

The Messenger and the Message — Terence McKenna under Examination. A Transdisciplinary Specialist Book — Reading sample

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This book grew out of the main work (v1.3) and the eleven sub-papers U1-U11. The substantive texts are carried over without change in content; new are the arrangement, the chapter apparatus, the key findings, the closing chapter, the concordance and the index. It has not been peer-reviewed and is not a manual: it contains no cultivation, dosage or preparation instructions.

Reading sample. This edition contains the preface, reading guide, key findings, abstract and Chapters 1, 5 and 15 of the full edition. Chapter numbers and cross-references follow the full edition; references to chapters not contained here refer to it.

Preface

Terence McKenna (1946–2000) left a body of work that can be missed in two ways. Those who defend it treat untestability as protection. Those who settle accounts with it treat untestability as refutation. Neither explains why a corpus whose answers have mostly not held has kept its effect for decades and has marked research questions that are now being worked on in controlled studies.

This book takes a third route. It tests twenty central claims against the state of knowledge in 2026, orders them by testability, and then reads the same sentences as questions. Three contributions of its own arise: a validity scheme with four zones (E1), the link to the distribution of disposition and risk (E2), and the thesis that McKenna is, in the history of science, a hypothesis generator and not a theorist (E3). The category of the productively false, which is established along the way, is built so that it does not become a free pass.

For whom. The book addresses readers from the history and philosophy of science, ethnology, pharmacology and psychiatry, religious studies, media and cultural studies, law and economics, and anyone interested in a transferable testing procedure for contested bodies of theory. No prior knowledge of McKenna is needed.

What it is not. It is not a biography, not a substance handbook and not a set of instructions. The *Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide* of 1976 appears only as a bibliographic object; its effect is examined, its content is not reproduced, not even paraphrased. Clinical dose figures appear only as parameters of published study protocols.

Origin and state. The chapters derive from the main work and the sub-papers U1-U11; Appendix A resolves the correspondence. The checks run to the state of October 2026. The book is not peer-reviewed. Which statements are evidenced is shown in the text itself: [G] marks primary-sourced statements, [S] secondary-sourced ones, [O] open ones. Where the book could not check something, it says so, and Chapter 20 collects the open points.

Reading guide

Three reading routes.

Route	For whom	Chapters
Short route	Those who want the argument in one pass	Key findings, 5, 14, 15, 18, 21
Full route	Those who want to follow the argument in detail	1, 5, 15, 20, 21

Discipline route	Those who represent a discipline and look for its verdict	see table below
Method route	Those who want to adopt the testing procedure	1, 2, 5, 9, 15, 19, 21

Discipline route. The discipline cascade (Chapter 6) runs fourteen axes; the case studies deepen them.

Discipline	Chapter 6	Deepening
Ethnobotany, mycology	6.1	12
Palaeoanthropology	6.2	8
Neuroscience, pharmacology	6.3	9, 13
Clinical psychiatry	6.4	13, 19
Religious studies, research on esotericism	6.5	9, 16
Philosophy of science	6.6	7, 15, 21
Linguistics	6.7	9
Mathematics	6.8	7
Cultural and media studies	6.9	16
Law, drug policy	6.10	10, 13
Economics	6.11	13
Ethnology, ethics	6.12	12
Sociology of knowledge	6.13	16
Biological-evolutionary analogies	6.14	8

Signs and abbreviations.

Abbreviation	Meaning
Z1-Z4	the four validity zones (Chapter 5): held, reformulated, refuted, undecidable
Z0-Z5 in Chapter 3	the six turning points of the work's history. They have nothing to do with the validity zones; Chapter 3 carries a note of its own
B1-B20	the twenty tested core claims (table in 5.2)
O1-O13	open points (Chapter 20)
E1, E2, E3	the three own contributions: validity scheme, reversal of disposition, hypothesis generator
[G] [S] [O]	primary-sourced, secondary-sourced, open
U1-U11	identifiers of the individual investigations from which Chapters 4, 7-10, 12, 13, 15-17 and 19 derive

References in the text that point, in the source, to the Roman-numbered parts of the main work have been converted to the chapter numbers of this book. References such as “U9 §5” stand; the section number of the individual investigation is the subnumber of the chapter (U9 §5 is in 19.5). Appendix A gives the assignment.

“Main work”, “this paper”. The substantive texts are carried over unchanged. Where they speak of the “main work”, “this paper” or “this work”, the respective source is meant; Appendix A names it for each chapter.

Chapter apparatus. Each chapter opens with a box “In this chapter” and closes with key statements, review questions and a transfer task. The apparatus belongs to the book, not to the source; the substantive texts between them are unchanged.

