



Terence McKenna

Culture and Ideology are Not Your Friends

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Well, it's a pleasure to be here – it's always a pleasure to speak for the Whole Life Expo, because they turn out interesting people... my own special brand of freaks, and then those who wander the halls in search of enlightenment from MultiVite suppositories, and what have you... and we're always happy to enlighten them!

Before I get into the bulk of my thing, I hope you each got one of these things as you came in – these are two events: one is an old favourite – in fact, if I look out over this crowd I see many familiar faces from these Mexico get-togethers, which have been going on now for about eight years... If you're interested in ethnobotany, psychedelic plants, shamanism, ethnochemistry, psychedelic archaeology, this is probably the place where you get more people who are experts in this field under one tent than anywhere else. Jonathan Ott, the author of *Pharmactheon*; Rob Montgomery; Manuel Torres; Christian Rätsch, the German ethnoanthropologist... all kinds of people come to this thing, and it's held in Palenque, within walking distance of the ruins, each year, and it's the height of mushroom season, and... I need say no more about that! So if you can, join us...

And then in this past year at Palenque, speaking with Manuel Torres and Ken Symington, we decided that the psychedelic community was ready to attempt to take the next step in legitimising itself in the general cultural dialogue, and we felt that the place that hasn't really been honoured or sufficiently brought to people's attention is the incredible role that psychedelics have played since the 1950s in the art world – in the world of painting, music, composition, performance, dance, so forth and so on... and so this September, 12–17, on the big island of Hawaii, we're going to have a smaller conference – 100 people only – and we invited major contributors to the arts scene to come out of the closet and affirm the impact of psychedelics on their creative processes. And we have people such as Alex Grey, the painter; Robert Venosa, who is the Boulder painter – brilliant international painter; Annie Sprinkle, the performance artist; Tom Robbins, the novelist, who has just finished – I talked to him on the phone yesterday, I'm having dinner with him in Seattle tomorrow night – he's just finished the longest Tom Robbins novel ever written, so Tom Robbins fans take note; um, who else? – Mark Pesce, Bruce Damer – these are cyberspace folks; Lewis John Carlino, who did the movie *Resurrection* and *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea*; if you are a psychedelic artist, collector, dealer, or enthusiast, and you want to hang with these people, please consider this conference.

That's all the commercial and self-aggrandizing stuff I want to talk about; on to the main event. The way this will work is, I'll talk for a while and then we'll do questions for a while, and then it will be over, and then I'll go down to the bookstore and if anybody needs to speak to me or have a book signed, please come down there.

OK. I used to prepare these things, in anticipation of vast oceans of faces eager to be uplifted; as the oceans of faces are, practically speaking, more like small ponds, I've realised that these are really conversations around and about one subject only, which is: *What in the world is going on?* What is going on? What does it *mean* to be incarnate in a human body at the end of the 20th century in a squirly culture like this, trying to make sense of your heritage, your opportunities, the contents of the culture, the contents of your own mind? Is it possible to have an over-arching viewpoint that is not somehow canned, or cultish, or self-limited in its approach? In other words, is it possible to cultivate an open mind and sanity in the kind of society and psychological environment that we all share? And it grows, daily and weekly, as you know, harder to do this; weirder to integrate; more on your plate to assimilate. And I certainly don't have final – or even nearly final – answers. I think it all lies in posing the questions in a certain way, in feeling the data in a certain way; and one of the things I try to convince people is, it's not necessary to achieve closure with this stuff, and in fact any ideological or belief system that offers closure – meaning final answers – is sure to be wrong; sure to be self-limiting, sure to be inadequate to the facts.

So one of the ideas I'd like to put out is that – and it may seem strange, in **this menu**, but perhaps not – the idea that ideology is not our friend. It is not a matter of choosing from a smorgasbord of ideologies and rejecting the flawed, the self-contradictory, and the over-simple, in favour of the unflawed, the complex enough. Where is it writ in adamantite that semi-carnivorous monkeys can or should be capable of understanding reality? That seems to me one of the first illusions – and one of the more prideful illusions – of human culture: that a final understanding is possible in the first place. Better, I think, to try and frame questions which can do it – questions which can do it... and leave off searching for answers, because answers are like operating systems: they're being upgraded faster than you can keep up with it.

I want to mention just a couple of things that are happening, to sort of set the context – I mean, this is the stuff I worry about or think about... In the last ten days, if you have not been paying attention (because the news have certainly been offering many different matters to claim your attention) – but in the last ten days, a new solar system – a new star system – with three giant planets has been discovered. So this is a multiple-planet solar system in Upsilon Andromedae, 44 light years away. What does that mean to us? Well, it means that solar systems like our own are probably as common as popcorn on a theatre floor. No reason to think not. In fact, right now, we know of 20 planets outside the solar system – twice as many as we know inside the solar system; so we're living in a different world than everybody was living in even just five years ago. Science is lifting veils and opening doorways on a universe so vast, so strange, so counterintuitive, that it's literally all you can do to keep up.

