

Spacetime Tsunami

Terence McKenna Interview by Carla Sinclair

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Terence McKenna is one of the few who's been able to jump the girdling walls that ensnare most people's thoughts and ideas at an early age. His reality is fresh. In his words, he's an edge-runner, an authentic explorer of the bizarre. What's weird is what's hot. He sees conventional thoughts on life and history as a dying breed, about to be replaced by some techno-future that is enigmatic even to him. He has been studying and experimenting with plant psychedelics for two and a half decades, and says "psychedelics are the petrol for the gas tank of any spiritual vehicle."

His fascination with plants goes beyond hallucinogens. He helps run a rescue project for rare and endangered plants on the big island of Hawaii. Most of the plants are sent from South America, and are grown and preserved in McKenna's botanical garden. Info on the plants are stored in a database. Although the project is used mostly as a green archive, McKenna hopes researchers will someday study the plants.

Terence gives a psychedelic presentation of his ideas on language, communication, and virtual reality in his video Experiment At Petaluma produced by Rose-X. He is the author of Invisible Landscape, Food of the Gods, and The Archaic Revival, and is featured on many audio tapes, which are worth getting if only to hear his wonderfully poetic narration and enchanting voice. Terence shared some of his reality with me over the telephone, which will hopefully give us all a glimpse over those girdling walls. - Carla Sinclair

bb: I just read Archaic Revival which was interesting. What do you mean when you say we are going to be unrecognizable to ourselves by 2012?

TM: Since I don't work for any academic institution or feed at any government or corporate trough, I'm free to think anything I want about reality. And I think the phenomenon which most people can agree is happening is that time appears to be speeding up in human history, for example, or in the twentieth century, or in the last 25 months. So rather than see this as just something trivial or an artifact of the act of perceiving it, I would like to think that it's real, that time is in fact speeding up. When you look back at the history of the universe, you see that this has been going on for a long long time. Things have been happening faster and faster and faster.

bb: Do you mean speeding up physically?

TM: Yeah. So that for instance, immediately after the birth of the universe, there was a long period of time where the only thing that was happening was that it was cooling. The amount of energy was so high that you couldn't get molecules, you couldn't get stable structures, you couldn't even get atomic systems. The universe was very simple and very hot. As it cooled, it became more complex. Each drop in temperature allowed new things to happen which built on previous new things which had happened. So, for example, first you get electrons settling into orbits around nuclei, then you get atomic chemistry for

the first time. The universe cools, and time passes, and you get molecular chemistry - bonds of lower strength that can form only at the lower temperatures coming into existence. That allows complex polymers to form.

bb: Well how does all of this make our Earth spin faster to speed up time?

TM: Bear with me. So this process of complexification is going on in nature. When you look at it you realize that it happened faster and faster. It took a long time for there to be life, or just for planets to form, and stars to settle down. Then once you get life, you get a very rapid proliferation of form, and by rapid I mean in scales of hundreds of millions of years, and then you get higher animals. After that you get animals like ourselves, and you get language, and culture, and writing, and electronic media. Each of these steps occurs more and more quickly, leading to the conclusion that human history and the presence of tool making, poetry making, and thinking creatures on this planet have something to do with being caught, or you might otherwise say, fortunately positioned very close to a kind of anomaly that is haunting space and time. You can think of it as a collision with a hyper dimensional black hole.

We and our universe and everything in it are being sucked closer and closer into the presence of something which seems to be made out of pure idea. It's very hard to English, but it explains basically what's going on on this planet - why it is that 50,000 years ago, shit-hurling monkeys decided to set off on the long march toward the space shuttle, and an integrated global economy, and toxic pollution, and the whole ball of wax? A process of some sort unique in nature was unleashed 25-50,000 years ago. From that point on there was a tremendous push into symbolic expression and the cultural consequence of symbolic expression which is technology. And now, we've run the nut right off the end of the bolt, and the planet's finite limits are being reached. But the process shows no sign of slowing down. So rather than see it as some apocalypse or some terrible flaw of human fate run amok, I see it as a natural phenomenon. Human history is not our fault.

The world is getting weirder and weirder by leaps and bounds. It's moving faster and faster. It's very science fiction. You have potentially human life-extinguishing epidemic diseases, at the same time that you have whispers of cold fusion and journeys to the stars. Meanwhile people are meeting little rubbery beings in their bedrooms in the middle of the night, and having rectal examinations. All this crazy shit is going on which is called the melt-down of Western civilization at the end of the second millennium. Then if you toss psychedelic drugs into the mix, shamanic plants and this sort of thing, and make journeys out into the architectonic superspace of the culture, you quickly realize the cosmic egg is cracking.

bb: But Terence, what does the weirdness of everything have to do with time?

