

Paleo Solution - 336

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Robb Wolf: Hey folks, Robb Wolf here, another edition to the Paleo Solution Podcast. Super excited for today's guest, Dennis McKenna is an American ethnopharmacologist. He is the author of The Brotherhood of the Screaming Abyss and is just a fascinating character whose work is held in extremely high regard in my world. Dennis, how are you doing?

Dennis McKenna: Doing well Robb. Thanks for asking me on to your show.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, it's a huge honor to have you here. So Dennis what is an ethnopharmacologist?

Dennis McKenna: Okay, well an ethnopharmacologist, there's the thumbnail definition and the formal definition. I guess the thumbnail definition is the study of medicines, not only medicines but any biologically active substance that's from nature that are used by indigenous cultures. So usually in a traditional context, that would be the short, short definition. Since we only have an hour, I won't go into the long definition but that pretty well sums it up its interdisciplinary infestation of those things unless you know, indigenous people are quite ingenious about identifying useful plants in their environment, useful other sources of these things too. It's not confined to plants as medicines, as poisons. I mean for instance the study of arrow poison would be a legitimate study for ethnopharmacology. But usually the focus is on medicines you know?

Robb Wolf: Dennis, could you give us some examples of what some of the maybe both more popularly known and perhaps less well known, both the plant sources and the biologically active substances are that you talked about and have studied?

Dennis McKenna: Well, most of my work has been devoted to the study of psychedelic plants or fungi which have an important role in indigenous cultures. My academic work and lately my personal work too or really for a long time has been more or less focused on Ayahuasca which is many of your readers will know about this. It's becoming popular. It's given a lot of attention. As a matter of fact there was an article just this week in the New Yorker about the Ayahuasca where I was interviewed. I can send you a link of that if you want.

Robb Wolf: I read it. It's a very, very actually well done. Yeah, and we will put that in the show notes for sure.

Dennis McKenna: Sure. I was just pointing out some parts of it but I came off sounding pretty good in the article. Ayahuasca, it's kind of at the center of traditional medical practices, ethnomedicine, shamanism in South America. It's a complex preparation that's made from at least 2 plants which have a synergistic effect. One contains the hallucinogen, the psychedelic compound DMT, Dimethyltryptamine but DMT by itself is not orally active. So it requires or when combined with the bark of the other main ingredient the Ayahuasca, banisteriopsis caapi, big jungle liana woody vine, that contains alkaloids that inhibit monoamine oxidase. The enzyme in the gut that breaks down DMT so it's protected from degradation in the gut that manages to make it to the brain in an intact form so instead of when you take DMT other than by mouth or by smoking it or snuffing it for example, it has a very rapid, very intense psychedelic effect that only lasts maybe 20 minutes.

If you take it orally, as in Ayahuasca, it lasts 6 or 7 hours. So it's less intense but if you get more out of it, there's more content in a certain way when you take it orally. That's the basis of Ayahuasca and many people are interested in this, going to South America to find their shaman to sample this or you can find it in the States too now. Ayahuascaros as they call these specialists come up to the States and go on like rock star style tours of that kind of thing. There are various places in the States where it is used but those are kind of underground. I mean technically Ayahuasca is illegal because of the controlled substance in it, called DMT. The other plant is not illegal.

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But there are two religions, Brazilian religions that also use this as a sacrament and they are allowed to do this in the States because they have taken their place and case all the way to the supreme court and the supreme court has granted them an exemption because what they do is a religious practice so under Religious Freedom Restoration Act they are permitted to use Ayahuasca.

Technically, nobody else thus, is permitted legally to do that. But I don't see that that's slowing people down. They tell me in New York, I mean in a typical weekend there's a more than a hundred Ayahuasca ceremonies happening around the city. That's possibly not a good thing but...

Robb Wolf: Right, right depending on the circumstance yeah. So the psychedelics have always been pretty fascinating to me and from a...I guess kind of a pharmacological perspective, in addiction and abuse perspective, they're

pretty low. Let's say relative to like opioids or even alcohol. Could you talk about that a little bit like the tachyphylaxis, the adaptation that occurs rather rapidly with everything from masculine the psilocybin to a DMT like why...