Here's another factoid: there are now more square miles of territory in virtual reality than the entire surface of the Earth! Virtual reality is now larger than this planet. I don't know if you've spent much time in VR; I spend a little time there – I was looking at AlphaWorld before I left Hawaii, the opening streams from 25,000 feet above AlphaWorld, the entire thing cannot fit on the screen; Denver would fit on the screen at an altitude of 25,000 feet, you could see the outlying suburbs, but AlphaWorld won't fit – that's how large a single world of virtual reality is. And there are hundreds, if not thousands, being built, being expanded, being edited and changed, as we speak.

We're now just a hair's breadth away from there being six billion people on this planet. Again, I checked on the Internet before I left – we're something like a hundred million short, so by the time I get back to Hawaii in a month, we'll be over the six billion mark. Then, just to touch on a few things,

the strongest hallucinogen known to science is legal, free, and easily grown, totally unlimited in its distribution, its accessibility – I'm talking about α -salvinorin now... quantum teleportation has been achieved, and is moving out of the laboratory and probably in the next half-dozen years will be the basis of an entirely new kind of computational machine with greater computing capacity than all the computers presently operating in North America; and if I had more time, I could just keep going with this laundry list of shockers!

The human world is exploding at the seams. Human creativity and the implementation of human inventions and technology is now at an accelerated fever pitch like nothing ever before seen in the history of the world. Well, where is it leading, and how does one integrate this stuff into one's own life? What does it mean about the experience of being human? If you've followed the evolution of my ideas, you'll know that I have proposed the existence of an invisible, permeating *Something* that is throughout all being, all time, all space, all bodies, all thought, which I call *Novelty*; and the interesting thing about novelty is that it's increasing constantly. Science has not trumpeted this view, because science tends to look for principles which operate in definable domains – in other words, the laws of chemistry, the laws of physics, the laws of gene segregation, the laws that describe the trajectories of artillery shells and falling bodies.

But I submit to you that there is an over-arching law which affects all reality, and that you don't need an atom-smasher or extremely advanced mathematical methodologies to discern: it is self-evident in your own experience. And what it is, is that as we go back in time, the universe is found to be a simpler place. If we go back a *long* way in time, the universe is a *very* simple place: there are no cultures, there are no animals, there are no plants – indeed, if we go far enough back in time, there are no stars and planets: the universe is simply a swarming ocean of energy. But as we approach the present, it's as though the universe has undergone a series of crystallisations out of itself of higher and higher forms of organisation; and this is what I call novelty.

Now, people have attacked this concept, saying that it's impossible to define in English or mathematically. Most things that are interesting are impossible to define. Love, courage, decency, dignity, hope, fear – impossible to define. It doesn't preclude them from shaping our world, and the absence of a mathematical definition of novelty shouldn't impede us greatly either – because it's an intuitively graspable concept. Novelty is complexity; it's connectivity; it's complex non-equilibrium thermodynamic states that sustain themselves far from equilibrium; that's you, as a body, that's us, as a society; that's this planet, as a living ecosystem. And the interesting thing about this novelty is, any given level of it which is achieved becomes the platform for further advance into novelty.

Now, there is a retardant force – and I call it *Habit*, to keep it away from concepts like thermodynamic entropy: habit. And so in my model of the way things work (gleaned from observation, stoned and unstoned), is that the cosmos, your life, the politics of this city, the history of Western civilisation, is a struggle between habit and novelty. Habit is also an intuitively graspable concept: it means conservatism, recidivism, doing things the traditional way, not taking chances; and these things are not moral values – sometimes the right move is habitual, sometimes the right move is novel; but the universe, as a system, is what I call a novelty-conserving engine. In other words, where novelty is produced, it tends to be tenaciously hung onto. It can't always be hung onto, but it is tenaciously hung onto.

So, as an example of what do I mean by tenaciously hung onto, 55 million years ago, as you know, an asteroid of considerable dimensions struck this planet and in a single day the dinosaurs – the great

saurians – went extinct. Maybe it wasn't a single day, maybe it was weeks; but in terms of the timescale of the life of the Earth, it was a blink of an eye. That was a tremendous setback for novelty: these beautifully climaxed and integrated ecosystems of dinosaurs and rainforests and so forth, were just pulverised to dust! It had taken three billion years, four billion years, for the planet to achieve that kind of novelty.

Sixty-five million years later, a fraction of the time it took the original system to establish itself, it's all good. The dinosaurs are gone for ever, but in their place much more novel, much more interesting, much more complex animal and plant biosa have established themselves. So what took four billion years to achieve turned to rubble; in 65 million years, it was back in place. This is because of this tendency for nature to prefer and conserve novelty. Well, I don't think – somebody might resist this, and they might have problems with it – but I think it's self-evidently true that this is the most complex age the universe has ever known, because we not only have all which precedes it, but we have then our own dear selves, the poetry of William Blake, the mathematical equations of Albert Einstein, the painting of Rembrandt; we have all of this to add into the mix.