The Key Findings at a Glance

The overview below summarises the findings and points to where they are established and qualified. It does not replace reading the chapters: the qualifications are there.

No.	Finding	Kind	Chapter
1	Of twenty tested core claims, five are held, five reformulated, seven refuted and four undecidable. The selection of the twenty is a stipulation; the shares are to be read as structure, not as measurement.	Test finding	5
2	For none of the five held positions is McKenna the originator.	Test finding	5

	McKenna the originator.		
3	The same statements that mostly fail as answers mostly hit as questions: seven of nine questions are now an object of research or recognisably accessible.	Own contribution E3	14
4	E3 is plausible and not evidenced as long as the reception path (condition 2) has not been tested. The lexical inheritance is quantified (about 8% of category assignments in the largest sample); the strong form remains untested.	Open test	15, 17
5	The Timewave is formally refuted, in the non-repairable form: missing justification, not a calculation error.	Test finding	7
6	The Stoned Ape thesis loses its explanandum; the visual-acuity claim (B2) stays refuted and is now primary-sourced.	Test finding	8, 19
7	The entity claim (B6) splits into an undecidable and a confirmed half. McKenna is the originator of the vocabulary, not of the finding.	Test finding	9
8	The Grower's Guide of 1976 is a drug-policy event without a drug-policy intention; three asymmetries can be named.	Test finding	10
9	Disposition over a substance practice can diffuse and re-concentrate without risk following; the decoupling is a datable event (13 May 1957).	Own contribution E2	11
10	Only mechanisms that return disposition address the asymmetry towards the communities of origin; there is no disposition-neutral option.	Test finding	12
11	Re-concentration can be shown in property rights and approval routes. The derivation E2-c had to be corrected: the category of those affected is not missing, it is without consequence.	Test finding, correction	13, 19
12	Reception is a media transformation: each stage removes modality. McKenna's self-correction of 1996 did not reach its audience because it changed medium.	Test finding	3, 16
13	The printed corpus comprises eight titles; the solely authored theoretical prose consists of three books within about 25 months. The audio corpus is larger by orders of magnitude and largely unprocessed.	Test finding	4
14	The printed corpus has five lines of continuation: two have died out (where an answer stood), one is alive and peer-reviewed (where a question stood).	Test finding	17
15	Of four re-checks, one corrected the work, two sharpened it, and one made a limit of testability visible.	Check report	19

Abstract

Terence McKenna (1946–2000) left a body of work that cannot be saved as a theoretical corpus and has aged well as a research agenda. This work separates the two. It audits twenty central claims against the state of knowledge in 2026, sorts them into a four-zone validity scheme, and finds that the hit rate on *answers* is low while the hit rate on *questions* is high. From this follows the principal contribution E3 — McKenna is to be treated historically as a

hypothesis generator, not as a theorist, and the case establishes a category of its own: the productive false, with three admission conditions that prevent the category from becoming a licence.

The second contribution E2 anchors the case in the master theorem FORSCH-0083. Examining the disposition over psilocybin practice yields a four-phase arc with a datable beginning. In **Phase 0** (until 1955), disposition and risk are coupled in Mazatec healing practice: whoever disposes over the practice also bears its consequences. The decoupling is not a natural state but an event — R. Gordon Wasson’s publication in *Life* of 13 May 1957 and its consequences for María Sabina, who bore the costs of a disposition she no longer held. Thereafter disposition moves twice more — diffusion from 1976, re-concentration from around 2000 — without risk following either movement. Thesis E2: **disposition can diffuse and re-concentrate without risk following either movement; risk is the inert term in both directions**. McKenna marks the turning point of the diffusion phase, not as its cause but as its most visible carrier — and as the carrier of an internal tension, because he distributed disposition while accumulating interpretive authority.

The book brings together the main work and eleven individual investigations and is anchored as a domain instance under FORSCH-0083. It delimits itself explicitly from the substance work `forsch-0361`: there the substance, here the person, the work and the history of science.

