INSIDE: L.A.'S BEST AND BIGGEST ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

L.A. WEEKLY
FREE

News • Movies • Music • Art • Theater • Airwaves

May 20-26, 1988 • Vol. 70 No. 26

PSYCHEDELICIZING THE HUMAN

TERENCE MCKENNA
REOPENS THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION

BY JAY LEVIN

Plus:
Terence Trent D’Arby
Not a Gay Blade
Wim Wenders’ Soaring Wings
Jesse in L.A.
The Doonesbury
Candidate
Tanner '88
TALKING HEAD

Rumbling up from the '60s comes one gifted Irishman with the message:

The human race cannot afford to give up all drugs.

BY JAY LEVIN

Once upon a time, while taking its experimental hallucinations as a metaphor for anthropology, McKenna says, "I, McKenna, was a student of the anthropologist, and I had the opportunity to study with him in his laboratory. McKenna recalls the book left on his desk: "I completed this experiment, and I remember following many of our conversations, where he said things about my work and about the future of mankind."

That in fact he has done a 20-year study of the clinical use of hallucinogens in the treatment of schizophrenia, the use of hallucinogens in spiritual transformation, and the enormous impact of these natural substances on our understanding of the universe. Part of this impact is the development of a new dimension of human consciousness."

McKenna took his first psychedelic-LSD-in the '60s at Berkeley, where he was a student of the famous LSD researcher, and he was introduced to the use of hallucinogens in spiritual transformation.

Both cultures, he discovered, used psychoacupuncture, and the effect of these substances on our understanding of the universe is the development of a new dimension of human consciousness.

McKenna is a member of the Department of Conservation of the Office of the National Parks, and he is a member of the Board of Directors of the Office of the National Parks. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Office of the National Parks, and he is a member of the Board of Directors of the Office of the National Parks.

This is McKenna's second interview on this subject, and it is the second interview to appear in this issue. The first interview was published in the March issue of the magazine.

What's the difference with you?

McKenna: When I was young, I would take LSD once a month or so, but I wasn't that crazy about it. I found it abrasively psychoanalytic, and I also found it very hard to define. My interest in mysticism, art, and that sort of thing had caused me to put a very high premium on hallucinosis. Then I encountered DMT in early 1967.

DMT, which is a natural plant compound that's been synthesized in the laboratory, is a hallucinogen and can reach new dimensions of evolved consciousness without further use of these nature-grown means of expanded awareness. According to McKenna, no fan of the pop drugs in their psychic explorations-

"metaconsciousness."

McKenna's second interview on this subject is published in the May issue of the magazine. It is the second interview to appear in this issue. The first interview was published in the March issue of the magazine.

What's the difference with you?

McKenna: When I was young, I would take LSD once a month or so, but I wasn't that crazy about it. I found it abrasively psychoanalytic, and I also found it very hard to define. My interest in mysticism, art, and that sort of thing had caused me to put a very high premium on hallucinosis. Then I encountered DMT in early 1967.

DMT, which is a natural plant compound that's been synthesized in the laboratory, is a hallucinogen and can reach new dimensions of evolved consciousness without further use of these nature-grown means of expanded awareness. According to McKenna, no fan of the pop drugs in their psychic explorations-
What's the empirical evidence of its being only 1.5 years old?

MCKEIIA: You must know this book by Julian James called The Evolution of Consciousness and The Breakdown of the Biocentric Mind. Well, he designed this experiment. And he made a number of interesting cases. He says that even as late as Homeric times, people wandered around rather automatically, and we're in a very tight spot, suddenly there would be a voice in their head saying, "You're in a tight spot. Here's what you should do." They called this the god, or the king (living or dead). This ego, the voice we now call "I," is something that has been assimilated in the wake of civilization as a necessary means of adapting to socialization. Now, coming out of the line, created kind of structures that were put on us by Christianity and print media and a number of cultural factors, we need to again reconnect with the shamans and their vision of reality.

