

Spiritual AF Sundays with The Mystic Geek

Season 1, Episode 11

Spirituality, Polarization, and the Pursuit of Truth: Navigating Politics in the Modern Era

Transcript

Opening

Jessica K: Have you ever wondered how spirituality and politics are interconnected or why we become so polarized by the media? And this week's episode of Spiritual AF Sundays, we will bring on Marc Wendt, Men's Wisdom Coach and Transformation Agent Provocateur, to explore these questions and more as we dive into the complex world of politics and belief systems.

We'll look at how breaking free from social conditioning can help us see things in a new light and why modern political discourse often falls short of productive debate. And speaking of debate, we'll discuss the difference between healthy debate and toxic arguing. Perhaps most importantly, we'll delve into the concept of truth: what it is, how it's defined, and whether it can be both objective and relative simultaneously.

And to wrap things up, we'll introduce you to Democracy 2.0, a new approach to democracy that could revolutionize our thoughts on politics.

So join us for an eye-opening conversation on spirituality, politics, and everything. It's time to sit back in your favorite chair, get your favorite beverage, and get ready for this

episode of Spiritual AF Sundays, Spirituality, Polarization, and the Pursuit of Truth:
Navigating Politics in the Modern Era.

[Opening Credits]

Guest Introduction

Jessica K: And welcome back, listeners. Today we have Mark Wendt here to talk about spiritual evolution. Glad to have you here, Mark.

Marc: It's great to be here.

Jessica K: All right. Well, my listeners are curious. Please tell us more about yourself.

Marc: Yeah. So I am a child of the sixties. I am a personal coach, a wisdom coach. I have been through a lot of transformation and, a lot of societal transformation, a lot of spiritual growth. My father was a student of theology before he met my mother. Then after his professional life, he continued to develop deeply into all of the various spiritual disciplines, researching many different things as well as the occult. I have a natural affinity and curiosity about human nature and what drives us.

The Connection Between Spirituality & Politics

Jessica K: And thanks for sharing that. When we first initially talked and connected, one of the things that came up was the topic of spirituality and politics. Some people may think they're opposites, and others may think they may intertwine. How do you see those two topics intersecting?

Marc: Well, it's a human story ultimately, right? We are all human beings trying to get through this thing called life together.

The intersection of spirituality and politics is the intersection of human challenges. How do we solve problems? What are the systems we use? What are the cultural frameworks? What are the structures we use?

Politics is just a reflection of various systems that we've tried to implement over the years, and in America, we have a particularly good one, albeit it is flawed.

Spirituality is who we are beyond the physical. It's a way to describe the science of something we don't have science really tuned into yet. So we use that word to describe phenomena and experiences and types of thinking that we don't have a really solid basis to discover other than philosophy, which is the language we tend to use in spirituality is philosophy.

Ultimately, life and human endeavor are a discovery process, and one of the critical things about scientific exploration and theories is the discovery process. And so we're humans discovering who we are.

Jessica K: Now you mentioned that the United States has a sound system going, albeit it needs to be revised. What are your thoughts about the current political climate within the United States?

Marc: We are not doing a really good job of helping each other. That's something that's conditioned; we're conditioned to. It's a context that's being woven by people that benefit from that.

Politics is another symptom of that. The economic disparities are symptoms of what amounts to an attempted control matrix. There's a lot of people who wield power who don't wanna lose power.

A democratic republic, at its root, has the premise that the majority rules a good way to do things. If we all have a say, we'll probably come up with the best of ideas and how to go forward, but inherent in the way that the founding fathers built the system is a mistrust of the majority, which is why we needed representative government.

We needed handlers to make the right decision in case we got a little too passionate. Unfortunately, now, getting those handlers elected involves poking at all of our passions and making us drive into how we identify with certain teams, which is just a way to identify with an ideology.

Identity politics is one way I've heard it said, but it's really about the influence of propagandists and others to force us into divided camps so that we're easier to maneuver and manipulate.

Jessica K: I'm in agreement on that part. It feels like it's either or. It's like you're either left, or you're right, you're a Democrat or Republican, and if you're like in the middle, then both sides scorn you.

Marc: It's a very interesting thing because the whole idea of cancel culture and the whole idea of othering people, it's really antithetical to what we call our country, the United States.

The basic premise was that we were supposed to be able to have our differences and live peacefully amongst ourselves. We were gonna be able to do that in a way that was conducive to getting along and making decisions. The ballot is better than the bullet on one level, right?

Media, entertainment, and technology have now made the means of mind control propaganda much more powerful. And so more and more money is poured into winning elections by creating divisive issues and polarizing people, and it's not in everyone's self-interest.

These issues don't feed us, and our body politic is sick of this division and this poison of our discourse. Our discourse is about othering people and poisoning people instead of finding the common human things that are true.

We all want real safety for our kids. We'd all like schools to be safe and well-funded and do a good job of educating each other, and we'd like to have our streets, our highways and our sewer systems, and our water systems are top-notch and well put together.

Ultimately that's the function of government. But too often, it's about who will control the purse strings, who will control the way things are done, and what, you know, where the ideological divisions are.

How Polarization Happens

In the best possible world, we would have differences that would break down, perhaps along spiritual ideologies.

