

Terence McKenna on the Archaic Revival

According to psychedelic philosopher and cultural critic Terence McKenna, the "Archaic Revival" is a manifestation of our deep "nostalgia for the lost archaic." Therefore, McKenna advocates a kind of counter-intuitive *via negativa* as a way out of our postmodern crisis: "... the way out is back; the future is a forward escape into the past." Thus some have deemed the Archaic Revival landing us in a paradoxical "Ancient Future."

The following from McKenna are his explanation of what he means by the "Archaic Revival" (transcribed from some of his lectures).

History is ending because the dominator culture has led the human species into a blind alley, and as the inevitable catastrophe approaches, people look for metaphors and answers. Every time a culture gets into trouble, loses its bearing, the traditional response is to go back in history to find the previous "anchoring model".... In the twentieth century a global civilization has lost its bearing, and as we look back in time for a model to anchor us we have to go back before history to around twelve or fifteen thousand years ago. It casts itself back into the past looking for the last sane moment it ever knew. And the last sane moment we ever knew was on the plains of Africa 15,000 years ago rocked in the cradle of the Great Horned Mushroom Goddess before history, before standing armies, before slavery and property, before warfare and phonetic alphabets and monotheism, before, before, before.

What I call the Archaic Revival is the process of reawakening awareness of traditional attitudes toward nature, including plants and our relationship to them.... So, the importance of the re-empowerment of ritual, the rediscovery of shamanism, the re-cognition of psychedelics, and the importance of the Goddess. There must also be an authentic religious mystery driving this.

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 into the twentieth century to Freud, to surrealism, to abstract expressionism 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.

And this is where the future is taking us because the secret faith of the twentieth century is not modernism, the secret faith of the twentieth century is nostalgia for the lost archaic, nostalgia for the Paleolithic, and that gives us body piercing, abstract expressionism, surrealism, jazz, rock-n-roll and catastrophe theory. The twentieth century mind is nostalgic for the paradise that once existed What the Archaic Revival means is shamanism, ecstasy, and orgiastic sexuality.

The 20th century mind is nostalgic for the paradise that once existed on the mushroom dotted plains of Africa where the plant-human symbiosis occurred that pulled us out of the animal body

and into the tool-using, culture-making, imagination-exploring creature that we are. And why does this matter? It matters because it shows that the way out is back and that the future is a forward escape into the past. This is what the psychedelic experience means. It's a doorway out of history and into the wiring under the board in eternity. And I tell you this because if the community understands what it is that holds it together the community will be better able to streamline itself for flight into hyperspace because what we need is a new myth, what we need is a new true story that tells us where we're going in the universe and that true story is that the ego is a product of pathology, and when psilocybin is regularly part of the human experience the ego is suppressed and the suppression of the ego means the defeat of the dominators, the materialists, the product peddlers.

Psychedelics return us to the inner worth of the self, to the importance of the feeling of immediate experience—and nobody can sell that to you and nobody can buy it from you, so the dominator culture is not interested in the felt presence of immediate experience, but that's what holds the community together. And as we break out of the silly myths of science, and the infantile obsessions of the marketplace what we discover through the psychedelic experience is that in the body, IN THE BODY, there are Niagaras of beauty, alien beauty, alien dimensions that are part of the self, the richest part of life.

I think of going to the grave without having a psychedelic experience like going to the grave without ever having sex. It means that you never figured out what it is all about. The mystery is in the body and the way the body works itself into nature. What the Archaic Revival means is shamanism, ecstasy, orgiastic sexuality, and the defeat of the three enemies of the people. And the three enemies of the people are hegemony, monogamy and monotony! And if you get them on the run you have the dominators sweating folks, because that means your getting it all reconnected, and getting it all reconnected means putting aside the idea of separateness and self-definition through thing-fetish. Getting it all connected means tapping into the Gaian mind, and the Gaian mind is what we're calling the psychedelic experience. It's an experience of the living fact of the entelechy of the planet. And without that experience we wander in a desert of bogus ideologies. But with that experience the compass of the self can be set, and that's the idea; figuring out how to reset the compass of the self through community, through ecstatic dance, through psychedelics, sexuality, intelligence, INTELLIGENCE. This is what we have to have to make the forward escape into hyperspace.