"The most extraordinary thing about the DMT experience is you see entities. You encounter beings, whom I've described as self-transforming machine elves. They are obviously, in fact, the basis of the idea of elves, and they are the denizens of this other dimension. They are trying to teach something. Well, if I'm not completely mad, then it's big news."

next level of the overmind — this globally conscious, ecologically sensitive, balanced, humane, caring kind of consciousness, which we can access only with considerable effort, through self-discipline, psychotherapy, psychedelic, this kind of thing.

WEEKLY: In studying spiritual systems and drugs, did you find drug-taking among the Tibetan Buddhists?

MCKEIIA: Not so much among the Buddhists, but I found myself spending more and more time with the pre-Buddhist shamans. And then I went and studied yoga, but what the yogic practice says, don't tell you is that almost all dod, all yogas are stories. Hash-shamans and/or users of Datura and were at that time, in the late '60s, absolutely fascinated by LSD and the psychedelic drugs coming from the West.

WEEKLY: Among the pre-Buddhist shamans, was there drug use?

MCKEIIA: Well, I certainly don't consider myself to be one so, I can only begin to answer: What they look like is extremely hopeful. The human potential is so vast. We don't have any problems that we can't solve by applying ourselves to them with open minds. Now, you see, the current notion of problem-solving is to go out and solve all our problems with solutions that make the back. Well, just may not be possible to solve the problems of the 20th century and make a buck at the same time. But if we're willing to put aside the notion, then the human future appears endlessly bright. There's a human movement that can be a much more open pipeline to God than anyone who is outside the psychedelic experience could ever imagine. And God appears to be much more benevolent and involved force in human affairs than the kind of image we have inherited from Western religion.

Now, why should taking a natural psychedelic drug compound like psilocybin be illegal, and why should the plants be considered drugs? This is the thing. The importance of these crazy cultural modes: fun and the importance of human values has to be brought back into the discussion of political priorities. This was attempted in the '60s; now it's premaature, it's absolutely necessary. Otherwise, you're not making your moves with the connections of the entire field of action. The importance of human values has to be brought back into the discussion of political priorities. This was attempted in the '60s; now it's premature, it's absolutely necessary. Otherwise, you're not making your moves with the connections of the entire field of action.
press and distort human misery. I think that there is a New Age about to dawn. I think it will come, but I think it will come in the late '70's, that we still have much to go through. Because the cultural institutions will not reach for the emergency brake until things are really cracking to pieces. Because, you know, the [present forms of civilization] represent a sinking ship.

WEEKLY: On the other hand, one could argue that the collective mood has already made collective decisions about collective healing, that the healing process and the climb toward collective consciousness is already going on. In other words, the psycho-cyborg movement, the spiritual movement (such as it is), the ecology movement, the cultural rebellion — all this, in fact, is the basis for profound positive change. Psychedelics played a part in this, and they continue to play a role, but you can't expect this culture to move into mass psychodelism.

MCKENNA: I think that's true. I'm not concerned. I think we're fine. Everything is right on track, developing the way it should. The trick is to know that, so that one can contribute to it, rather than being frozen by anxiety. I make the analogy to a birth. A birth looks like somebody's being split apart, and there's a lot of blood, guts and gore. You'd swear that this is death, split apart, and there's a lot of blood, guts and gore. You'd swear that this is death, not life. But in fact, it's a completely natural process. The goal then is to reassure the mother so that she realizes, you know, that this is natural, this is going to have a termination and it is part of the plan.

WEEKLY: How many times have you taken LSD?

MCKENNA: Well, if you put them all together ... I don't know, maybe 150 times when I was young. Not a lot. I think if you do these drugs right, they give you plenty to think about. One thing people do, that I'm definitely opposed to, is dabble with it. If you're not taking so much that going into it you're afraid you did too much, then you didn't do enough. Not the way people will take it to go to the movies, go to the beach this and that. No, I talk about what I call 'heroic' doses, 'committed' doses. And if you only do committed doses, then every trip will count. You won't have to do it more than three or four times a year to feel fully psychodelic.

WEEKLY: What a committed dose of psilocybin?

MCKENNA: Five dried grams. Five dried grams will flatten the most resistant ego.

WEEKLY: More?

MCKENNA: 300 milligrams. I'm less fond of mescaline because it's an amphetamine. And it's rough on you.