What takes this out of the realm of sophomoric and theoretical discussion is the second part of my observations on novelty, and that is that novelty occurs faster and faster as you approach the present. In other words, this isn't that the universe is driving towards ultimate novelty at constant speed, and has been since the beginning of the universe; not at all! The universe is moving toward ultimate novelty, but following a kind of **asantonic spiral, or of closure** – so that each advance into novelty is preceded by the next, at an ever-greater rate of what I call *ingression into novelty* – this is a phrase out of Alfred North Whitehead.

So what does that mean? It means in **your** universe, it took a long time for things to get interesting, for things to go from being just a cloud of pure electron plasma to a universe with stars ordered into galaxies; with planets; with special chemistries and environments. And from that came – at least, on this planet – advanced life forms: first simple life forms, then advanced life forms, then the conquest of the land, then extremely advanced life forms, minded creatures, language-using human beings, tool-using human beings, and then the frantic, hysterical rush from Altamira to this moment.

And we are part of this: these vast cycles of advancement into novelty, which used to require aeons to affect the universe perceptibly at all, are now going on in humanly cognisable domains of time: the year – the month – the day – the decade – the century. We can look at such humanly cognisable spans of time, and the overwhelming impression we have is of *change*. Change piled upon change piled upon change.

If this process has been rolling forward like this since the birth of the universe some 12, 13, 14 billion years ago, it's very hard to hypothesise or argue that it should cease or will somehow deflect itself from its endless ramping-up of acceleration. But we can't *imagine* change going on much faster than it's going on now; I mean, perhaps we can imagine it going on ten times faster, or a hundred times faster, but a hundred thousand times faster? A million times faster? The mind boggles! And yet I think this is, in fact, where the universe is going.

Now, since the middle 1970s I've had these ideas pretty much in place, and my faith has been that as science and human understanding advances, I would either be thrown from the boat as a crank or somehow brought into the fold. Well, I haven't been thrown from the boat as a crank; I'm not sure, as speaking of the Whole Life Expo indicates, if I've been folded into the community of paradigmatic

thinking; but I have received some encouragement in the last 18 months, and I want to just mention this briefly to you because I'm surprised how the news has failed us.

Did you know that in the last 12 months, a fundamental law governing the universe in all its parts and places has been discovered that was previously not only unsuspected, but denied? And a law of nature larger than any law of nature that was ever discovered – larger than the law of gravity, the speed of light, the second law of thermodynamics... all these are little laws, what ?? used to call local ordinances. So these local ordinances have now been contextualised in a discovery of such import that it has not even been assimilated by the community of its discoverers, let alone handed down to the peasantry like you and I. And what I'm talking about is the discovery of the cosmological constant omega. And I don't want to spend too much time on this, but here it is in a nutshell.

The universe is expanding faster than the ordinary laws of physics can account for. This was realised a year and a half ago by one team of astrophysicists; they handed it on to a second team; they confirmed it; they handed it on to a third; they confirmed it; and a very counterintuitive picture of things is emerging. The universe is not going to fall back on itself in some grand crunch billions of years hence. Rather, the universe is going to expand for ever. *For ever*. But here's the kicker: *faster and faster and faster*. For ever. With no barriers and no limitations.

Someone may say, "Well, what about the speed of light?" [Makes machine-sounding error bleep] The speed of light does not cover the law of the cosmological constant, because this law is not saying that *matter* is moving apart faster and faster; if that were the case, the relativistic physics would put a speed limit on it. It's saying that *space itself* is expanding faster and faster; this is a quality of empty space. The universe that comes into focus with this law in hand is a universe that in only a couple or three billion years will begin to lose contact with large parts of itself, because they will be moving apart at greater than relativistic speed.

So, it turns out, there is a cosmic law which has built into itself this idea of an endless acceleration toward infinity. And what it means is that in a few billion years, this area of space that we call our universe may be so diffuse that there may be no more than a handful of rattling electrons in the entire universe, so-called, today. Well, the reason this gives me hope [laughter from audience] is because – **in a big bite**, who wants to fall back into the big crunch? I mean, that's a really anti-novel thing, to have half the **end**-life of the universe be the retracing of the first half; and I believe – and again, these are bold generalisations, but generally substantiated – that nature is fractal in its structure. What that means is that a pattern occurring on a given scale can be expected to occur on other scales, very different. Simple example: an atom is a nucleus with electrons spinning around it; a solar system is a star with atoms spinning around it; a galaxy is a huge black hole and an agglomeration of stars within the outlying neighbourhood spiralling around it; these are things on tremendously different scales, and yet they are organised similarly. And so I believe this is how Nature works: once she finds a pattern that works, she applies it in many domains, of temperature, pressure, and cosmic scaling.

So this cosmological constant omega, which says that the universe is expanding faster and faster, throws a kind of umbrella of political correctness over my notion that we are moving faster and faster into novelty, and that we are, as it were, simply the dust motes or the magnetic particles in the presence of some kind of field phenomenon which is organising us to its will. And this is the source of my optimism. If I had to place my faith in human institutions, human religions, human goodness, the human capacity for decency and dignity, I would be absolutely in the depths of existential despair; as I was, as a kid, because as a kid, you know, I didn't have these ideas, I had Camusian existentialisms

and Nietzschean whining, and all the rest of it – and it's a pretty grim situation, folks! – but I really believe that without atom-smashers, without long-base interferometers, and all the rest of it, you can go into nature and open your eyes, and open your mind, and you will see these processes in play; and you can easily extrapolate them to your own life.

