entirety in a soon-to-be-published work by David Jay Brown and Rebecca McClen entitled *Voices of Vision*. David J. Brown is the author of *Brainchild*, reviewed in this issue.

**Rebecca:** You have said that the term "New Age" trivializes the significance of the next phase in human evolution and have referred instead to the emergence of an archaic revival. How do you differentiate between these two expressions?

**Terence:** The New Age is essentially humanistic psychology Eighties style, with the addition of neo-shamanism, channeling, crystal and herbal healing, and this sort of thing. The archaic revival is a much larger, more global phenomenon that assumes that we are recovering the social forms of the late neolithic, and the archaic revival reaches far back in the 20th century to Freud, to surrealism, to abstract expressionism, even to a phenomenon like National Socialism which is



Terence McKenna

a negative force. But the stress on ritual, on organized activity, on race/ancestor consciousness; these are themes that have been worked out throughout the entire Twentieth Century, and the archaic revival is an expression of that.

**David:** According to your time-wave model, novelty reaches its peak expression and history appears to come to a close in the year 2012. Can you explain what you mean by this, and what the global or evolutionary implications are of what you refer to as the "end of time"?

**Terence:** What I mean is this: the theory describes time with what are called novelty waves. Because waves have wave-

lengths, one must assign an end point to the novelty wave, so the end of time is nothing more than a point on the historical continuum that is assigned as the end point of the novelty wave. Novelty is something which has been slowly maximized through the life of the universe, something which reaches infinite density, or infinite contraction at the point from which the wave is generated. Trying to imagine what time would be like near the temporal singularity is difficult because we are far from it, in another domain of physical law. There need to be more facts in play, before we will be able to correctly envisage the end of time, but what we can say concerning the singularity is this: it is the obviation of life in three dimensional space, everything that is familiar comes to an end, everything that can be described in Euclidian space is superseded by modes of being which require a more complicated description than is currently available.

**David:** Terence, you're recognized by many as one of the great explorers of the twentieth century. You've trekked through the Amazonian jungles and soared through the uncharted regions of the brain, but perhaps your ultimate voyages lie in the future, when humanity has mastered space technology and time travel. What possibilities for travel in these two areas do you foresee, and how do you think these new technologies will affect the future evolution of the human species?

**Terence:** Some question. I suppose most people believe space travel is right around the corner. I certainly hope so. I think we should all learn Russian in anticipation of it, because apparently the U.S. government is incapable of sustaining a space program. The time travel question is more interesting. Possibly the world is experiencing a compression of technological novelty that is going to lead to developments that are very much like what we would imagine time travel to be. We may be closing in on the ability to transmit information forward into the future, and to create an informational domain of communication between various points in

time. How this will be done is difficult to imagine, but things like fractal mathematics, superconductivity, and nanotechnology offer new and novel approaches to realization of these old dreams. We shouldn't assume time travel is impossible simply because it hasn't been done.

There's plenty of latitude in the laws of quantum physics to allow for moving information through time in various ways. Apparently you can move information through time, as long as you don't move it through time faster than light.

David: *Why is that?*

Terence: I haven't the faintest idea. (laughter) What am I, Einstein? (laughter)

David: *Well Terence, now I'm wondering what you think the ultimate goal of human evolution is?*

Terence: Oh, a good party. (laughter)

David: *Do you have any thoughts on what happens to human consciousness after biological death?*

Terence: I've thought about it. When I think about it I feel like I'm on my own. The logos doesn't want to help here. The logos has nothing to say to me on the subject of biological death. What I imagine happens is that for the self time begins to flow backwards. Even before death, the act of dying is the act of reliving an entire life, and at the end of the dying process consciousness divides into the consciousness of ones parents and ones children, and then it moves through these modalities, and then divides again. It's moving forward into the future through the people who come after you, and backwards into the past through your ancestors. The further away from the moment of death it is, the faster it moves, so that after a period of time, the Tibetans say 42 days, one is reconnected to everything that ever lived, and the previous ego pointed existence is defocused, and one is returned to the ocean, the morphogenetic field, or the One of Plotinus, you choose your term. A person is a focused illusion of being, and death occurs when the illusion of being can be sustained no longer. Then everything flows out, and away from this disequilibrium state, that life is. It is a state of disequilibrium, and it is maintained for decades, but finally, like all disequilibrium states, it must yield to the Second Law of