Dennis McKenna: Sure, sure, yeah well these psychedelics are as a class do not cause addiction. They don't work on those systems. They don't work on the opioid system or the dopamine reinforcing pathways. They work on different pathway serotonin and you don't get that reinforcing effect. In fact, psychedelics if anything are anti-addictive, they or have been used to treat addiction with quite a lot of success.

They're actually not addictive. I mean you can treat alcoholism, even smoking. There have been some very impressive studies that have had come recently out of Johns Hopkins using psilocybin to treat smoking sensation with absolutely spectacular results compared to any other treatments that's out there.

So these things can be used to treat addiction to other substances and as far as the psychedelics themselves they're anything but addictive. What do I mean? In the first place you develop a tolerance very rapidly. In the second place they usually kind of move you off your dime. They move you off out of your comfort zone temporarily. It takes a bit of courage to...it takes a courage to take even that first place and it takes courage to go back and repeat that experience.

Many people they have no particular impulse to go right back into it or repeat it. Eventually, many people do. But so psychedelics themselves are not addictive but they can be used to treat addiction. On other parameters are they harmful, long-term use and so on. Not, they don't appear to be like everything can be overdone you and there's wisdom in the rule of thumb, moderation and all things but occasional use of psychedelics is probably good for mental health. There are actually studies that show that. That people who are occasional users of psilocybin mushrooms for example have generally more positive attitudes, less incidents of depression and it's just kind of a tonic for mental health. So there's what we used to believe about psychedelics was mostly propaganda the idea that these things are going to drive you crazy and all that.

If you have schizophrenia, if you have a proclivity to mental illness, you probably...they shouldn't take these things. In any case you should always pay....you should do it from an informed place. You have to pay attention to set and setting, right? The circumstances that you do and wonder and

the mindset that you bring to it, what do you bring to the table, what are your expectations. So the more you can inform yourself before you can take any psychedelic and the more you can pay attention to the circumstances, the proper set and setting, the better experience, the more positive it's going to be for you. Yeah, so just a little bit of thoughtfulness about how and where you take them.

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The other variable of course is a dose impurity, so know what you're taking. That's one reason why I say if you're going to take a psychedelic, stick with the plants. Take a plant preparation, mushrooms, you know what that is. Ayahuasca usually, you know what that is. Pills could be anything. There's such a proliferation of designer drugs now. Some of which are probably harmless but some of which may not be so harmless. So I tend to...no sure way to know what those things are so in the world of ecstasy and molly and all that there which is...There's such a proliferation of different kinds. There's just no quality control of it so.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Dennis McKenna: That's where one should be cautious.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, I guess like some of the recent celebrity deaths like Prince in fentanyl thinking that he was getting something like a Percocet with the fentanyl. I didn't even realize the pharmacology on it like about the equivalent of three grains of sand is enough to cause...suppress breathing and coalmine death. I mean that's a pretty narrow window of mistake that you can make on that and if you think that you're getting one thing and getting something else then clearly that could be disastrous.

Dennis McKenna: Yeah, that's right. Really that's where much of these hazards of things comes up and Prince was under the care of physician. I mean he was...Apparently he was, I can say that for sure but I think he was...fentanyl is a prescription drug. It's a very potent narcotic. Many more times more powerful than heroine but it's very short acting. They used it almost like an anesthetic, extremely short acting but very potent.

Now I've read recently there's something else on the market called carfentanyl that is coming out of China. That is like a hundred thousand times more potent than heroine. Nothing that any sane person would want to take because there's no way to measure the dose and this is a good example of what has happened to this designer drug markets you know?

Chinese will make anything and they don't care and they can...that stuff can be sold off websites and there's just absolutely no way to control that so you have to turn to...you have to rely on education to inform people that these stuff is out there and they should no way be taking. So that the whole synthetic designer drug market has turned pretty dark basically.