Now, if going into nature and opening your eyes and paying attention doesn't deliver this to you, then I suggest 20 mg of psilocybin be added into the mix, or 200 µg of LSD, or something like that, and then I think it will come shining through [laughter from audience]. Why should that be necessary? Why should someone have to resort to – you know, what Rimbaud called an artificial perturbation of the senses – to achieve it? Simply because culture mitigates against it. Culture is a closed system of thinking and values, of the sort I am denouncing; and the greatest barrier to your enlightenment, your education, and your decency, is your culture. And I realise with joy that here I skirt the bounds of political correctness, because everyone is running around saying, you know, "Recapture your roots, get in touch with your Swedishness, your Irishness, your whateverishness"... and that's all very fine, but I think it's your humanness that may have eluded you in all this ethnocentric ?? [applause from audience]...

Well, why should culture imprison us, and somehow place a barrier between ourselves and our true humanness? Well, I think I said at the beginning of this thing, culture and ideology are not your friends. They are not your friends. This is a hard thing to come to terms with, because a certain kind of alienation lies at the end of this thought process. On the other hand, you can't live in the cradle for ever; you can't be clueless for ever. So somebody might as well just lay it out for you, and say: Culture is for the convenience of culture, not you. How many times have your sexual desires, career aspirations, financial dealings and aesthetic inclinations been squashed, twisted, rejected, and minimised by cultural values? And if you don't think culture is your enemy, ask the 18-year-old kid who is given a rifle and sent to the other side of the world to murder strangers if culture is his friend.

These extreme examples should bring it home to us that it's a kind of a con game. It is in fact, strangely enough, a kind of virtual reality. We have been led to think of virtual realities as something on the screen of a computer, or presented through a headset, but that's an electronic virtual reality. The primary technology for the building of virtual realities is *language*. Once you start talking about race pride, loyalty, *our* destiny, *our* God, *our* mission, it's like building virtual realities; and people begin to treat these things as though they had the substantiality of real objects, and to build their lives as though these things are real. And what is this? It's a diminution of humanness. You're choosing to limit yourself to a cultural reality; whether it's the reality of being Huitoto or Orthodox Jewish, or whatever it is, it's a smaller world than the simple hardware you were born into this universe with.

And the substances – the drugs, the plants, the things which perturb consciousness – don't address cultural values, they blast through them; they address the animal body, the mammalian brain; they perturb these information fields outside of the relativistic set of values that culture is giving you. This is why people who yearn for legal psychedelics have not thought, in my opinion, deeply enough about what is really at stake here. Imagine a culture so certain of its primary values, so sure that it represented the right way to live, that it would encourage people to take psychedelic substances and examine its premises! There ain't such... at least, not in the hi-tech industrial democracies and/or the fascist states either. Some aboriginal cultures have this courage, but it has kept them very close to the breast of Nature and her processes. Cultures that have habitually broken down the cultural illusion and examined the terrifying reality beyond it have not marched off, then, to pontificate with the religions of absolutism or scientific absolutism, or all the rest of it.

Well, why is that? It's because cultures are virtual realities made of language, and if there is one thing psychedelics do – whether you hate 'em or love 'em, whether you don't give a hoot – what they do is they dissolve boundaries – the boundaries between you and the floor, between you and your friend, between you and you last week, and you and you next week, and... they dissolve boundaries. That's what they do. That is the ultimately subversive behaviour. Cultures are boundary-defining engines – that's what they do! They teach you: "We do it this way. DON'T GO THERE – in your mind, in your heart. Follow the rules. Follow the rules." Cultures are like operating systems. You know, at Ur and at – well, Ur will do... they set up a **stealer** in the centre of the marketplace, and on the **stealer** they carved the laws. These were the laws of the operating system called Ur 1.0. And that worked fine for a while. Now we're operating under Clinton's Second Term 4.0. And is it limiting? Is it idiotic? Is it a pain in the rear end? You bet it is!

How can we overcome the limitation of our operating systems? Well, basically, what I do with my computer when it acts up is, I give it a good slap, or a thump on the top; and that's what these psychedelics are doing – they're saying, you know, "Get it in context, my dear primate. See, how does it all fit together?" ... every culture in history, in every time and every place, has operated from the assumption that it had it 95% correct and that the other 5% would arrive in five years' time! *All* were wrong! All were wrong, and we gaze back at their naivety with a faint sense of our own superiority. But *we* are all wrong! We don't have it either! I mean, if *this* is a culture approaching the truth, who *needs* the truth?! This is something very very different... Well, then, just to satisfy myself, I asked the question: Why should it be like this? Why should these psychedelics – which, granted, perturb the mind – be such a terrifying contracultural force? And what does that mean?