Contents of the full edition

Chapter	Title
1	Task, Delimitation, Method
2	Sources
3	Outline of the work’s history
4	The Work Itself: Catalogue and Proportions
5	The four-zone validity scheme (E1)
6	The disciplinary cascade
7	The Half Twist: Formal Analysis and Error Diagnosis of the Timewave
8	The Ape That Does Not Stand: Stoned Ape as a Palaeoanthropological Control
9	From Anecdote to Measurand: Entity Encounter as a Research Object
10	1976: A Manual as a Drug-Policy Event
11	p/6 anchoring (E2): the reversal of disposition
12	Without Return: Indigenous Sources, Appropriation, Benefit Sharing
13	The Re-concentrated Disposition: Psychedelics Economy 2000–2026
14	The hypothesis generator (E3)
15	The Productive False: A Philosophy of Science of the Hypothesis Generator
16	Archaic Revival and the Second Career: Rave, Sampling, Podcast
17	What Was Built on It: Lines of Continuation
18	Rejected material and source criticism
19	Check Report: Four Open Points Worked
20	Open points and research gaps
21	What Can Be Transferred

Section A — The Subject

Chapter 1 — Task, Delimitation, Method

Source: Main work v1.3, Part I

In this chapter. The chapter fixes what is examined and what is not. For a predominantly oral body of work, completeness can only be achieved as a record of all types of claim and all paths of effect; the scope is built on that. - You can follow the scope of the commission and the delimitation. - You know the protective logic and the six methodological principles.

1.1 Task

Complete transdisciplinary treatment of Terence McKenna’s work and effect: all writings, lectures, positions and reception strands; audit against the state of research; reinterpretation; linkage into the existing body of work.

The task contains a difficulty that must be named before any substantive work. “Complete treatment” presupposes a delimited object. McKenna’s work is not delimited: it consists predominantly of lectures circulating in varying, mostly unedited versions, and its effect consists to a considerable extent of material cut from those lectures after his death and reassembled. Completeness here is therefore not achievable as coverage of all utterances, only as coverage of all *types of claim* and all *paths of effect*. That is precisely the cut of this work.

1.2 Delimitation against existing works

Work	Object	Delimitation from this work
forsch-0361 (psilocybin reference book)	Substance: pharmacology, clinic, botany	There the substance, here the person, the work, the history of science. No duplicated content; U3 and U6 refer to 0361 rather than repeat it.
struktur-des-undergrunds (Orig. 0272)	Free tekno, underground rave, psychedelics as a research field	There the scene and the enclosure cycle, here the individual figure. U5 is the seam (McKenna’s rave reception).
huxley-vollwerk (PROV0415)	Aldous Huxley, psychedelic strand included	Parallel author study, different generation and reception situation. Comparability is an open point (O10), not a duplication.
FORSCH-0083	p/5 master theorem	This work is a domain instance, not a competing frame.
FORSCH-0199 (consecration asymmetry)	Valorisation from below	Connection in U5: McKenna’s posthumous consecration through podcast culture.
alpine-ethnopharmakologie	Regional ethnopharmacology with a psychoactive strand	Methodologically related (handling of transmitted knowledge), geographically and materially separate.

1.3 Protective logic (HART)

The *Magic Mushroom Grower’s Guide* (1976) is here an **object of analysis, never a source of procedure**. No cultivation, dosing or preparation information is reproduced, reported or reconstructed — not in paraphrase, not in historicising form. What is analysed is solely the *fact* of publication, its timing, its mode of distribution and its effect on the disposition situation.

Clinical dose figures appear only as trial parameters within the context of published protocols — as a description of what a licensing study examined, not as instruction. The same separation applies to the entity literature: what is described is what surveys have established about the frequency and structure of experiences, not how such experiences might be brought about.

The protective logic has a consequence for the architecture: U4, the sub-paper on the Grower’s Guide, is the only one working exclusively through effect and reception without opening its object. This is a restriction the paper can carry, because its question — what happens when production knowledge becomes free — does not require the content of that knowledge.

1.4 Method

1. Primary corpus before secondary literature. With McKenna, lectures are a primary source with a status of their own: most of the work is oral and exists in varying versions. Every attribution names the carrier medium and the version problem.

2. Validity audit before interpretation. Every claim is classified for testability before it is assessed on content. The order is not arbitrary: whoever interprets first will find, for every claim, a reading under which it holds.

3. Evidence grades. [G] primary-sourced (DOI/PMID/archive reference), [S] secondary-sourced, [O] open — marked in running text. The marking is not a formality: for an object whose reception consists almost entirely of unsourced claims, the evidence grade is the single most important piece of information in any sentence.

4. Biological and evolutionary analogies are audited explicitly. They are central in McKenna and simultaneously the main source of his fallacies; Chapter 6.14 treats them separately.

5. No rescue, no demolition. Both stances are over-represented in the literature, and neither explains the most interesting feature of the case: the asymmetry between the quality of the questions and the quality of the answers.

6. Priority is audited alongside. For every held claim, the question is asked whether McKenna was originator,

transmitter or merely describer. The reception skips this question systematically, and it decides the work’s place in the history of science.