Robb Wolf:

Right, right. Dennis I knew this stuff gets super political but why in a reasonable world would psychedelics that have a long history of traditional use and low-addictive potential and what not. Why would they be lumped in with things like cocaine and heroin and litigated against an attack in a way that like they depleted uranium or something like that. Like I mean it's kind of...it's a little crazy and I'm possibly a little crazy anyway and I think having a decent background in pharmacology and stuff you are able to look at these stuff and possibly more objective way than somebody that like when my system admin guy tells me that the SQRT bundles communicating with something, I'm just kind of like, okay, I've got to take it at face value so I can understand that different pharmaceuticals and bioactive substances could be a similar opaque experience for people without that background but why has it been so marginalized in a sailboard just now starting to get some decent academic research on a lot of these substances. Like where does this all come from?

Dennis McKenna:

Well, I think the keyword here Robb is reasonable. In a reasonable society, these things wouldn't have been banned in the first place. I think what you're looking at is the fallout from the 60's. Basically, I think that in the 60's LSD kind of came along and it dropped like a bomb into the society.

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We had no context for this. As a society we were not aware of the indigenous traditions. If you've seen these things it was a time of social turmoil LSD. It made people have plenty of ideas like maybe I don't need to go to Vietnam and kill people. So the powers that they saw these as socially disruptive which they were but in ways that we would probably say as a good way, they enabled people to kind of think for themselves. But I think there was a metric reaction on the part of politicians, worried parents, authorities, everybody else that kind of lump under the term of powers that be.

There was a hysterical reaction and it was way more than the 0:16:20.4 to given that the actual properties of these compounds. Now, everything was banned pretty much at one time at the end of the 60's and 1970 I think. It's taken 40-years to overcome that, to realize that. Well, maybe that was an overreaction, and now with some of the emerging research

or finding not only, was it over reaction but we're overlooking these medicines which have a great deal of potential for therapeutic use for treating everything from PTSD, to addictions, to intractable depression, to OCD.

A lot of things including interestingly enough since you've mentioned it, post traumatic brain injury. Some of these compounds are neuroprotective in terms of DMT is one example. This is entirely sort of outside the context under the fact that it's a psychedelic and it's also neuroprotective.

So it's taken that long for the hysteria to die down, for cooler heads to look at it and say, well, maybe we threw the baby out with the bath water here because schedule I classification which also applies incredibly to cannabis and the DEA just continued its schedule I classification for cannabis.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Dennis McKenna: Schedule I says absolutely no medical application, high potential for abuse, dangerous, toxic, worthless in every respect. That's clearly does not apply to the psychedelics and it shouldn't be applied to cannabis. This is what happens from politicians instead of people with information like pharmacologists or doctors you make these kinds of decision.

Politicians are generally ignorant about practically everything and I love to bash politicians.

Robb Wolf: Right you're in warm company there yeah.

Dennis McKenna: So they know nothing and not only do they know nothing but they don't bother to educate themselves about them at all. So they are worried. Most politicians unfortunately seemed to be worried about one thing only and that's being reelected.

Unfortunately, their electorates are as ignorant as they are on these science and medicine related issues. Just a good example, I mean, well I don't want to rave too much.

Robb Wolf: No, please rave, please, please. We love these raves on this show. Please.

Dennis McKenna: Something just happened last week that was really quite disappointing to me which is, there is this drug out there called kratom. You might have heard of it?

Robb Wolf: Yeah, the opiate modulator, yeah.

Dennis McKenna: Yeah, it's a plant from South East Asia that is used kind of like opium. It definitely hits the opiate receptors in the brain but it does not cause respirator depression which is what kills people from opiates until a couple weeks ago it was legal. You can buy it at shops and many people were using kratom, and Kratom extracts to get off the more addictive drugs often OxyContin and may go from OxyContin to heroin. Kratom was actually part of the solution I thought. Here is an herbal medicine relatively nontoxic. People are using it successfully to discontinue their addictions to heroin.

So it was part of the solution, nontoxic herb but the DEA decided to make it schedule I for no particular reason. Very few deaths were associated with kratom and most of those that were traced to people who were taking heroine and kratom at the same time.

So kratom doesn't cause respiratory depression. It's nontoxic. For that reason alone it's a better alternative but the DEA again apparently not talking to their scientists because they certainly have scientists advising them. On the administrative side they just decided to make it schedule one so that's unfortunate.

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It means that option is not available to people where it might have been before. As a result people are going to die wouldn't have to die. I think that's unfortunate. This is a good example of how these sort of ill thought through administrative and political decisions really impact people's lives.

