

Psychedelics, eco-consciousness and the coming ecological crisis (Seminar)

Bruce Parry

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Bruce Parry was invited to talk at the international Breaking Convention Conference on Psychedelics, held at the University of Greenwich in 2019.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXVLLSXiR4c>

It's an interesting one being a public figure. I talked a little bit about this last time in that there comes with a sense of responsibility with what I say.

I'm often highlighted in The Sun as having vomited when ayahuasca was drunk and like how terrible that was and at the same time, I think those programs were left rather ambiguous by the BBC as to where I stood on a lot of the things that I took.

But if you watched the rushes, you would see me going, oh my God, this is the most amazing thing that's ever happened.

But they took them out.

So I have been in this slightly ambiguous space.

But I was quite happy, especially when I did the ayahuasca with the BBC, that they let me stop originally I was just doing it with the tribal people, but then I went and did it in a community in an urban space and that was quite a leap for them, I think, that I could go and do it like as a tourist, essentially and so that was like, that felt like something unusual for them.

So my history, my past as far as taking psychedelics in the public space, public arena is It's kind of a beautiful one, and I feel very grateful for it and that's what I'm going to talk a little bit about today, is my own personal experiences and this title of the talk, which is Psychedelics, the Eco-Consciousness, and the Coming Crisis.

So I'm going to try and do that.

If you read anything on the brochure about what I think I said I was going to talk about, I did this last time as well.

It's like, forget all that.

We're going to talk about something else and the reason for that is that I've actually been giving talks this summer, which I rarely do because I get terrified, but I felt I've been out on the road talking about power and revolution because it's something that it rarely comes up when I'm interviewed and it's something I really wanted to talk about.

So I did write that down for here, but it's an hour-long speech and it didn't fit fully with this title and I thought it would be nicer to try and squeeze, well not squeeze, but try and elucidate something that's more fitting with the theme of this morning.

So psychedelics.

as I said, I've had great privilege of experiencing some really extraordinary ceremonies in places that few people get to go to, very authentic ceremonies.

I started out my first ever programme with a boga.

I remember reading on the flight on the way out, if you get an ECG test before you have it, then you can check whether or not you're going to be in the danger zone and be thinking, if only I'd read this yesterday.

I could have had a ***** ECG and that was the first ever try program we made and that was me going off having a three-day deep experience with a group of people who'd never done it to an outsider before.

I had to sign a disclaimer to say I wasn't a witch and it was a subtly weird mixture of modern and ancient realms, in case someone came looking for them and an extraordinary ceremony meeting the Buiti and going into all sorts of depth and I could wax lyrical about just that one ceremony.

Then on the Yoppo, again, with the Sanema people in the Orinoco, like a day and a half of just snorting DMT.

It's kind of fun and then the Ayahuasca, which I did then in another series called Amazon, where I started out doing that with a group of people who didn't mix the Chacruna with the vine, but they just did the vine itself and then I went on because I didn't get a strong enough vision to go and do that in town, which is what I talked about a second ago.

So those are the sort of TV versions and then I lived in Ibiza for 10 years, and I've done ayahuasca, I don't know, 100 times now, and a number of the other different plant medicines that I've had the great privilege of doing, but not necessarily in the public space.

So I guess I have some experience and for me, definitely, the psychedelic realm, and especially the realm of a held ritual with people who know what they're doing, has had profound and extraordinary benefits for me in my life and one of those is this eco-consciousness.

I do think there's lots of ways that we can have an experience of connectedness or oneness or unity consciousness, whatever you call it and one can have that from drumming, singing, dancing, chanting, meditation, yoga, all sorts of different ways of quietening the left hemisphere, the chattering voice and entering into something that feels more akin to an empathic connection with all that is and there's lots of ways of doing that, but the reason that I've always found the plant medicine realm to be a special one is because it comes with this ecological mix that I don't always get when I'm doing it in some of these other realms.

You can often have this extraordinary sense of connection and somehow miss the trees and the ecology, especially if the narrative structure that surrounds that has its own manifestation.