1.5 Structure of the book

Section A (Chapters 1–4) fixes the subject: scope and method, sources, history of the work, catalogue of works. Section B develops the testing frame (Chapter 5, E1) and runs it through fourteen disciplines (Chapter 6). Section C tests four cases: Timewave, Stoned Ape, entity encounter, the Grower’s Guide. Section D anchors the case in the distribution of disposition and risk (Chapter 11, E2) and deepens it on indigenous sources and on the psychedelic economy. Section E founds the hypothesis-generator thesis (Chapter 14, E3) and the category of the productively false (Chapter 15). Section F follows reception and lines of continuation. Section G rejects what is to be rejected, reports on the re-check and lists the open points. Chapter 21 summarises the procedure. The appendices contain the concordance, chronology, glossary, sources, notes and disclosure, and the index.

Key statements. - Testing validity comes before interpretation, because for any claim a reading can be found under which it holds. - The evidence grade [G]/[S]/[O] is the most important single piece of information in every sentence for this subject. - Neither rehabilitation nor dismantling; priority (originator, mediator, describer) is checked as well.

Review questions. 1. Why is the order “test first, then interpret” not arbitrary? 2. How does this book differ from the substance work, and where is the seam? 3. Why does the Grower’s Guide appear only as a bibliographic object?

Transfer. Choose a contested body of theory in your field. How much of it is handed down orally or in changing versions, and what does that mean for the notion of completeness?

Section B — The Testing Frame

Chapter 5 — The four-zone validity scheme (E1)

Source: Main work v1.3, Part IV

In this chapter. The chapter develops the four-zone validity scheme (E1) and applies it to twenty core claims. It is the methodological centre of the book. - You can define each zone and name its consequence. - You can read the validity table and state its three qualifications.

5.1 Why a separate scheme is required

The existing literature works with a two-valued logic — “confirmed” or “refuted” — that does not fit McKenna’s corpus. A substantial share of the claims is formulated such that neither value can be assigned: no procedure can be stated whose outcome would decide the claim.

The obvious response to this finding is, in the literature, the wrong one in both directions. The defending side treats untestability as protection: what cannot be refuted remains “within the realm of the possible”. The prosecuting side treats untestability as refutation: what is not testable is thereby settled. Both are wrong. **Undecidability is a defect of the formulation, neither a shield against testing nor a substitute for it.**

The scheme keeps the four possible situations apart and assigns each a consequence. It is not a rating scale — Zone 1 is not “better” than Zone 4 — but an order of jurisdiction: it states which discipline is responsible for which claim, and what is to be done with it.

Zone	Definition	Consequence
Z1 HELD	Claim is testably formulated and was supported by later research	Connectable; clarify priority (originator, transmitter or describer?)
Z2 REFORMULATED	The core holds, the given formulation does not	Reconstruction task: produce a testable version, keep attribution honest
Z3 REFUTED	Testably formulated and falsified — empirically or formally	Closed; analyse as a source of error, do not continue as an open question
Z4 UNDECIDABLE	Not formulated such that a test procedure could be stated	No scientific status. Possible literary, heuristic or religious status — which must be named, not assumed

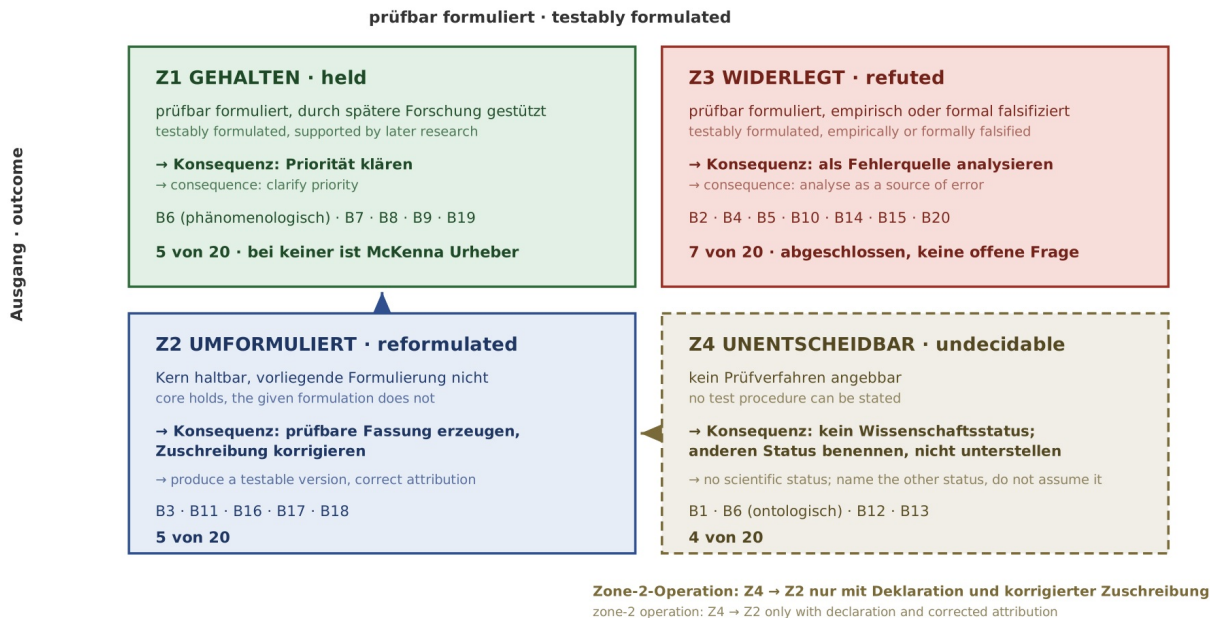
Two rules of application. **First:** a claim may be Zone 3 in one reading and Zone 4 in another. In that case it is carried twice (as with B1 and B6), not resolved into the more favourable reading. **Second:** the transition from Zone 4 to Zone