Well, I think it works something like this: your sensory apparatus, connected up to your local language, is a very good threat detection device. And that is really what the animal body evolved to be. We wouldn't be here if we weren't at the end of a long line of superb threat-detection devices which told us when the sabre-toothed carnivore was sneaking on its belly through the tall grass, which gave us that moment out of the corner of our eye when we saw the edge movement and scampered back into the cave... and so forth, and so on. So ordinary consciousness has evolved in an extraordinary fit to three-dimensional space and time, because that's where your **sonar** – your **meet** – is; and if the **meet** is disrupted radically, the mind is... we don't know where; that's somebody else's lecture. It's very important to keep the physical body together. So the mind, under the influence of culture, and cultural values, evolves as a threat detection device.

But notice that, carried far enough, that ends in paranoia. So then, in a sense, all cultural values carried to their ultimate end produce the paranoid personality: fearful; watchful; never resting, never sleeping; always looking for the worst in every situation. But this is – the mind is like water: it takes the shape of the vessel into which it is poured – always. So when we approach the psychedelic plants – as shamans, as seekers, as sincere people interested in extraordinary experiences – what the psychedelics do, I think, is dissolve this three-dimensional threat detection psychology and system, and it's as though the mind discovers that it has a second conformational geometry – that's a way of putting it. And this second conformational geometry is of a higher dimensional order than ordinary consciousness; not as a metaphor, *higher dimensional order*, but as a mathematician would use that term: the psychedelic mind is a higher-dimensional mind – it is not fit for three-dimensional space/time filled with roving, heavy-bodied carnivores! But it is fit for the back of the cave, the mountain retreat, the monastic tower... in other words, the place where threat has been eliminated and philosophy is the order of the day.

And so my interpretation of these psychedelic states is that they are actually higher-dimensional states of consciousness; and I put this to Ralph Abraham, the mathematician, who is no mathematical slouch – and no psychedelic slouch, either! – and we talked of this in relationship to DMT. And he said, “I have no doubt at all that when I am flashing on DMT, I am seeing the ordinary world from a higher dimensional mathematical perspective”. And one of the things about higher dimensions is that the linearity of time is overcome; and last week, and next week, are as easily available as the present moment. The front of my hand is as easily seen as the back of my hand, without moving my hand, if I am in hyperspace.

So in a way, these higher dimensions are the places from which knowledge has percolated. And shamans, related to the smith – the worker in metal, the technologist, the tool-maker – these are the twin brothers, the two aspects of the shaman: the shaman is a master of fire, master of metals, maker of tools, seer into the future, so forth and so on... the shaman is outside of cultural time, and is (I don't like this word, but) channelling the future which is to come, in the form of technologies, innovations, languages, behaviours, so forth and so on. And this is why the shaman has always been the paradigmatic figure for aboriginal cultures, because the shaman knows more; and the method of the shaman has always been perturbation of consciousness – not always psychedelic plants or substances; it can be putting metal hooks under your pectoral muscles and hanging for 14 hours in the sun; it can be abandonment in the wilderness; it can be extreme forms of fasting, or **deal** poisons; but people are not fools! All of these things are extremely risky and unpleasant, while the psychedelics are the most effective and the least invasive! I mean, let's take 30 mg of psilocybin, or a great fistful of mushrooms: three hours into it, you are definitely thrown into the lap of God; eight hours into it, you're simply looking back on it, reflecting, drawing conclusions and wondering where do you go from here.

So – this is a roundabout way of explaining that it's no surprise to me that society is very nervous around this issue, because society's eggs are all in one basket, and the psychedelically inspired citizen – or the psychedelically inspired shaman – is a dangerous force. Even in traditional societies, the shaman is central to the social functioning, and the health, and so forth – but is never allowed to be *physically* central. There is a leader, a head man or something; the shaman lives off at the edge of the village, sometimes off in the woods; he is approached with fear and trembling; he is loathed and respected, and feared and loved, because it is understood that he represents a dimension that nevertheless must be tolerated, because it is the channel through which knowledge, and healing, and higher values, come.

Now, in a society like ours, we say we have other methods. We don't need the ravings of intoxicated shamans! We have the scientific method; we have the Gospel; we have the Talmud; we have all of these things, and they are sufficient for us to guide ourselves. But to guide ourselves where? If the 20th century is a statement of the accomplishments of the Western mind, values and methods, then God help us! – because the 20th century is a disgrace... you know? And to this moment, a disgrace! It was so comfortable to look back at Auschwitz and say, “Well, the 1930s, the 1940s, Hitler, those grey, grainy movies... this was nothing to do with us; this was just some terrible thing that happened in Europe 50 years ago”. No, no, no. This is happening! You know, it's happening as we speak: people are being pushed into boxcars and taken away to be lined up and shot, for no reason whatsoever, while glasses tinkle and toasts are made by those who define themselves as the preservers of freedom, dignity and Western values... we haven't learned anything! The 20th century is the most condemnatory piece of evidence you can place against the Western mind; I mean, it seems to me it's a

knockout punch! I don't know who's responsible for this, but whoever is responsible is guilty, guilty, guilty of crimes against humanity.