Thermodynamics, and at that point it runs down; its specific character disappears into the general character of the world around it. It has returned then to the void/plenum.

David: *What if you don't have children?*

Terence: Well then you flow backward into the past, into your parents, and their parents, and eventually all life, and back into the primal protozoa. Now it's a hard thing to face, but from the long term point of view of nature, you have no relevance for the future whatsoever, unless you procreate. It's very interesting that in the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, when they took the sacrament, what the god said was, "Procreate, procreate." It is uncanny the way history is determined by who sleeps with whom, who gets born, what lines are drawn forward, what tendencies are accelerated. Most people experience what they call magic only in the dimension of mate-seeking, and this is where even the dullest people have astonishing coincidences, and unbelievable things go on; it's almost as though hidden strings were being pulled. There's an esoteric tradition, that the genes, the matings are where it's all being run from. It is how I think a super-extra-terrestrial would intervene. It wouldn't intervene at all, it would make us who it wanted us to be by controlling synchronicity and coincidence around mate choosing.

David: *Do you think that there's any relationship between the self-transforming machine elves that you've encountered on your shamanic voyages and the solid state entities that John Lilly has contacted in his interdimensional travels?*

Terence: I don't think there is much congruence. The solid state entities that he contacted seem to make him quite upset. The elf machine entities that I encounter are the embodiment of merriment and humor, but I have had a thought about this recently which I will tell you. One of the science fiction fantasies that haunts the collective unconscious is expressed in the phrase "a world run by machines," in the 1950s this was first articulated in the notion, "perhaps the future will be a terrible place where the world is run by machines." Well now, let's think about machines for a moment. They are extremely impartial, very predictable, not subject to moral suasion, value neutral,

and very long lived in their functioning. Now let's think about what machines are made of, in the light of Sheldrake's morphogenetic field theory. Machines are made of metal, glass, gold, silicon, and plastic; they are made of what the earth is made of. Now wouldn't it be strange if biology were a way for earth to alchemically transform itself into a self-reflecting thing. In which case then, what we're headed for inevitably, what we are in fact creating is a world run by machines. And once these machines are in place, they can be expected to manage our economies, languages, social aspirations, and so forth, in such a way that we stop killing each other, stop starving each other, stop destroying land, and so forth. Actually the fear of being ruled by machines is the male ego's fear of relinquishing control of the planet to the maternal matrix of Gaia. Ha. That's it. Just a thought. (laughter).

Rebecca: *It seems that human language is evolving at a much slower rate than is the ability of human consciousness to navigate more complex and more profound levels of reality. How do you see language developing and evolving so as to become a more sensitive transceiving device for sharing conscious experience?*

Terence: Actually consciousness can't evolve any faster than language. The rate at which language evolves determines how fast consciousness evolves, otherwise you're just lost in what Wittgenstein called the unspeakable. You can feel it, but you can't speak of it, so it's an entirely private reality. Notice how we have very few words for emotions? I love you, I hate you, and then basically we run a dial between those. I love you a lot, I hate you a lot. (laughter)