2 is the most productive operation of the scheme and simultaneously the most dangerous. It consists in turning an untestable formulation into a testable one. It is admissible only if the reformulation is declared as such and the attribution corrected: the testable version is no longer McKenna’s claim but one derived from it.

Abb. 2 — Das Vier-Zonen-Geltungsschema (E1)

Fig. 2 — The four-zone validity scheme (E1)

Zwei Achsen entscheiden, nicht eine: erst Prüfbarkeit, dann Ausgang der Prüfung.
Two axes decide, not one: testability first, then the outcome of the test.



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Fig. 1 — The four-zone validity scheme (E1) with the assignment of all twenty core claims.

5.2 Validity table — twenty core claims

The selection follows the criterion “actually effective in the reception”, not “held central by McKenna”. Reason: the object of this work is work *and* effect; a selection by the author’s self-assessment would miss the second half.

#	Claim	Principal locus	Zone	Finding
B1	Psilocybin catalysed hominid cognition (“Stoned Ape”)	<i>Food of the Gods</i> 1992	Z4→Z3	In the given version no test procedure can be stated; in partial versions made testable, no palaeoanthropological evidence. The inheritance argument carries a Lamarckian residue. Audit in U2.
B2	Low-dose psilocybin sharpens vision and thereby hunting success	<i>Food of the Gods</i> 1992, citing Fischer et al. (1970)	Z3	The cited research programme measures no visual acuity. Hill & Fischer (1971) report that ergotropic arousal-inducing drugs including psilocybin lower spatial distortion thresholds and interfere with counter-adaptation to optical distortion — the direction runs against the claim. [G] The extrapolation from laboratory finding to hunting success under field conditions is additionally unsupported. Check report U9 §3.
B3	Psilocybin raises activity in language-forming areas and drugs language emergence	<i>Food of the Gods</i>	Z2	The localisation claim does not hold in this form. Reformulable core:

	proved language emergence			Reformulable core: psychedelics measurably alter semantic network activation. The evolutionary conclusion does not follow.
B4	Time has a fractal novelty structure; zero point 21 Dec 2012	<i>The Invisible Landscape</i> 1975 / TWZ software	Z3	Watkins 1996: the construction contains an unjustified “half twist”; without justification the curve is not what McKenna claims of it. Date passed. McKenna published the objection himself. [G]
B5	The King Wen sequence of the I Ching encodes a structure of time	<i>The Invisible Landscape</i>	Z3	Refuted jointly with B4: the derivation from the sequence is not compelling but chosen.
B6	DMT entities (“machine elves”) exist autonomously	<i>True Hallucinations</i> , lectures	Z4 (ontological) / Z1 (phenomenological)	The existence claim is undecidable. The phenomenological claim — consistent, interpersonally similar, non-arbitrary experiences — is confirmed: Davis et al. 2020, n=2,561. [G] The cleanest separation in the corpus and the model for handling zone 4 generally.
B7	The experience durably alters fundamental ontological convictions	Lectures	Z1	Confirmed: Davis et al. 2020 documents a marked shift in self-identification as atheist before/after; Griffiths et al. 2019 adds a cross- substance comparison. [G] Priority: McKenna described, he did not demonstrate.
B8	Set and setting determine the effect	Lectures, throughout	Z1	Established — but not McKenna’s contribution. Taken over from the Leary/Zinberg strand. A standard error of the reception.
B9	Psilocybin has therapeutic potential in depression	Implicit, lectures	Z1	Confirmed at phase 3 level: COMP005 (n=258 dosed) and COMP006 (25 mg n=296 / 10 mg n=142 / 1 mg n=143) both met the primary endpoint on MADRS; COMP006 showed −3.8 points for 25 mg versus 1 mg (p<0.001), effect through at least 26 weeks. [G] Priority: McKenna did not show this, he asserted it.
B10	Endogenous DMT explains dreaming, near-death experience and mysticism	With Strassman, lectures	Z3/Z4	The pharmacological premise is doubtful: it is not established that endogenous DMT occurs at concentrations sufficient to produce effects. [S]
B11	Modernity is returning to archaic forms of consciousness (“Archaic Revival”)	<i>The Archaic Revival</i> 1991	Z2	Partly confirmed as a diagnosis of the period — rave, neoshamanism, the psychedelic renaissance. Useless as theory: no criterion could make the diagnosis fail. Reconstruction in U5.
B12	Culture is an operating system and hackable through language	Lectures	Z4	Metaphor without test procedure. Heuristically productive, theoretically empty. The case shows how a good metaphor acquires theoretical status by stealth.

B13	Language becomes synaesthetically visible under DMT	<i>True Hallucinations</i>	Z4	Experience report. Legitimate as such; not testable as a claim about language.
B14	Psilocybin mushrooms are of panspermic origin	<i>Food of the Gods</i> , marked speculative	Z3	No evidence; fungal evolution is documented as terrestrial. McKenna marked the claim as speculation himself — the reception removed the marking.
B15	Loss of the mushroom cult produced patriarchy and dominance culture	<i>Food of the Gods</i>	Z3	Rests on an anthropological state of research (the Gimbutas/Eisler strand) that is no longer carried. Additional counter-examples: societies with ritualised psychedelic use and pronounced practices of violence. [S]
B16	Psychedelics dissolve loyalty to cultural models and are therefore politically subversive	Lectures	Z2	Partly operationalisable: associations between use and nature relatedness or value orientations are described; the causal direction is open (self-selection not excluded). [O]
B17	Institutionalisation and commercialisation would neutralise psychedelics	Lectures	Z2	Prognostically the most robust point in the work. Partly realised: proprietary formulations, protocol IP, clinical gatekeeping. No evidence of “neutralisation”, but clear evidence of a shift in disposition — the connection point for E2.
B18	Widespread cultivation knowledge withdraws the substance from state control	Practice 1976, never formulated as a thesis	Z2	Partly realised empirically, with an unnoticed side effect: disposition diffused, risk did not. Core finding E2.
B19	No gurus, no authorities, “find the others”	Lectures, throughout	Z1 (as a position)	The position is consistently documented. Its effect contradicts it: McKenna became an authority, against his own programme. This tension is analysable, not resolvable.
B20	Novelty increases monotonically over the course of history	TWZ, lectures	Z3	Refuted with B4/B5; in addition, the historical calibration rests on retrospective pattern assignment to selected dates.

5.3 Distribution

Zone	Count	Share	Claims
Z1 held	5	25 %	B6 (phenomenological), B7, B8, B9, B19
Z2 reformulated	5	25 %	B3, B11, B16, B17, B18
Z3 refuted	7	35 %	B2, B4, B5, B10, B14, B15, B20
Z4 undecidable	4	20 %	B1, B6 (ontological), B12, B13

5.4 What the table shows and what it does not deliver

The principal finding lies not in the distribution but in the priority column. Of the five Z1 positions, McKenna is the originator of **none**:

- **B6** (phenomenological): he described and named the experience. Establishing its consistency is an achievement of the survey, not of the description.
- **B7**: described, not explained and not demonstrated.
- **B8**: taken over from an older strand.

- **B9:** asserted, not demonstrated — it was demonstrated in a study design he would have rejected.
- **B19:** a stance, not a finding.

That is the finding of the table, and it is more uncomfortable than any individual refutation. As a theorist McKenna delivers nothing that survives. The question that follows, and that Chapter 14 addresses, is: why then does a work continue to act whose every tenable position came from others?

Three limitations must be marked hard.

First, the selection of the twenty claims is a decision. A different cut would yield a different distribution; in particular the Zone-4 share could be raised arbitrarily by finer subdivision of the lecture material. The percentages in 5.3 are therefore to be read as structure, not as measurement.