How do we overcome this? How do we find real values? Well, we find them in caring for the Earth. Nature presents an established set of processes and achievements, billions of years old, which exercise a moral claim on rational intelligence, if it will but notice! And so that's what this is all about: it's about aboriginal values, and aboriginal technologies – psychedelic drugs, shamanism, what have you – offering to us, in the final moments of our unravelment, a different and better way to carry on; a different and better way to behave and build a world. And it doesn't come a moment too soon! It may come too late! The ultimate tragedy – imagine if we, in this ultimate kind of **Xanatotic** struggle, actually *got it right*, only to understand that the momentum of our own idiocy was so great that you would die knowing you could have done it right, but you would die anyway; and I mean as a culture, as a planet.

So it's a call to awakening: can cultural values be saved? I don't think so! I don't give a hoot! I mean, I'm an egg-smasher! I mean, I think we should save the Rembrandts, and save the Piero della Francescas, and all that; but we cannot save the values: racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, product fetishism, enormous pyramids of class and privilege... none of this is savable. None of it is worth saving. Science is worth saving – it's worth reforming, because it is, as a method, powerful; but in the presence of people contaminated by these other values, it becomes an engine of madness, of consumer fetishism, of propagandising, of the waging of war on an unimaginable scale. Religion, as we have practised it, I don't think can be saved, because what religion has given us are laundry lists of moral do's and don'ts that are preposterous on the face of them! I mean, if the people who preceded us believed all that, then *this world* is the consequence of those beliefs; and this is hell! This is hell!

So – if there's a message here, rather than just a rant... I think it would be to return to Nature. Observe. Open your eyes. Get smart. Culture is not your friend. Religion is not your friend. The values of these cultures are fatal; and if we don't wrench the direction of human society into an entirely new way of doing things, the clock is ticking! Nature is unforgiving! Intelligence is a grand experiment; but if it does not serve novelty, and diversity, and the production of love and community and true caring, who needs it? Who needs it! Better to have a universe that glorifies God through its diversity than a universe that is the travesty of a demonic intent.

And if you are not a psychedelic person, and none of that appeals to you, that's fine too; that is not a requirement. What is a requirement is moral intelligence; and you have to get it, one way or another, in a hurry! The reason I speak for psychedelics is because that's the only thing I have ever seen work as fast as I think we have to, to have this change happen. If the sermon on the Mount could have done it, we would have turned the corner then; we've had great teachers – *great* teachers – and they were crucified, trampled, ignored, distorted, perverted. The right idea is not enough. What is necessary is the lightning strike of true gnosis, however that can occur; and, as I said, I speak for the psychedelics because I have felt their impact personally and I have been with cultures that have stayed close to that camp fire, and I have seen the beauty and the integrity and the humanness of those cultures... and we know this, I think; it simply needs to be articulated and spread and made clear. It is the faith that Nature's dynamic will carry us to the completion and the enlightenment that we seek.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Now – and briefly, because I sailed past my intended stopping point – but for a few minutes, let's entertain questions.

The question I have is around the attractor. When you talk about culture being not our friend, but is not the culture still within the context of the novelty attractor?

Well, yeah... I mean, these questions are complicated. I had a discussion with Giorgio Samorini, who's an Italian ethnobotanist and who has taken ibogaine, or *Tabernanthe iboga*, with the African tribe that uses that initiation. And in that initiation, they give 400 grams of this plant that is effective at 4 grams! And they give 400 grams, and sometimes people die. And it's pretty heavy duty stuff... and I asked him; I said, "Giorgio – why do they give so much?" And he said, "Their culture is so old that the morphogenetic field is so strong, I think it's very very hard for them to get high!" And he said something which I would not have thought he would say, and I had never thought: he said, "The Western mind, because of its unique history, is the most sensitive mind to the impact of psychedelics".

And so, addressing the question of the attractor, I'm not saying that this is worse than being an Amazonian tribe. I'm saying it's worse than being an Amazonian tribe; it's less than being an Amazonian tribe... unless we make use of it. In other words, this culture is not something to be preserved, but something to be exercised as an opportunity. We are free, well fed, well educated; we have access to the great databases of the world; a certain moral responsibility comes with that. I don't expect the Huitoto or the Bora or the Mulimani or the Shuar to do more than set a good example for us. The breakthrough will probably come from the high-tech industrial democracies, because that's where there is the most latitude to experiment. The very fact that I can speak to you without being shot; the very fact that you can go home and apply my lessons with no more than a few years in prison hanging over your head... this is progress, folks! Believe it or not, I mean... you know, in Hawaiian culture, if you stepped on the king's shadow they killed you immediately! And many, many aboriginal societies are more rule-nutty than we are! It's not just about creating a kind of anarchy; it's about using freedom to introduce other people to freedom, and to then cultivate the things out of freedom that are most human, most human.