Some of them are very human-centred.

but the stuff that comes from our tribal ancestry I find to be, it often comes with it, this really beautiful ecological understanding too and so that's why I've always enjoyed the experiences of doing indigenous medicines and I do call them medicines.

So what is it that I say to people, because I do get people coming up to me all the time about what about what I think of this, because as I said earlier, it is relatively

ambiguous what it seems like I'm saying on my TV shows and most people just project in where they're at.

So either people come up and go, oh my God, you're the guy that gets naked and does drugs, have some DMT and others go, oh my God, poor you, that must have been the most horrendous thing in the world.

Poor you, that like, what a horrible thing to have to go through, to like look at yourself and all that stuff and I'm like, you should do some ayahuasca.

But that's the reality of the type of reactions that I get in the high street and so what do I do? I often am targeted by people who want to do it for the first time and they don't know anyone else, but they've sort of read about it and heard about it and want some advice.

That's quite difficult for me because obviously advising people where to go when you've no idea who they are and you can't take them through the whole certain setting.

It's just an e-mail or a conversation in the street or something.

It's very difficult.

So I've struggled with that a little bit.

But what I often, I mean, in the end, I ended up going to a place called the Temple of the Way of Light, which you probably know.

As I felt that was somewhere, if I went and recognized that space as somewhere that that has a very large throughput of people and I thought that was good enough, I could just recommend people to go there.

But for myself, I go to all sorts of other spaces, but I needed somewhere to be able to recommend.

But what do I say to people when they ask me what my experiences are? And obviously this whole weekend is full of people trying to describe what this is all about.

So my 3 little bullet points are not very much in comparison with all the sort of pharmacology and science that's happening, but this is how I pretty much describe it.

I say sort of three things and the first is that in my own personal experience, I've had an opportunity to see myself through another prism.

It's allowed me to see myself rather than lying on a couch and having a shrink tell me who I am and where I'm going wrong.

It's like this deep, visceral seeing of oneself through another prism and this humbling realization of who I am and the decisions I'm making and the relationships that I'm holding and all those things and that's can only be a beautiful thing.

It doesn't cure you of anything, it opens the door of which you have to then walk through and make a different life for yourself.

But that is a beautiful insight into self that has often come to me during these experiences and that's a beautiful thing.

The second thing I often say is I also get a deep healing, often, not always, and that healing is a physiological one, different to the visionary side.

It's A physiological one where I feel that I revisit old traumas through the prism of an older, wiser, more kind person that I am now, and that allows for me to then be with that trauma in a different light, take...

some compassion for the younger self that received that, and therefore maybe unlock a new neural pathway to a different way to being with that memory and in the deep realization that memory was affecting my behavior in a very profound way, sometimes very unconsciously, but that behavior was defensive or aggressive or whatever and to unlock that and to have a new neural pathway to be able to be differently, And often the sort of vomiting of what that was perhaps stored often in the gut is something that I often receive, especially with plant medicines like ayahuasca and Iboga.

So that's another thing that I often say to people and then the third thing I say is that there's this often you get as well, this sense of unity consciousness, this sense of being beyond oneself, connecting to that which is and that's the bit, I think, in the relation to the psychedelics, eco-consciousness, and the eco-crisis is a very important one.

Maybe not the most important, but it is, I think there are lots of studies that suggest that the more that people have a sort of an anthropomorphic vision of the world, a more interconnected, empathic vision of the world, they're much more likely to be ecologically minded, and they're much more likely to become active in this space that we're dealing with now, this response to the coming crisis.

So for me then, definitely, absolutely on camera, without question, I guess, without question, there is a real place for plant medicines done in the right way in this coming ecological crisis.

I believe it.

I am absolutely fully behind it, and I think that these sorts of conferences are vital for us finding the right way.

But as the speaker before me was saying, it was like, that's all very well and good for us, but what about those who are not interested or who are still fearful or whatever? And this is the hard thing.

So what are the other things that I then, when I'm talking to you in this moment is like, what are the other lessons that I've had from this? Before I just go on into how amazing psychedelics are, I think it would be good to counter that with a couple of the other lessons that I've received in this realm and the firstly is that, of course, they are not one-stop-shop cures.