WEEKLY: And Peyote?

MCKENNA: Well, I can give it to you in a nutshell. There are three questions you should ask about a drug you're considering taking. Number one, does it occur naturally in a plant or an animal or something? Because nature has use-tested these compounds over millions and millions of years. Something that came out of the laboratory four or five years ago — who knows? So it groups of human beings that are still in touch with reasonable social values.

WEEKLY: Let's talk about schematic definitions of your various experiences. I've heard you speak about something that brought you closer to what monics and heretics call the "logos," the ultimate source of knowledge. If you made a chart of the levels of the unconscious you've experienced, how would you schematize it?

MCKENNA: I guess the way I'd schematize it is: Psilocybin "speaks." The speaking voice of psilocybin is absolutely extraordinary. DMT combines the speaking voice and the seeing eye — the most extraordinary thing about the DMT experience is you see entities. You encounter beings, whom I've described as self-transforming machine elves. They are obviously, in fact, the basis of the idea of elves, and they are the denizens of this other dimension. They are trying to teach something. Well, if I'm not completely mad, then it's big news. Straight people — skeptical people — if given DMT will be conveyed to, essentially, the hall of the Mountain King. We're not prepared for this. We expect everything to fall into the rational maps that science has given us, and science doesn't describe a hyper-dimensional university, teeming with alien intelligences that can be contacted within a moment if you have recourse to a certain chemical compound. Science is hard-pressed to assimilate that, light years away, there might be beings around another star.

WEEKLY: What already-existing metaphysical map would describe this? Would the Sufi experience be close to it?

MCKENNA: I think Maharanis Buddhism, the continued on page 77

---

**PROFESSIONAL EYECARE & EYEWEAR**

**$79**

DAILY WEAR CONTACT LENSES

BAUSCH & LOMB

SOFTSPIN complete

**$149**

EXTENDED WEAR CONTACT LENSES

PERMAFLEX complete

**$30/99**

SPARE PAIR clear when purchased same day. Daily/Extended Wear

**$199**

BROWN EYES to BLUE, GREEN, AQUA, HAZEL complete

**$119**

DAILY WEAR CONTACT LENSES

BAUSCH & LOMB TINTED complete

**$159**

EXTENDED WEAR TINTED CONTACT LENSES

BARNES / HIND complete

1 HOUR SERVICE in most cases

COMPLETE CARE INCLUDES:

- Professional EYE EXAM & fitting
- 3 months follow-up care
- One pair SPHERICAL lenses
- Care kit and instructions

MYOPIES ONLY. OTHER TYPES OF LENSES AVAILABLE AT SIMILAR SAVINGS

**EYEGASSES**

$29 ECONOMY COLLECTION

COMPLETE SINGLE VISION CLEAR PLASTIC

**$29**

DR. L.M. PHILLIPS OPTOMETRIST

650-0414 8250 Santa Monica Blvd.

827-5060 4708 Lincoln Blvd.

West Hollywood Marina del Rey

1 WEEKLY Vol. 2. No. 48
McKENNA: I'm not familiar with Jewish mysticism, but I do know it is powerful. My feeling is that abstractions of that kind represented by Kabbalistic theory suck in modern frantics as part of the historical movement that has brought us down the track of modern science. Aristotelian theory, dualism, materialism and so forth.

McKENNA: The thing is, reality itself is not static. This is one of the things that the psychedelic is trying to put across, that the reality we're immersed in is itself some kind of evolving toward a conclusion. So 20th-century history is not simply a fluke or an anomaly, it is the culmination of a process that has been in motion for as long as the planet has been in existence. We are not alienated and outside of nature; we are somehow the cutting edge of it. And this vast output of building and highways and all the things that characterize the modern world is actually a feature of the natural world. Similarly, the evolution of technical intelligence on the surface of the planet, while new, is not unnatural.