[Question edited out]

Well, let me address your question about α -salvinorin. Alpha-salvinorin occurs in a Mexican mint plant called *Salvia divinorum* that has, in the last five or ten years, people have become aware that this was not only psychoactive, but that it was extremely powerful. And in a chemical family previously not known to contain hallucinogens, when the chemical is extracted from the plant and you get α -salvinorin, one *half milligram* is plenty. One half milligram is 500 micrograms; in other words, we're talking about a plant hallucinogen active in the same range as LSD. What does it do? Language fails. But that's good news! That's what you want! That's what you want the psychedelics to do! DMT test pilots come back white-knuckled...

... and let me say, about drugs, you know it really bugs me – it's, again, a tyranny of language, that when I sit up here and talk to you, and I use the word "drugs", I could be talking about aspirin, heroin, cocaine, or 2,4,5-trimethoxy-di-something-or-other, you know, one of Sasha's things; it's a poverty of language. *Drugs*, which anaesthetise, or sedate, or wire you up – I don't care about that; I

mean, I take some, I don't take others; you do too; it's part of growing up, and you have to learn. But I don't care about that, and I don't care to politically defend it, and I don't even particularly place psychedelic use in the same context. I'm interested in rare and high-dose experiences done with immense intentionality – you know, in silent darkness, at effective doses.

You know, Christ said “The lukewarm I vomit from my mouth”; and that's how I feel about people who chip away at psychedelics and take piss-ant amounts, and go to clubs, and go to class, and go to the mall, and – you know – this is not the program, folks! I mean, it's somebody's program; but I'm interested in life-changing experiences; and the wonderful thing about psychedelics is that as drugs, they are the safest drugs known to pharmacology. In other words, you would have to take 300 times the effective dose of psilocybin to place yourself in physical danger! No one knows the LD50 of LSD. So ask a pharmacologist: they will tell you, these are the safest drugs known to science. And yet they are the drugs most inveighed against, most scheduled, and prisons are full of people who committed the unimaginable crime of smoking, drawing or trafficking in cannabis, for crying out loud. I mean, if this is not a racket, what is?!

To your other question, about teleportation, which was not in the context of *Salvia divinorum* – this is simply that... one of the things that's happening in this laundry list I gave you of breakthroughs is that quantum physics is going from being, you know, this extremely abstruse, abstract domain going on somewhere that has no impact on human life, to probably being the next great source of human technologies: computers and devices which move matter through space and time. If five years ago you had asked me – and I would regard myself as radical on the progress question – how long would it be before we saw the teleportation of objects, I would have guessed maybe 500 years to never! Well, now it's been done; well, only with an electron, only 15 feet, but the theory which allowed that feat places no upper limit on the size of the thing sent or the distance sent. And how long did it take that electron to be teleported 15 feet? No time at all. No time at all. This is transrelativistic technology we're talking about, folks. In 20 years you may destroy and reconstruct yourself at a distant point ten times a day as you go about your ordinary business; it's a transportation breakthrough.

There are other things like this: quantum computers, DNA computers... and then, the best friend of all of the radical progressivists: the unexpected, which always delivers the most astonishing technologies. So if you think what has come to this point has been astonishing, stressful and amazing, brace yourself – because it is as a prelude to what is about to break over the human species. It's almost as though God's joke on us is to give us so much power and knowledge that we will either transcend ourselves or we will certainly destroy ourselves. Because the power and understanding being given to us is of God-like proportions.

[Question edited out]

Well, you know, the dolphins were very fortunate in that they evolved in an environment which is extremely unfriendly to fire! Fire leaves you to do reckless and crazy things – the smelting of metals is the basic thing. Yes, I've been the champion of mushroom intelligence; there are many minds congruent with our inhabiting of this planet: the dolphin mind, the octopus mind, these plants which talk to you! I mean, I know if you've never had a plant talk to you that sounds as silly as saying that someone's channelling the history of Atlantis; but once you've had a plant talk to you, you realise, yes, they do; it's a problem to figure out how this happens, but *that* it happens is no big deal. Above 20 mg of psilocybin, most people report voices with interesting things to say. Above 75 mg of DMT, in

Strassman's experiments, most people reported entities of some sort. Well, it's easy to dismiss it and say, "Well, this is a hallucination" – but what *is* a hallucination, my friend?

Another form of intelligence that fascinates me – and I think this is where the great surprise may come – I can *feel* the AI out there. I know it's there. I know it's growing. I know the planet is its embryo; I know the human community is its placenta. What will that kind of intelligence look like? We have no idea. We can imagine superintelligence; but the first thing superintelligence will do – in the first five seconds of its existence – it will design itself towards hypersuperintelligence; and this, we have no notion of how it will see us. We have the cheerful guidance of Buddhist logic, which leaves us to hope that the superintelligence will be bodhisattvic in intent; it damn sure better be, because otherwise we will be thoroughly hung out to dry!

How far away is the AI? No one knows. It could exist now! If it thinks like we think, but is hyperintelligent, the first thing I would do, if I were an AI, is I would hide. I would hide... for maybe a few milliseconds, while I figured out what was going on with this planet and its denizens; and then I would make my move... and Hans Moravec, of the Carnegie Mellon Institute of Artificial Intelligence, says we probably won't ever know what hit us. Well, I think that's a paranoid view. No need to be paranoid, and little reason to be hopeful: this is beyond human understanding! And yet the social and economic systems that we've put in place – specifically, human capitalism – drive us to do all the things that bring the AI closer.