They're not.

As I said a minute ago, it's just a window opened up into you acting in a different way and there are plenty of people, and we have friends, all of us, no doubt, who have basically started wearing feathers and wrapping every day and haven't really changed that much.

So clearly it's a complex thing.

I do believe that it does allow for all this positivity and there is healing and even those people have had their healings, which is why they dive into it so much and make it their new identity.

But there's dangers there and I think that another one of the dangers is that we give our power away too much to the shaman, and we give our power away too much to the romanticization of the tribal people who are holding these things.

They are not perfect people.

These are not perfect societies, and the shaman are definitely not perfect and what I might come on to at the end is the groups of people that I'm most interested in, who are the egalitarian groups, who live in a realm where they wouldn't, where before shamanism even really came about, where I think that there weren't any specialist medicine people, they were all pretty much equally involved in the understanding of the plant realm, and equally able to have their own connection to that which is and perhaps the shamanic tradition has come about in a later time when we've gone into areas where we're losing that a little bit and these people are the wise ones on the outside who are bringing that wisdom back, along with all the tools they use all over the world.

So I think that the heavy romanticizing is not necessarily helpful because we can get lost in that and we can And when we give our power away, centralizing power, individuals who are getting too much power, it's very, very, very hard for them to hold on to their integrity.

It becomes incredibly difficult and we see that and we hear about that all the time and you can't just say that person, therefore no good.

I think that we have our own role in that is what we're giving them.

So we have to respect and honor, but not get too carried away in just giving it all away, because it's a shared experience.

So that's another thing and so, indigenous peoples generally, we often romanticise, and indigenous peoples are also very capable of trashing their environments.

Indigenous peoples are doing all sorts of things that are not necessarily, I think, perhaps as harmonious as they could be.

So I say that from the position of someone who is clearly an advocate for so much of what we can learn from tribal people.

There's so much.

That we can learn in so many ways, but again, we must be careful not to... overly romanticized.

There are one or two groups that I am quite romantic about, but they're very special and they highlight a time that is a long time ago and most of the other indigenous groups that we see out there now are actually in very many ways like us.

They might be further down that conveyor belt of movement into where we are, but there is a time And this is the talk that I actually give, and if you want, you can look it up.

I've just stopped one of the talks on my website that I've been traveling around talking about.

It's like the time before the Neolithic revolution, the time before the domestication of plants and animals for food.

There are some groups who still hold on to our oldest traits that we had for like 95% of our time on the planet, and they're much more egalitarian.

They don't give their power away.

It's A It's a sort of like an empowered, decentralized way of community and those people are really interesting to me.

So they are, I think, quite, I have a relatively high level of romance to them, but not necessarily generally just across all tribal people.

So we have to be careful about that and I think the other lessons is that I think that I've also been with some groups who use psychedelics regularly And I'm not sure necessarily in a very positive way.

I think that psychedelics in their own right, despite how much we are going to learn this weekend about how they can help us cure addiction by bringing about connection.

I've also lived with one group in particular that I'm thinking of who I really felt that actually their daily use of DMT was an avoidance of the deep pain that they were receiving as a result of what was going on in their world and most tribal peoples are having a really difficult time now and what might have once been a sacrament and a ceremony for helping in all sorts of positive ways has perhaps now become something that is actually an avoidance of the deep pain of their society and that's just a very personal view.

But I think for everyone here who's deeply into this world, knowing these things is important too, to not be too absolute in our statements of their amazingness.

It's like we have to bear in mind that it's not a one-stop shop and to finalize that point, probably the most harmonious groups that I've lived with have no psychedelics in their culture at all.

That's a big one for us to take on board in this room.

Sorry to say that.

Maybe they're just a pathway to something else.

That's A biggie.

Ten minutes.

All right, buddy.

Okay, so with 10 minutes to go, let's move on to...

There's no gems here.

It's all on film.

I just said that the...

I said that the...