Human beings are therefore the natural agents for a compression that is building up in the temporal world towards transcendence into some other level of existence. History is going to end. This is the astonishing conclusion that I draw out of the psychedelic experience. And all the scenarios of history's ending that haunt human thinking on the matter, ranging from the apocalypse of John down to the latest prophecies of the flying-saucer cults, are attempts to grasp or come to grips with an intuition of transcendental departure from business as usual. And I think with things like the Harmonic Convergence and all this New Age stuff, these prophecies are building more and more of a process that has been in motion for as long as the planet has been in existence. We are not alienated and outside of nature; we are somehow the cutting edge of it. And this vast output of building and highways and all the things that characterize the modern world is actually a feature of the natural world. Similarly, the evolution of technical intelligence on the surface of the planet, while new, is not unnatural.

Looking at present cultural trends and extrapolating them, it's reasonable to suggest [as the Harmonic Convergence theorists predict] that by the end of the current calendar — which is in 2012 A.D. — we shall be unrecognizable to ourselves, that what we take to be our creation, or at least our computers and technology, are actually another level of ourselves. And that when we have worked out this perspecption through the process of history, we will recover what we knew in the beginning: the archaic union with nature that was seamless, unmediated by language, unmediated by notions of self and other, of life and death, of civilization and nature. These are all dualisms that are temporary and provisional within the labyrinth of history. When we arrive there it will be seen that all our religions were pale imitations of the mystery itself. Then everybody will say, "Now I understand! Now I understand why the pyramids, why Rome fell, why Auschwitz, why the H-bomb." All these things are signs of the way to the transcendental object. And once we reach it, meaning will flood the entire human experience.

McKENNA: But to see people transformed, to go back into nature with nature on such a mass level, would mean to turn collectively prepared to put such low-consciousness matters as planetary pollution or the Arab-Israeli struggle behind us totally overthrown. That's what's happening, and there have to be some kind of transcendental event. A vast from a flying continued on page 24
Mckeena continued from page 24

that culture] that will arise out of the clear perception of human needs, rather than the [present] unclear and politically arguable perception of human beings. We're basically

Mckeena continued from page 24

hazes our efforts at communication will become impossible and obsolete. And it will be in that environment definition communication that the new word of the logos will be realized.

We're: And MTV and the computers are just rushing us there?

Mckeena: Yes, they're pushing us right now.

We're: The metaphysical experiences always promote that once the ego is dropped, and true knowledge is accessed at that, in fact you begin to experience reality through the embodiment of God — which is supposedly yourself. And that embodiment is a joy and love, a profoundness of pleasure, experiential awareness; consciousness and resonances beyond what many people have ever experienced on the most profound levels. How does that integrate with your sensibilities?

Mckeena: My notion of the post-transition felt experience is that it is that domain where appropriate activity is the path of least resistance. In other words, in this current realm Tao and ego seem impossibly opposed. Things are either one or the other.

In the post-transition world, there will be no possible strange thing about psilocybin, my career, this conversation is that it is no one

Wmt: What is not well known is the communication model that is happening in the octopus. Octopi change their color not for camouflage purposes, as they are supposed, but as a mode of communication. The blushes, spots and traveling bands of color that an ordinary octopus can manifest are reflective of its linguistic intent. Its language appears on the surface of its skin.

Ordinarily, telepathy is imagined to be you hearing me think, then me hearing you think. But a richer notion of telepathy would be if you could see my words, rather than hear them — if they were actually sculptural objects where I would make an argument, an utterance from 21 angles. There are things arised from what goes on with the octopi. Shamans do the same thing. These shamanistic songs that are sung are not intended to be heard, they're intended to be seen by other people, who are intoxicacted. This crossing from the hearing to the seen is a very important part of the revelation of the transcendent object.

Philo Judeus, the second-century Alexandrian Jew and polymath [a person knowledgeable in many fields] who wrote encyclopedic tomes on the religions of his day, talks about what he calls a more perfect logos. And he asks, what would be a more perfect logos? And he answers his own question by saying, "The more perfect logos is a logos that goes from being heard to being beheld without ever crossing over a quantifiable moment of transition."

And I think this is a perfect example of the kind of historical development that I am trying to indicate by talking about the transcendental object. That we are going to go from a linguistic mode that is heard to a linguistic mode that is beheld, and when this transition is complete, the ambiguity, the uncertainty and the subterfuge that

Mckeena: No, but a new design process [of