Robb Wolf: Absolutely, so the FDA just crackdown on e-cigarettes which had been show pretty conclusively to reduce tobacco consumption depending if the preparation within these cigarettes were relatively clean and there really wasn't a downside to that consumption. Nicotine as a pharmacological agent isn't really all that much to get concerned about. It's all about the delivery mechanisms via tobacco that are usually concerning. But they just took this thing that was easily accessible, clearly had shown significant benefit and made the access almost impossible and we continue to see more and more examples of things like that.

Dennis McKenna: I guess you have to be over 18 or so. I missed that. I didn't realize that they had crackdown on e-cigarettes but that's exactly what we're talking about.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Dennis McKenna: Here's a thing that is relatively benign compared to what it's replacing. Why they would make that decision, I just have no ideas. Robb, it's enough to make people believe of the conspiracy.

Robb Wolf: It's funny they just had a piece...Wall Street Journal I mean. Everybody has picked this up that in the 60's there's some documents now that the sugar industry basically payed off the government...key governmental people to really heavily align any type of fat particularly animal based fat like butter and to minimize any type of negative signaling around sugar and refined carbohydrates. I mean this stuff is damning. I mean it's like holy smokes and so we've reached a point where...and it's funny I really like listening to a guy Dan Carlin, great, great podcaster, great thinker but he's made to the point that there are so many real conspiracies mixed with so much disinformation that like it's kind of a crapshoot.

Dennis McKenna: It's very hard to sort it out.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Dennis McKenna: It's very hard. I'm not...Generally I'm not a conspiracy theorist but sometimes you have to wonder. I tend attribute a lot of these decisions, policy changes and so I'm not so much to conspiracy as to just stupidity.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Dennis McKenna: Not really thinking it through.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Dennis McKenna: One of the things...I read that article about the sugar industry and so on. One of the things that I think this has an effect that goes far beyond anyone of this one thing is it shows that sciences corrupt and science used to be one of the things that we could look up at to that had the kind of integrity about it.

Scientists were seekers of truth. No actually it seems that their skills of the nutritional industry, the pharmaceutical industry so the respectability of science comes into question. I think that we should always be in a way skeptical of science. I mean that's kind of what science encourages but when you read articles like this, you realize one of the last institutions that gets respect in our culture, even if that's corrupt. So what's left? Politics is corrupt. Religion is corrupt like there is no moral authority.

Science is corrupt like there is no scientific authority. Who can you believe? What can you believe in then in this culture?

Robb Wolf: Personal experience and outcomes which is I try to really get people to hang their hat on. If you've been messing around with the super high carb diet and you're dyslipidemic and starving all the time maybe we go the opposite end of the spectrum and see how that works and damn the torpedo's full speed ahead if you're feeling good. Your blood lipids look fantastic.

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Dennis McKenna: Yeah that's kind of where I'm at with it. What can you believe? You can believe in yourself. People say...before I was writing this, before I went on the show I was replying to a young man who was writing me, telling me how my brother and I had brain washed him and then the Hare Krishnas and then the political system and I wrote back and say nobody has the agenda to brainwash you, try thinking for yourself for a change. That's always been my message. Think for yourself. Don't believe me. Don't believe Terrence McKenna and don't believe anybody. Look at the data and think for yourself. People don't want to do that. It's like they got a brain...especially younger people if they're confused they don't know what to believe, well, I'm not here to tell you what to believe. Work it out. Figure it out. You got to learn to trust yourself.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Dennis McKenna: That's about the only thing you can't trust in some context these days and fortunate too because science properly practiced is a very powerful thing. It's not something that asks people to have faith in it.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Dennis McKenna:or anything yet we do. In fact the scientific message is don't have faith, don't have belief. Science is a way that asks questions of the world and get answers back that you can verify. But then when you see that whole segments of science are basically in the service of political interests, the whole edifice becomes shaky. Because then every...and it all it becomes open to question.

