

Notes on Culture & Ideology Are Not Your Friends (Terence McKenna)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0gsHFatPp0>

5:00 What does it mean to be incarnate, in a human body, at the end of the 20th Century? Trying to make sense of your heritage, opportunity, contents of the culture, contents of your own mind. Is it possible to have a viewpoint that is not somehow canned, cultish, or self-limited in this environment that we all share. As time goes by, there is more on your plate to assimilate.

6:00 there are no final answers. Final answers are self-limiting.

6:58 where does it say that humans should be capable of understanding reality. This is one of the more prideful illusions of human culture. It's better to frame questions which can endure, 7:25 and leave off searching for answers.

11:15 human creativity and inventions are accelerating at an unprecedented pace. Where is it leading and how does one integrate this into one's own life. What does it mean about the experience of being human?

13:00 As you go back in time, the universe is a simpler place. As we get closer to the present, it's as though the universe has undergone crystallization out of itself of higher and higher forms of organization. [sounds like chaos theory. McKenna calls it "novelty"]. Most things that are interesting (hope, love, fear....) are impossible to define. The absence of a mathematical [physics] description of something should not impede us because that something [novelty in this case] is an intuitively graspable concept. Novelty is complexity and connectivity. It is complex, non-equilibrium thermodynamic states that sustain themselves far from equilibrium [sounds like chaos theory]. That's you as a body, us as a society, and the planet as a living ecosystem.

27:35 Go into nature and open your eyes and mind and paying attention , and you will see what's going really on. So if this is the case, why should someone have to resort to psychedelic drugs to have experience? Drugs are an artificial perturbation of the senses. The reason is that culture is a closed system of thinking and values, and it is hard to overcome. It is the greatest barrier to your enlightenment, your character, your decency. This isn't a politically correct idea because everyone is saying get in touch with your "roots", like your swedishness, your Asian-ess, etc. It's your humanness that has eluded you in all this ethno-centric breast-feeding.

28:44 Why should culture imprison us and place a barrier between us and our true humanness. Culture and ideology are not your friends. A sort of alienation lies at the end of this thought process. Culture is limiting. It creates barriers.

30:00 Culture is a type of virtual reality. We have been led to think that virtual reality is on a computer. It is electronic virtual reality. The primary technology for the building of virtual reality is languages. People believe that culture is real and build their lives around it. This is a dimmution of humanness. You are choosing to limit yourself. Culture creates a smaller, artificial universe for you. The drugs, the plants don't address cultural values. They blast through them. Culture is an illusion. Religious absolutism. Scientific absolutism.

32:35 cultures are virtual realities made of language. Psychedelics dissolve boundaries. Cultures are boundary defining engines. They teach you: We do it this way. Follow the rules. How can we overcome the limitations of our operating system?

34:30 Every culture throughout history has operated from the assumption that it has it 95% correct. All were wrong. Our culture is wrong too. If this is the culture approaching the truth, who needs the truth?

35:00 Psychedelics perturb the mind, and are a “terrifying” contra-cultural force. What does that mean? Your senses connected up to your local language is a very good threat-detection device. And that is what the animal body evolved to be. We wouldn’t be here without it. Ordinary consciousness has evolved a very tight fit to three dimensional space and time, because that’s where your “soma”, your meat, is. The mind under the influence of culture evolves as a threat-detection device. But carried far enough, that ends in paranoia. So all cultural values carried to their end produce the paranoid personality: fearful, watchful, always looking for the worst in every situation.

37:05 the mind takes the shape of the vessel into which it is poured. Psychedelics dissolve this three-D threat detection system, and the mind discovers that it has a second conformational geometry that is a higher level of consciousness, or a higher dimension as a mathematician would use that term. [interesting idea here of painting a picture of going beyond four dimensions of reality]. A higher-dimensional mind operating in a situation where threat has been eliminated and philosophy is the order of the day. Psychedelic states are higher dimensional states of consciousness. Knowledge (e.g. shaman) comes from these higher dimensional states of consciousness.

39:00 shaman is outside cultural time. Method of the shaman has always been perturbation of consciousness.

42:05 Knowledge, healing, and higher values come from the shaman. In our culture we say we don’t need the shaman. We have the scientific method, the Gospel, etc to guide us in the 20th Century. Guide us where? If the 20th Century is a statement of the accomplishment of the Western mind, values, and methods then God help us. The 20th Century is a disgrace.

44:00 how do we find real values? We find them in caring for the earth. Nature presents processes and achievements which exercise a moral claim on rational intelligence. It’s about aboriginal values and aboriginal technologies offering a different and better way to carry on, behave, and build a better world. Can cultural values be saved? I don’t care. We can’t save the values of our culture: racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, product and material fetishism, waging war, enormous pyramids of class and privilege. None of this is savable. None of this is worth saving. Science is worth saving. Religion can’t be saved. It’s just given us laundry lists of moral does and don’ts that are preposterous on the face of it. If people before us believed all that, then this world is a consequence of those beliefs; and this is hell.

46:40 if there is a message here, it’s return to nature. Open your eyes. Get smart. Culture is not your friend. Religion is not your friend. The values of these cultures are fatal. Human society must be taken a different direction. Nature is unforgiving. If intelligence does not result in the right things who needs it? Moral intelligence is a requirement. People need to get it in a hurry. Change must happen fast. We’ve had great teachers. The right idea is not enough. We need true gnosis. One way to get it is through values of primitive cultures and another is thru psychedelics. This needs to be articulated and spread. It’s a matter of faith that nature’s dynamic will carry us to the completion and enlightenment that we seek.

51:00 this culture is not something that should be preserved. It should be exercised as an opportunity. Primitive societies can do little more than set good examples for us. The

breakthroughs will come from the high-tech democracies because that is where there is the most latitude to experiment. Many aboriginal societies are more rule-nutty than we are. Use this freedom we have to cultivate those things that are most human.

1:07:00 We must reawaken and escape these cultural illusions hold us back and keep us from our birthright (of full understanding and full being). The struggle between plants and culture is the struggle over what a human being is, how a human being should be, and what it even means to be a human being.