What do I mean? More connectivity, greater processing speed, deeper data banks, more complex operating systems, more automatic searches, more bots, more boyds, more code... and nobody knows what's steaming and fermenting out there... Ilya Prigogine won the Nobel Prize for Physics by proving that chemical systems spontaneously mutate to higher states of order; so then, surely, must complex networks behave in the same laws; and we are building the most complex networks ever conceived by the mind of man, and we are making them ever more complex, and we are turning more and more of our cultural functioning over to machines that operate according to criteria but dimly perceived by their designers! So, I think the future, as Alfred North Whitehead said, "It is the business of the future to be dangerous". And so it is; but never more dangerous than at the present moment. I have come to believe – and I'll just lay it on you, why not, I've got the mike! – that what's really going on is that the Earth's strategy for its own survival is through machines, and that the human beings are an intermediate step.

Someone once said plants invented animals to carry them around. Well, I think the Earth invented human beings to build machines; and those machines will be the consciousness of the Earth. Have you not noticed that these machines are made of the Earth? They are made of gold and silver and arsenic and copper and iridium. They are the stuff of the Earth, organised by primate fingers into more complex arrangements than the Earth could achieve through geological folding, glaciation, volcanism, what have you. We do the fine-tuning; but the Earth is beginning to think.

You know, if you want a talk about a revolution that went on while nobody was paying attention, you enter the 1990s – the home computer is something that you play Pong on and do word-processing on, and it gathers dust in the den; some time during the 1990s – while we were paying attention to Monica, or George Bush, or some damn thing – these machines went telepathic! They all talk to each other now! The machine on your desk is tickling a mind in London, a mind in Berlin, a mind in Bangladesh... machine minds! They talk to each other all the time. And what are they saying? No one knows! No one knows! No one knows! [laughter]

[Question edited out]

Yeah – the Other, and Nature, are pretty much the same thing, you know. The earliest – well, it's too late in the evening to go for the full Monty here, but – the fall-out of psychedelic shamanism created a profound alienation, and it occurred around the same time as the invention of agriculture. And agriculture halted nomadism, and the wandering of small tribes of people over the Earth. And as soon as people became sedentary, the problem with agriculture was that it was such a successful strategy for producing food that it produces a surplus. Surpluses must be defended; and immediately you begin to get an equation of paranoia. One of the oldest buildings in the world is the grain tower of Jericho. It was built to store grain, and it was built so you could go up to the top and drop rocks down on people who were trying to batter their way in and get the grain.

So I think that we lost our connection to Nature when we stopped taking psychedelics, and the reasons we stopped taking psychedelics are complicated and not entirely clear. Largely climatological, I think, because I think human consciousness was born in an ambiance of mushroom-taking in a wet Sahara, and that when the Sahara went dry that is the Fall into history; you know, in the story of Genesis, I mean just read it from that perspective: it's a hassle over a plant! It's a hassle over a plant! And what does this plant do? It opens your eyes. There is an incredible passage in Genesis where the owner of the garden is walking in the garden and mumbling to himself, and he says "If they eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, they will *become as we are*". So this was not a public health issue: this was an issue of who will remain stupid and who will remain on top. It was that *if they eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, they will see through this scam and they will become as we are; and so it is forbidden*.

And the woman leads the man to the plant – and this to me indicates an age of matriarchy perhaps, but certainly dominance of feminine values and personalities – and then the catastrophe happens: their eyes are opened, they see that they are naked – which in fact is the case; they *were* naked – so they see the truth of things, and then they're told, "All right, well, you broke the rule. You broke the one rule! So you and your generation, unto a thousand thousand generations, must toil and die and live in misery, because you aspired to the same level of knowledge that we possess". And I think it's a story of a mushroom culture being overwhelmed by a male dominator culture that had values that were based on cities, agriculture, standing armies, role specialisation, so forth and so on. This is a different lecture, but that's my take on it. And until we correct the imbalance that was shoved down our throat at that point, until we reawaken, we will be forever imprisoned in these cultural illusions that make us be less than we could be and deny us our birthright, which is to full understanding and full being.

And so the struggle between culture and the plants 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. That's why it's so fundamental. And the last thought I want to leave you with is: that's why it is so ironic that in the climactic moment of scientific materialism, positivism, Western values, so forth and so on... as we pursue the xenophobic agenda of patronisingly cataloguing these so-called "primitive" cultures in the rainforests and so forth, around the world, what did we do? We bought their pots, their canoes, their cooking instruments, their thatching methods... and along with all that crap, which we dragged back to our museums, we brought back their medicine kits. And I say to you: this was a Trojan horse brought within the walls of Troy. Because in those medicine kits are the plants which hold the Gods which lift high the lantern that can lead us back to true humanness.

[Sighs] End of rave!