Robb Wolf: It's funny because in this attempt to control the horizontal and the vertical then when you have this one exception and part of what I'm thinking here so mainstream medicine and the DEA would tell us that the cannabis, cannabinoid products have no medicinal quality that's why they're schedule I. But then it's very easy to track down information. Anecdotal for the most part but some decently performed randomized

control trials showing like the cannabis in general, but cannabidiol oils are quite efficacious for a host of inflammatory conditions for seizure disorders.

So then you get that one exception. So if a scientist is telling us there's no benefit here and then you find the benefit then all of a sudden you start questioning everything and I think some of this whether it's politics or even just well-meaning people, there are quacks out there. There are people who prey upon the desperation of people who are dealing with cancer or other intractable diseases. So on the one hand you do want to create I guess potentially some sort of a system of checks and balances.

Although, I would argue that we need like 6 or 7 different entities not just the FDA but maybe 7 different FDA's that all compete against each other and then we would actually get to the, get the brass tacks really damn fast with all that stuff but so I get what the sentiment is that there needs to be protecting somebody somewhere. But then at the same time when the people protecting are preventing the access of things that are known to be both safe and peculiarly efficacious for a host of conditions that we have no other solutions for then not only is it frustrating on that side but then I think it pushes people even further in to the pseudo-science realm. Then if you question that one element of science then you can just go off and do a host of other kind of crazy directions.

Dennis McKenna: Yeah exactly. That's the danger it will lead people to reject science all together. That's unfortunate because that encourages loose thinking. I mean really delusional thinking in some ways and stuff that science has all the answers. But science is in some ways is self-correcting thing but these decisions to keep cannabis schedule I, it has nothing to do with medicine or science. They've totally ignored much scientific evidence. While we were talking while you were talking, I just went on pub med which is the national library medicine biomedical database. I'm sure you're familiar with it totally open to anyone. I did a search on cannabis clinical trials and 738 peer reviewed publications popped up clinical trials involving cannabis. So it's not like the work is being done, it's not like the evidence isn't there.

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For the DEA, just think about it, they're a dinosaur for agency. Much of their budget depends on cannabis. That's probably 80% if they're enforcing, they are preaching about cannabis. If they rescheduled cannabis their budget's going to evaporate. It's a matter of or certainly be greatly reduce so it's a matter for them self-preservation. We have to keep this in a schedule so that our people will stay employed basically. This isn't based on any solid criteria and people are no longer fooled.

This is why I mean the DEA needs to just go away. They need to just link away in shame because if they are the cutting edge of the so called war on drugs, there could be no more dismal failure. There has been a trillion dollars more than a trillion dollars that's been spent on the war on drugs since the 70's and look where we are, more drugs than ever. So this is what institutions, bureaucracy is doing. They try and perpetuate themselves.

Robb Wolf:

I read a fascinating article that was talking about really a well-established organized crime. It's somewhere in Russia. I forgot the exact location but the roadways in this area are really deplorable and they were so bad that these black marketers were getting a lot of breakdown to damage to the vehicles and these guys put in to their budget road maintenance and they started repairing road so that they can shift their black market materials around more effectively. I just can't find a more hilarious example. If you reef down on something that people want and you create this prohibition black market kind of scene and all kinds of unintended consequences and inevitably it doesn't deal with the problem itself. It shifts incentives into directions that you can't even dream of imagining and it's just so fascinating to me that we still, like a huge portion...in the United States in particular, there's this kind pure botanical element when we talk about substances that alter perception and so long as it's...if you go to your doctor to get some opiates or you go to the 7/11 to get some booze then it's okay so it's quote legal.

But again that legality piece just gets really slippery for me when I'm looking at it at from a pharmacological toxicology type of perspective. But I guess those times are changing a bit. I guess with the information age and the internet and people being able to share information so much more rapidly then it's more difficult to spin this stuff in a negative way but it's really...It seems like the government has painted itself into a corner in a variety of ways on this topic.

Dennis McKenna:

Yeah, yeah. They definitely have. In many ways they had it wrong from the beginning because the focus was on the substances. So there's like substances that we have to ban these substances. But there's thousands of substances and more everyday due to the proliferation of the medicinal chemistry and even in plants. So the focus had to be and it should've been all along education of people and the message should have been we're immersed in the chemical ecology if you will in psychoactive substances. You need to know how to navigate.