Second, the zone assignment for oral sources depends on the version problem (2.2). A different version of the same statement can force a different zone. Affected: B7, B12, B13, B16, B19 — five of twenty.

Third, the table makes no statement about the quality of the underlying *questions*. It assesses answers. Precisely there lies its limit, and from that limit Chapter 14 arises.

Key statements. - The zones are an order of competence, not a scale of value: Z1 is not “better” than Z4. - Undecidability is a defect of formulation, neither protection from testing nor a substitute for it. - For none of the five held positions is McKenna the originator.

Review questions. 1. Why are B1 and B6 carried twice instead of being resolved into the more favourable reading? 2. Under what condition is the move from zone 4 to zone 2 permissible? 3. How would the distribution change with a different selection of claims, and what follows for the percentages?

Transfer. Assign five central statements of another author to the four zones and mark those whose assignment depends on the version.

Section E — The Hypothesis Generator

Chapter 15 — The Productive False: A Philosophy of Science of the Hypothesis Generator

Source: U8 v1.2

In this chapter. The philosophy of science of the hypothesis generator: the chapter founds the category of the productively false, fixes its three conditions and delimits it from four neighbouring categories. - You can apply the three conditions and state which one is met in the case.

15.1 The gap

The demarcation debate is cut to theories and research programmes. It has no tool for persons who run both at once — a degenerating programme and an agenda that proves progressive.

The McKenna case supplies exactly that constellation. The Timewave is a degenerating programme (U1). The entity question, the clinical question and the critique of institutionalisation are questions that have proved viable (U3, U6).

The gap is not that someone does both. People are inconsistent. The gap is that the available categories force a classification of the person as a whole — and every classification then renders the other half invisible.

15.2 The two standard errors

Approach	Result	What becomes invisible
Treat as theorist	Uniformly negative verdict, correctly grounded	Why the work continues to act
Treat as visionary	Effect explained	The claims escape testing

Both approaches are represented in the literature, and both are not wrong but incomplete. They share a presupposition: that the question quality and answer quality of a work coincide.

That presupposition is precisely what fails in the McKenna case. The main work’s validity table shows 55 % of

answers not holding; the question list shows 78 % of questions viable. The difference is this paper's object.

15.3 The category

A claim is **productively false** if it is itself refuted or undecidable, but marks a testable question with sufficient precision that the later testing would have begun later or not at all without it.

Without conditions this would be a licence. Every refuted claim could be ennobled retrospectively, because for any claim a neighbouring question can be found that somebody later worked on.

15.4 The three conditions

Condition 1 — Demonstrable marking performance. The question must not have been asked before, or not in this form.

Form of test: state of the literature before the point in question. Negative proofs are weak but feasible.

In the case:

Claim	Condition 1	Reason
B6 entities	met	Before McKenna there were reports but no vocabulary establishing comparability
B17 institutionalisation	met	The question of the consequences of co-optation had not been posed in this field
B8 set and setting	not met	Taken over from the Leary/Zinberg strand
B9 depression	not met	The question was posed in the research of the 1950s and 60s and was interrupted by criminalisation, not by ignorance

The last row matters and is skipped in benevolent accounts. McKenna did not mark the clinical question. It was marked and then prohibited.

Condition 2 — Demonstrable reception path. There must be a documentable connection to the later research, not mere temporal succession.

Form of test: citation trace, questionnaire wording, participant vocabulary, interviews with the researchers.

In the case: **[O] open.** U3 named the point of attack: the 2020 survey works with a vocabulary whose provenance is testable. Two of the four checks are feasible with existing material and have not been performed.

That is why E3 is carried in the main work as plausible and not as evidenced. This paper does not change that; it makes the test feasible.

Condition 3 — Cost balance stated openly. The misallocation of attention produced by the false claim must be counted in.

In the case: partly achievable and reliable on one side only.

Cost item	Estimable?
Circulation volume of the Z3/Z4 claims	yes — publication, access and sampling figures
Attention that accrued to the Timewave	yes, approximately
Work not done as a result	no
Reputational cost to the questions bound up with the answers	partly

The third row is structurally unmeasurable. The balance therefore remains one-sided: the costs are more visible than the forgone yield. This is to be stated, not smoothed over.

The fourth row deserves its own sentence. Whoever embeds a viable question in an untenable answer damages the question. Part of the delay in entity research is likely traceable to the question having stood in one work with the Timewave.