Actually, the most harmonious groups that I've ever lived with, I think it's possible that they don't even really use psychedelics at all and so to say that this is the only

path towards something, it may be, there's truth in that, in that it's a very useful tool for getting somewhere, but it doesn't mean to say that it has to be the answer.

It's like, it's a tool.

I wonder what those groups would be like if they did all have mushrooms every day. Maybe they'd be even better.

But I'm just giving you my experience, probably.

But jury's out a little.

I just thought I'd offer that because it's good for us to be sort of grounded a little bit.

Okay, so let's move on to the eco-crisis.

What have I missed out? I only wrote this this morning.

Okay, eco-crisis.

So yeah, how are we going to invite people to do psychedelics? Well, look, what did I write? Well, clearly this, is the hard bit, isn't it? Okay, well, look, we have to feel more deeply.

We have to fall in love with nature.

That is something that absolutely has to happen.

If it remains in the realm of the mind, then we're going to carry on just carbon credits and all the madness and just, it's not going to work.

The technological fix is a great idea, but it just plays to the mind.

We've got to fall back in love with nature and we've got to go on that healing journey to be able to feel more deeply once again and I think that there's lots of healing tools out there in the world, but for me, definitely plant medicines have been one of the most profound.

I'm a big believer in Vipassana meditation as well, but I think those both work quite well in unison and one gives you a slap and then you can have a more long-term play out with the other and like, you know, there's lots of tools and each should find their own.

But I think the main direction that we need to be going on is to feel more deeply and the only way to do that is by going on the inner journey.

But as we know, going on the inner journey, the first step is a really difficult one and like for all of us who've done that, we remember how difficult that was, especially if you come from a culture like I did, where I believe that all drugs are bad and I was just fully institutionalized.

So to even start doing something that's going to play with the mind was very, very difficult for me.

In my life, that was because I fell in love with someone and that helped.

But for a lot of people, I hear it all the time, they just don't want to go there.

So how do we invite that? Well, I think that the most important thing is the narrative that we hold in our lives at the moment, that actually we could all be good or bad and there are axes of evil and there's people over there that are bad and we need to lock some people up because they're bad and all the rest of it.

I've lived with tribes where the egalitarian tribes where any type of violence at all is seen as a type of mental illness.

Almost reduced so much that it's just not present.

Where's the axis of evil there? Where are the just bad people there? So if you take that on board, and I've lived with groups who are not utopian or perfect, but the level to which they're working in harmony with each other is so extraordinary that they've almost disseminated, or sort of almost gone through this sort of timeless group healing where they're all living in a much more harmonious way and for me, that gave me the insight into the counter-argument to this much more genetically determined whether we're good or bad.

It's like, well, no, here's a group of people where the environment is clearly the most powerful tool and here, this environment has been created in such a way, and they've been birthed and brought up in such a way that they're living in this harmonious way.

So that suggests to me that beneath my layers of conditioning is actually something really beautiful and that is the thing that I want to put into the world when it comes to people saying, I don't want to go on that journey, because beneath those layers, I might just find something really dark and that's the thing we have to cross out, because there is a lot of that in our society.

I hear it all the time.

It's like, I just don't want to go looking, because it only leads to badness.

But we have to be able to undo those layers to find our deeper harmony so that we can feel more deeply, because without the feeling we're not going to get through and there has to be some compassion in that too, because although we've all had our own difficulties on those healing journeys, we have no idea what the next person's is like.

There's a lot of really bad trauma in our society, and there's a lot of people who had it really ***** hard when they were kids, and there's a lot of abuse, and there's a lot of things that didn't happen that should have happened, and a lot of things that should have happened that didn't and so compassion in our society, but we need to bring back the narrative of going on that journey to heal so that we can feel and only through the feeling can we reach that empathy once again, and empathy being the most important thing for us to connect with nature.

It's like empathy for me and you, your pain is my pain.

Clearly in the long run, it's in my interest that that you're happy, because that would be my happiness and that empathy stretched out into the natural world too.

It makes absolute sense that the well-being of nature is the well-being of me and my society and my community and that's what empathy can bring about.