You need to know how to make informed choices about whether to use these substances and which ones and how to use them, really pretty simple. But the educational message has always been, just don't do it. Well, that's not helpful. That doesn't help people.

Robb Wolf: There's great literature demonstrating that it encourages exploration because anything that is prohibited makes you curious.

Dennis McKenna: Right, exactly so in the end, I mean that there are program which was very ineffective that's now recognized. It had a lot to do I think with the fascination with drugs, or with the now millennials or 20 something. They all have to take D.A.R.E.

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I have had any number of students who told me the way I got interested in drugs was like I took the D.A.R.E program in the 6th grade and that made me curious, right, so unintended consequences, right?

Robb Wolf: Dennis this may sound crazy but what would you think about this if were to in and granted this is like magical wand fairy tale type stuff but we deschedule the stuff. We find care healthcare providers that can set up clinics. We can continue clearly, the fundamental research. But if somebody wants to do a psilocybin exploration or DMT or something like that then they go to a clinical setting where they're screened and monitored and cared for.

Then whether the people are seeking this for spiritual reasons or health reasons but there is actually a controlled, monitored, vetted system for these people being moved through this experience versus talking to Veny down at the corner and getting some sort of white substance. Like I don't...and taking it at a rave where you're not safe and it can be a harm to yourself and others those are kind of the two...different kind of the two options on the table in a way, right?

Dennis McKenna: Yeah and of course it totally makes sense, with respect to psychedelics. If people want to have a psychedelic experience there should be exactly be what you described as center which I describe and maybe a clinic but it looked more like a spa.

It can be like a comfortable place where you can come and have a spa weekend and part of that spa weekend might be taking a dose of psilocybin or Ayahuasca even and you could do it with your family and I think it would do a lot for family dynamics.

But first of all I think, first before that could happen and talk about your magic wand solutions. Basically, all drugs should be legalized, that should be the starting point and then legalize them and then regulate them and even the worst drugs the most potentially abusable drugs like methamphetamine. Just don't put the criminal stigma on it and say you really want to crank meth? Okay, you can crank meth. Here's your prescription.

But you go to this drugstore to get your prescription you have to get that from a healthcare provider. So it create opportunities for people that have that conversation about their use of drugs and say well, geez there's all these other choices you can make. There all these other much less harmful substances. Do you really want to crank meth? Every time they go for their dose or whatever and they have to have like conversation. Eventually, you're going get through the people. Maybe there are better choices. My teeth are falling out. I'm weighed 90 pounds, all these bad side effects of something like meth. You think they'd wake up to it.

So that's what we have to do, we have to create. Other countries have shown Elizabeth, Portugal...

Robb Wolf: I was just going to ask you about Portugal.

Dennis McKenna: ...Uruguay. They've legalized drugs across the board and their society has not collapsed. Drug use has gone down overall. Nobody is too excited. You can have small amounts of drugs and nobody's getting too excited. That's what we need to do. We need to do it. Robb it's not that is about the substances, this is about controlling people's behaviour, controlling people's consciousness ultimately. This is a war on consciousness. That's why it's dangerous I think. We say that we're a democracy in this country.

We're really in many ways were quite totalitarian. We want to regulate behaviour, individual behaviour. Same issues apply to women's health and abortion and all these things, the rights as well. We want a small government but when it comes to what you think or what your medical choices are, or who you marry, we want micromanagement of those issues.

I think that's a fall out from this sort of authoritarian puritanical Christian history that we come out of where anything fun was automatically bad right?

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Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Dennis McKenna: So that's what you're seeing. But they don't want to let individuals make their choices that the government is very paternalistic. We're children. We don't have the wisdom to make our own choices on these issues so we'll make the choices for and if you don't like it you can go to jail.

Robb Wolf: I could not agree more, the main fund raising type stuff I do is for the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund and these are the folks that go out and fight the feds when the guys in body armor and I love the police military and fire scene. I love the folks in that but a lot of work that's implemented is absolutely appalling,

But you know there's an Amish family that's selling raw milk and raw cheese. They don't pasteurize it and this is the way it's been done for a couple of thousand years and the feds show up, dump out their milk, haul away their cows. Throw these Amish farmers in to clink and the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund comes to their defense but inevitably what happens is someone phones the local health department and files a complaint that there's something dangerous going on in that Amish farm and it's fascinating and oftentimes it ends up linking back to some sort of a bigger food producer something like and this is where the conspiracy stuff gets kind of thick.