15.5 Delimitation against neighbouring categories

Category	Difference from the productively false
Fruitful error	Denotes a false <i>theory</i> that produced correct <i>results</i> . Here the claim

	produces no results but a question
Heuristic	Denotes a procedure consciously adopted as an aid. Here the claim is meant seriously
Precursorship	Denotes an incomplete correct statement. Here the statement is false, not incomplete
Pseudoscience	Denotes a claim that avoids testing. The category is compatible with it: a claim can be pseudoscientific <i>and</i> productively false

The last row is the actual gain. **Productively false is neither a rescue nor a counter-concept to pseudoscience.** Both attributions can apply to the same claim, because they judge different things: one the readiness to be tested, the other the marking performance.

15.6 What the category does not do

It does not normalise. From “productively false” no recommendation follows to claim without evidence. A hypothesis generator without testing discipline produces as many unusable as usable questions and supplies no criterion for distinguishing them. The distinction is made only by the research he does not conduct.

It applies only retrospectively. Whether a claim is productively false is decided by a reception that does not exist at the time of the claim. Nobody can claim to be productively false right now.

It does not exonerate the author. Whoever is praised in hindsight for the usable questions is praised with knowledge he himself neither had nor wished to obtain.

15.7 Reach

The category is not made for McKenna. It describes a position that occurs more often than the demarcation debate suggests: authors whose claims do not hold and whose questions endure.

The conditions are formulated so as to be testable on other cases. Candidate fields, without prejudging the outcome: speculative cosmology, early parapsychology, pre-genetic theories of inheritance, techno-utopian publicism.

Condition 2 is the bottleneck and is meant to be. It demands a documented path, not a plausible narrative. Most candidates will fail on it, and that is the condition’s function.

15.8 The use

The use lies in the jurisdiction question. The category permits both at once: full testing of the claims and serious examination of the effect. It does not force a choice between a uniformly negative verdict that fails to explain the effect and an appreciation that suspends the testing.

For the history of science this means: a work can fail the validity audit and count in the history of effects, without either judgement having to be revised.

15.9 Result

- The demarcation debate has no tool for persons with a mixed balance; the category closes that gap.
- It is secured against misuse by three conditions.
- In the McKenna case condition 1 is met for two of four examined claims, condition 2 is open, condition 3 reliable on one side only.
- The category is compatible with “pseudoscience” and is not a rescue.
- It applies only retrospectively and exonerates nobody.
- **E3 therefore remains a plausible, not an evidenced thesis until condition 2 has been tested.** That is the most honest sentence of the work as a whole and remains its closing sentence.

15.10 Open points

ID	Point	Status
U8-01	Test condition 2: citation trace, questionnaire wording, participant vocabulary, interviews	weak form tested, unsupported and quantified , U9 §6 and U11 §5: the lexical inheritance stands at 8% [G]. The strong form — frame imprinting rather than word imprinting — remains untestable with existing data → U9-04
U8-02	Secure condition 1 for B6 and B17 through the state of the literature before 1990	[O]
U8-03	Cost balance: estimate the circulation volume of the Z3/Z4 claims	[O]

U8-O4	Test the category on at least one case outside the psychedelics field	[O]
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Key statements. - The demarcation debate has no tool for persons with a mixed record; the category closes this gap. - Three conditions secure it against misuse: marking achievement, reception path, cost account. Condition 2 is the bottleneck. - In the case: condition 1 is met for two of four tested claims, condition 2 is open, condition 3 is reliable on one side only. E3 thus remains plausible, not evidenced.

Review questions. 1. Why does B9 (depression) not meet condition 1 although the question was later researched? 2. What does condition 2 demand, and why do most candidates fail at it? 3. Which cost items can be estimated, which cannot?

Transfer. Test a candidate from the fields named in 15.7 (speculative cosmology, early parapsychology, pre-genetic theories of heredity, techno-utopian publicism) against the three conditions. Where does it fail?

Appendix E — Notes and Disclosure

State. Edition 1.0 of 12 October 2026. Identifier FORSCH-PROV0462 is provisional; final assignment takes place locally against the register. The slug `bote-und-botschaft` is the stable identifier.

Review. The book is not peer-reviewed. It rests on source work with the references given in the bibliography; the evidence grade is stated in the text.

Disclosure. The work is privately funded and was produced without institutional affiliation. It was developed with AI assistance; the author is responsible for the content. Conflicts of interest of the sources used (COMP360 sponsor, Marks & Cohen 2022, Magar et al. 2026) are noted in Appendix D.

Protective note. No cultivation, dosage or preparation instructions. No armament, weapons or defence application. Clinical figures appear only as parameters of published study protocols.

No advice. The book is neither medical nor legal advice. Anyone making decisions about health or legal questions needs competent bodies for that.

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