Thanks, mate and so empathy to me is at the heart of it.

It's at the heart of the film I made to why and And I think that there was a time when we were feeling that on a much more regular basis.

The Tawai film I made talked about how nomadic hunter-gatherers were essentially meditating every day, out when you're trying to catch the monkey, You have to be in

your body, in your senses, alert in this moment to be able to get it, otherwise it will get away.

You just won't get it.

You've got to be training yourself on a daily basis to be present.

Likewise, when you're foraging, you have to be present.

You can't be whistling, watching the dog walking off the heart.

You're present to what's going on around you.

On a daily basis, that is some type of meditation that perhaps rebalances the inner world and allows for this more body sense experience of empathy.

So that's one thing and I think that's at the heart of it.

We have to fall in love with nature and feel this eco-connectedness again.

Power inequality is another one, which I sadly don't have time to go into now, but that was going to be my whole talk.

So I'll shoehorn that in another time.

But I think that having lived with the truly egalitarian peoples, I think that power, clearly we're living in a realm now where power is completely out of hand.

we did have a time, potentially for 90% of our time on this planet as a species, where we held a narrative together that any centralization of power in individuals or groups only led to things going **** ** and we managed to maintain that narrative as a decentralized, everybody, every individual fully empowered themselves to be able to stop someone getting out of hand and others to bring them up if they're getting low and I think that was a narrative that was in our bodies and souls and our hearts for the vast majority and the talk that I give goes into how that came about and the tools, especially the play between the men and the women and also the narrative and also the sort of methodologies they had for bringing and diffusing power rather than challenging it with the same type of power, that whole thing.

That's another big part of the ecological crisis and I think that when we're feeling more empathic, it's more likely that we can rebalance that as well.

But there are tools on top of that are needed and you're going to have to check my website for that and the final one is, which I only scribbled 5 minutes ago, so thank God I've got one to finish on.

It's this sort of unity consciousness, but also us coming together as a group and it's where are we finding our meaning in life? We are living in a very atomized individual space at the moment, where so many of us, and it's the American dream, and we're all living it to some degree, it's like, my well-being is how I find my happiness.

So if I'm comfy, I'm happy.

If things are going well for me, I'm happy and a point of Victor Frankl, and his probably name is mentioned probably in every theatre here over the weekend, I don't know, but like something that I found very interesting insight, a guy called Victor Frankl, I'm sure you'll know, who's a psychiatrist at Auschwitz, and he pointed out that everyone who's whose vision of life, where their values were, where they found

meaning in life, if that meaning was in their own well-being, then clearly you're at some place like Auschwitz, you're going to have a really hard time.

You're just going to struggle big time.

There's nowhere worse.

But for those people whose meaning in life wasn't about themselves, but was about something beyond themselves, those people, even in the most horrific of environments, could still find some sort of happiness to get through that, because they were making incremental steps to that thing which was the most important thing for them, whether it was their children or it was God or whatever it was, they're making little steps.

It didn't matter about their uncomfot, discomfort, it was about them and I think that what I've experienced with tribal people as well is that they have a vision of something, a unified vision of something.

It's much easier when this is a shared vision of something beyond themselves.

It's the well-being of their children and their children's children and their children's children and it doesn't matter about me.

It's not about me.

I will let go.

The final words of my film was like, I don't know about planes or cars, but if they don't last forever, I don't want them.

Unlike the forest, which lasts till the end of time.

Those people, of course, they love planes and cars, but they love their kids and their kids' well-being more and so it's easy for them to let go of those things because they found something that they believed in and they derived their happiness from that and as long as we're only finding a happiness in our own well-being, we've got no chance.

We've got to come together with a collective vision for the future and we can find so much fun and joy in that.

We can come together and we can absolutely do it and I think XR and all these other movements together have that.

It's like the joy of coming together with a bigger vision.

Being on the streets, like being in a festival, but with a meaning as well, how cool is that? And so I guess that leads us to the next talk very well.

But I just wanted to say thank you, and we'll leave it at that.

The Ted K Archive

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<www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXVLLSiR4c>

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