But it's fascinating to me that we really do seem to have these kind of two main bodies that kind of the left and the right and usually we talk about health but what the heck we'll diverge and do politics a smidge. But to your point, we have two large groups of people that want to be very paternalistic in what we tell people, what they can and can't do.

We seem to have a very small colonel in the middle of people that are like, "Hey, I don't want to tell you what to do at all and I would prefer you not tell me what to do," so long as what you're up to isn't causing you injurious harm to one or the other or someone else,

Let's just leave things be and people are really fidgety and anxious about the prospect of not trying to control everyone and everything around them. Why is that? Is that a normal human state like or is this an artifact, again, kind of a Judeo-Christian culture? Like would China have developed more of the kind of libertarian approach to drugs had and not had heavy influence from the west which wove this kind of psychology and morality or along with market forces into stirring the way that people acted like we get more innovation if the US wasn't the largest, wealthiest country in the world.

Dennis McKenna: Yeah, I don't know. I mean in China, in countries like this, they're very authoritarian. They're certainly happy to make any number of illegal drugs and ship them to the States or drugs that would be. I'm not sure that was being with drug policy in China. But my guess is it's probably frowned upon, if not really actively persecuted. Probably most people don't have access to the kinds of drugs that we have that are much harder to get. But ultimately, it's authoritarian and so the meds that the Chinese are quite upfront compared to the States and that they want to control what people think.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Dennis McKenna: They restrict what people can read, what they can get off the internet and that's an authoritarian society. The States pay lip service to the fact that we have freedom of press, freedom of thoughts and all this but it's really lip service in a lot of ways. I mean they have their only interest in authoritarian mechanisms and but they're more subtle somehow within or...

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Dennis McKenna: ...they appear to be more subtle. What's good is that with so much information available, people see through this propaganda much more readily. Actually, psychedelics again are an antidote to the poison that culture dishes out that the toxic crap that they call culture psychedelic.

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Many younger people that I encounter are not fooled by the propaganda and many of them credit psychedelic. It was so, yes, I took psychedelics and then I saw what was going on and so they're teaching tools in that respect and granted the authorities recognize this to a certain extent.

Psychedelics are dangerous because they make you have dangerous ideas. Like those threatening the power to beat. So yeah, in some sense they know they're dangerous things. It's ideas they worried about, not substances.

Robb Wolf: Dennis, how are they dangerous? Like I think that some people are kind of conservative leaning like they would say well they're dangerous because they make you crazy. Like that's not what you're saying. What I take from that is they're dangerous because usually one of the commonalities of most of these psychedelics,

They experience a sense of unity that you're a part of something larger but also not. But at the same time kind of ego crushing because you

usually get a sense that you hear for a brief moment and then you're gone.

Dennis McKenna: Right.

Robb Wolf: So it really undermines a lot of the things that theoretically hold together, a the society of the United States but then you have like the Scandinavian countries which are quite low in religious following and they're not sacrificing babies on altars and stuff like that. They actually tend to be pretty darn crazy place to...

Dennis McKenna: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: They're been busy. So what are the dangerous ideas? Like you kind of see through some of the BS that expand and why does that happen? What's that mechanism?

Dennis McKenna: Well I think that psychedelics enable you to get a different perspective. What they let you do is step out of your reference frame temporarily and look at things from a different perspective, and if you're looking at governments, regulation, ideas, these sort of thing, you can view it in a way that you've never have. I mean, as you say often psychedelics induce meaningful experiences about how we're all one and we're all part of something bigger.

Essentially the kind of messages that religions like to promulgate but they don't like it when people need to get that from the officially sanctioned religious institutions, right, it's like you, the individual, you're not good enough to have a mystical experience, right?

Robb Wolf: Directly.

Dennis McKenna: We the priests will tell you what to think right? You can't go talking to God. You can't step out of the authoritarian structure. So they're dangerous in that sense. So they're dangerous in the sense that they make you think about your role in the world.