Rebecca: *How do you feel? Fine.*

Terence: Yes, how do you feel, fine, and yet we have thousands and thousands of words about rugs, and widgets, and this and that, so we need to create a much richer language of emotion. There are times, and this would be a great study for somebody to do, there have been periods in English when there were emotions which don't exist anymore, because the words have been lost. This is getting very close to this business of how reality is made by language. Can we recover a lost emotion, by creating a word for it? There are colors which don't exist any more because the words have been lost. I'm

thinking of the word *jacinth*. This is a certain kind of orange. Once you know the word *jacinth*, you always can recognize it, but if you don't have it, all you can say is it's a little darker orange than something else. We've never tried to consciously evolve our language, we've just let it evolve, but now we have this level of awareness, and this level of cultural need where we really must plan where the new words should be generated. There are areas where words should be gotten rid of that empower politically wrong thinking. The propagandists for the fascists already understand this; they understand that if you make something unsayable, you've made it unthinkable. So it doesn't plague you anymore. So planned evolution of language is the way to speed it toward expressing the frontier of consciousness.

Rebecca: Future predictions are often based upon the study of previous patterns and trends which are then extended like the contours of a map to extrapolate the shape of things to come. The future can also be seen as an on-going dynamic creative interaction between the past and the present—the current interpretation of past events actively serves to formulate these future patterns and trends. Have you been able to reconcile these two

perspectives so that humanity is able to learn from it's experiences without being bound by the habits of history?

Terence: The two are antithetical. You must not be bound by the habits of history if you want to learn from your experience. It was Ludwig von Bertalanffy, the inventor of general systems theory, who made the famous statement that "people are not machines, but in all situations where they are given the opportunity, they

will act like machines," so you have to keep disturbing them, 'cause they always settle down into a routine. So, historical patterns are largely cyclical, but not entirely; there is ultimately a highest level of the pattern, which does not repeat, and that's the part which is responsible for the advance into true novelty.

Rebecca: The part that doesn't repeat. Hmm. The positive futurists tend to fall into two groups. Some visualize the future as becoming progressively brighter every day and that global illumination will occur as a result of this

progression; others envision a period of actual devolution—a dark age—through which human consciousness must pass, before more advanced stages are reached. Which scenario do you see as being the most likely to emerge, and why do you hold this view?

Terence: I guess I'm a soft Dark Ager. (Laughter) I think there will be a mild dark age; I don't think it will be anything like the dark ages which lasted a thousand years. I think it will last more like five years, and will be a time of economic retraction,

religious fundamentalism, retreat into closed communities by certain segments of the society, feudal warfare among minor states, and this sort of thing. But I think it will give way in the late Nineties to the actual global future that we're all yearning for—and then there will be basically a ten year period where all these things are drawn together with progressively greater and greater sophistication, much in the way that modern science and philosophy has grown with greater and greater sophistication in a single direction since the Renaissance, and that sometime around the end of 2012 all of this will be boiled down into a kind of alchemical distillation of the historical experience that will be a doorway into the life of the imagination.

Rebecca: Rupert Sheldrake's morphic resonance, Ralph Abraham's chaos theory, and your time wave model all appear to contain complimentary patterns which operate on similar underlying principles—that energy systems store information until a certain level is reached and the information is then transduced into a larger frame of reference, like water in a tiered fountain. Have you worked these theories into an all encompassing metatheory of how the universe functions and operates?

Terence: No, but we're working on it. (Laughter) Well, it is true that the three of us, and I would add Frank Barr in there, who is less well known, but has a piece of the puzzle as well, we're all complimentary. Rupert's theory is, at this point, a hypothesis. There are no equations, there's no predictive machinery, it's a way of speaking about experimental approaches. My time wave thing is like an extremely formal and specific example of what he's talking about in a general way. And then what Ralph's doing is providing a bridge from the kind of things Rupert and I are doing back into the frontier branch of ordinary mathematics called dynamic modeling. And Frank is an expert in the repetition of fractal process. He can show you the same thing happening on many many levels, in many many different expressions. So I have named us Compressionists, or Psychedelic Compressionists. A Compressionism holds that the world is growing more and more complex, compressed, knitted together, and therefore holographically complete at every point, and that's basically where the four of us stand, I think, but from different points of view. ☺

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