TM: Well weirdness, when you analyze it, means unusual connections. Connections between things which would ordinarily not be connected. This was the perception of surrealism. Another way of thinking, what time speeding up means, is that all boundaries are beginning to dissolve - boundaries of space and time - and everything is beginning to coalesce into some kind of organometallic-human-machine-cultural-spiritual-material interphasing amoeboid something that is spreading like a coral reef

around the planet. In order to not freak out and see it as the end of everything, you have to think of it as under control, first of all. So then the question is, of what? I think it is controlled by something like the Gaian mind.

bb: Gaian mind?

TM: Yes, the planet is some kind of organized intelligence. It's very different from us. It's had 5- or 6-billion years to create a slow moving mind which is made of oceans and rivers and rain, forests and glaciers. It's becoming aware of us, as we are becoming aware of it, strangely enough. Two less likely members of a relationship can hardly be imagined - the technological apes and the dreaming planet. And yet, because the life of each depends on the other, there's a feeling towards this immense, strange, wise, old, neutral, weird thing, and it is trying to figure out why its dreams are so tormented and why everything is out of balance.

The culture is melting down. It's happening, and nobody knows where it leads. They're doing computer modeling, some of which indicates that it's too late, that if men of good-will and women of good-will came forward everywhere and took control, it would be too fucking late. I don't think so. I think that there's some very large plan in all this that doesn't come from God Almighty or anything like that. It comes from biology. It's the architecture of evolutionary breakthrough that is etched into every molecule of DNA on the planet. It's going to happen - the egg shell is breaking. The womb is ruptured, and there is no way out now but some kind of journey down the very frightening birth-canal of experience. The next 30 years will stand your hair on end, guaranteed, because it's barely begun. Right now, we are living in the golden twilight of Western Civilization. The long afternoon of Cartesian rationalism. Ahead lies agricultural failure, atmospheric disruption, ethnic warfare, sexually transmitted diseases, propoganda, superdrugs, AND a whole bunch of good stuff. But it's going to be a white-knuckled ride to break through at the end of time, because there is so much to be unleashed. What's happening is we're turning into something else.

We're now in the process of answering your original question which was why did I say we would be unrecognizable by the year 2012? Because we cannot continue to be recognizable and survive. We monkeys love a good fight, so now the pressure is coming on. The kissing has to stop, and the struggle will be wild and wooly, but we're intelligent. We're survivors.

And finally, what does this faster and faster mean? What it means is that time will eventually go so fast that the rest of the future - all of it - will happen in a few seconds. This is similar to the bubble-like expansion of space and time at the birth of the universe. There will be a contraction of space and time at the end that will be similar to the bursting of a bubble. That's what I think lies at the bottom of the basin of attraction that is pulling us towards itself and that seems to be located in the late months of 2012.

bb: How did you choose 2012?

TM: Well that is a complicated story, my dear.

bb: It's too soon. Pick a later date.

TM: Seems too soon to you does it?

bb: Oh yes.

TM: Well when I chose it it was twice as far away. It's true though, it does feel like we're kind of rushing towards it. On the other hand, if you have an exponential collapse, it can really catch you by surprise. The burst of the universe must have caught somebody by surprise.

bb: So what's 2013 going to be like?

TM: Well that's a good question. That's like asking, 'how shall we imagine what we in principal cannot imagine?' But on the other hand, there are ways to approach it, and model it. I think what's going on is some kind of conquest of dimensions. The previous dimension in which you've been imbedded becomes a unified plane from your new point of view. Maybe what is happening is that culture is somehow going to bootstrap itself into a kind of intellectual hyperspace. And then the question is, where is that? Is it enfolded within the eyelash of a fruit-fly? Can we become as viriuses and just drift in the stratocumulus clouds? I don't know, but it's not my business at this point to know that. I think we have a lot to go through. I think that people don't understand. As the Firesign Theater used to say, 'Everything you know is wrong.' But that is a very liberating understanding, because if everything you know is wrong, then all the problems you thought were insoluble can be framed differently. And there's a way to take the world apart and put it back unrecognizably. We don't really understand what consciousness is at the really deep levels. With some of the tryptamine hallucinogens, you see into possibilities where questions like, 'are you alive?' 'are you dead?' 'are you you?' seem to have been transcended. I think people have a very narrow conception of what is possible with reality, that we're surrounded by the howling abyss of the unknowable and nobody knows what's out there.

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