You might take a psychedelic, step out of your reference frame and think why should I work for a soulless corporation for the rest of my life in a cubicle where it's mind numbing work. It's not helping the world so that at the end of the day they can dump me out on the street and say sorry you don't our pension because we had to cancel that last year. It makes you see the soullessness and the essential and some ways evil of these corporations, government institutions and so on. Which are not serving

the well-being of people? They're serving the well-being of corporations and government institutions. They're self-perpetuating so this is heresy. They make, I mean psychedelics gives you funny ideas and funny ideas almost in by definition are heresy. They go against what is accepting to believe.

We need a lot more of that in my opinion. That's what happens when people think for themselves. When people are growing up when they were younger and maybe they grow up in a religious household and maybe to a certain stage in their development, they accepted these teachings but there's a certain stage and a lot of people, they're thoughtful and they're thinking maybe around 12, between 12 and 15, they begin questioning some of these stuff.

It's like wait a minute; this stuff doesn't make any sense. So they become, they leave the faith or whatever. I'm all in favor of leaving the faith. I have no use for faith. Faith is being asked to believe something without any evidence.

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I mean why should you? I mean at least we should ask for evidence for belief but religion is not for that. It's like you must have faith. You must not ask a lot of bothersome questions. As a person who really believes that one should think for themselves I question that. I think more people should question that. I think more people are questioning that so the trend is overall positive by they'll love way to go.

Robb Wolf: Yeah nobody say...I think we have good job security in pushing these ideas. Nobody's going to come in and scoop it up and fix these problems right up from underneath us and we'll be left wondering what are we going to do next year so I...

Dennis McKenna: I'd love to be out of a job if that's what...

Robb Wolf: Exactly that, exactly that.

Dennis McKenna: That's what's keeping me going. I'd love to say, they don't know anyone. Nobody wants to listen to me. Everybody got the message.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, everybody has the message. They understand it better than I do. So I'll go do something else. My dream is that on this healthcare side of things that enough people get this story that I can go farm coconuts and do spear fishing and call it good, do my little permaculture farm operation and my services are not needed but it still seems like it needs a

little bit of a push. But I'm working towards the coconut farm but Dennis
It's...

Dennis McKenna: Glad to hear it.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, Dennis it's been so fantastic having you on the show. Where can people find you on the internet and where will you be speaking in the next couple of weeks or months?

Dennis McKenna: Gosh, well I have this 3 events in New York this weekend at a place called Alchemist's Kitchen so Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I've got quite a busy schedule and there's a conference in Prague, Czech Republic. I think it's from the 29th or something of September to the 2nd of October called Beyond Psychedelics. I'll be speaking there and I'm also going to...there's another conference in Rio Branco Brazil in October. The World Ayahuasca Conference and I'll be going there. So that's where they can catch up with me.

Most of this will be on my Facebook page. I have a Dennis McKenna public figure Facebook page. They can look at that and also I should not forget to plug my book.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Dennis McKenna: Which is the, The Brotherhood of the Screaming Abyss: My Life with Terence McKenna and there's a website by that name and there's also a Facebook group by that name. So it's member only but you can ask to join, almost everything on that too will be posted on that page and also my Dennis McKenna page. So that's how you can track me.

Robb Wolf: Fantastic and we'll get all that in the show notes. Dennis, really a huge honor having you on the show, we'd really like to meet you in real life at some point. Maybe we can get you out to Paleo f(x) next year and do a talk for the giant paleo nerd fest in Austin. There's amazing food and some wonderful people there so maybe we'll try to get you out for that.

Dennis McKenna: I'm open to that; I would love to do that.

Robb Wolf: Okay.

Dennis McKenna: We didn't even touch on all that but there's a whole other area of discussion there so yeah it's been a real pleasure, Robb. All the best to you. You're doing great work and yeah, maybe I'll see you there next year.

Robb Wolf: I will make it happen. I know somebody who knows somebody in that organization so I'll get the wheels going on that.

Dennis McKenna: Sounds good.

Robb Wolf: Okay Dennis, take care and safe travels

Dennis McKenna: All right you too.

Robb Wolf: Okay, bye-bye.

[0:54:04] End of Audio