For instance, the abortion issue would still be here even if we had a perfect democracy, right? If democracy were perfect, we would still be divided about this spiritual issue because people have differences of opinion about whether or not that's something that we should be doing with uteruses.

My take on it is very libertarian. Sovereignty is real. People should get to do whatever they need to, and society should be constructed around mutual beneficial beliefs.

Where I live in California, abortion's legal. In other places in the country, it's not legal.

I'm not okay with that, but that's how our system is structured. And if you don't want that happening in the community, you should be able to construct your community in a way that can be true for you if that's what everyone agrees to.

The problem is this is being done from a top-down dictatorial level. If it were about freedom of choice, we'd be a lot less critical of each other, and more tolerant of each other. And I'm particularly not fond of Christians who want to espouse these ideals. And at the same time, they're ready to persecute women who are having difficulty in their lives because of what's happening with their reproductive system.

Jessica K: It's fascinating that when we're looking at the abortion issue, a lot of the people who are anti-abortion, when you start asking them about what do we do after the child's born? How do we make sure the child's fed? How do we make sure the child's educated? How do we support the family, that you just forced to have happen? They try to deflect or like them. I'm not paying my taxes for that child or that woman's "mistake".

It's fascinating to see those who wanna force their beliefs on other people, but do not wanna be held accountable for the consequences of those beliefs.

Marc: This is a perfect example of why polarization happens. It's also one of the key areas where spiritual evolution occurs. How we have these discussions with each other is the key to how we live together and evolve spiritually through this process of arriving at mutually beneficial peace.

As we bump into these conflicts with each other, we have to do the inner work to evolve ourselves and evolve our relationship with creation. However, you might view that. Whether you want to view that through a more natural science-based sort of approach, or if you want to see that through the lens of some other kind of organized spiritual religion. Some set of practices or some set of beliefs.

I'm a white person raised in America, and so the Christian ethos permeates my lifestyle and permeates where I live, but because I was raised in the counterculture in the sixties in Berkeley, I have access to a whole lot wider system of beliefs, and that informs this kind of, I don't want to say Libertarian because I'm a registered Democrat. On some levels, I am. I believe in self-definition, and this crosses a lot of arenas. This causes a lot of areas.

Breaking Free from Social Conditioning

One of my father's favorite quotes is about Christ. He says that Christ isn't coming to make peace. He's coming with the sword. I find that very interesting, and that's antithetical to my point of view, which is that the idea here is we could find a way where humanity could be more closely connected to what aligns us as opposed to what divides us.

How do we get there? And that was what the American system was supposed to help us do. We're supposed to be able to have the freedom to have religion or freedom from religion. The freedom to identify as whatever party we wish, vote for who we want, and have a business we run ourselves.

That's the ideal, but more and more, we find that system was built on the oppression of other people and the genocide of indigenous populations. And so we can now see behind the veil and what that's forcing us to recognize the illusions that we hold as the foundations of our society.

When a person's foundations are pulled out from under them, which happens in a psychedelic journey, by the way, that's when you find out what they're made of, what are their values when their moorings and the things that they're tethered to that help them align and navigate who they are and what they believe in are sh torn away?

Who, who are they then? And that's a fascinating question.

Jessica K: Yeah, it is. I know it's not just psychedelics, some religious traditions out there that is the crux of their, I don't want to say initiation process because other groups have different terms, but a lot of it is how do you deconstruct who you are when you no longer listen to society's filters.

Marc: Right. When we are free from our conditioning and our social conditioning, who are we? We're all busy trying to figure that out. We're all trying to remember who we are beyond our identities, who we are, and what team we think we're on, right?

Jessica K: Yeah, exactly on that. Now, you brought up a term earlier, and I'm sure some of my listeners heard it, and they're probably either rolling their eyes or getting a little tense. But this term gets used by various groups with different meanings, cancel culture. How would you define "cancel culture"?

Marc: Probably the most potent way I could speak to this question would be to say, as an almost 60-year-old white, cis male, I shouldn't be the one we listen to on this conversation as to what defines culture.

To go beyond that politically correct stance, that informed stance on who I am, where I sit; the privileges I have. It's the idea that the thing that we are afraid of or that isn't in alignment with our value system, needs to be eliminated and needs to be unavailable to anyone because it could threaten us or it could threaten the people we care about. And so that is how I see cancel culture.

How would you define "cancel culture"?

Jessica K: It's along those same lines. So it's the opposite of the echo chamber, where the echo chamber is where we self-select the messages that we hear or what we allow into our bubble.

As for cancel culture, there are two variants of it. If something is genuinely harmful, deplatforming it to protect others.

That's is not how it's often used. It is more like the mob trying to externalize their echo chamber. If they don't like someone's opinions, they will go through any means possible to silence them. It's not just what they call out, which is, okay, this is problematic. It's going through as far as doxing, stalking, all those sorts of things, trolling, and using those negative behaviors or and those harmful behaviors as a means of silencing that external voice versus just saying, "Nope, we're just gonna filter this out in my bubble and say that this doesn't exist, or we're not gonna listen to them."

Marc: This ties back into the earlier discussion because the imposition of our values on others is where it gets problematic. The idea that someone can tell someone what to do with their body, or that someone can tell someone that their form of comedy is not okay and should be removed from the airways it's similar in nature.

Debate vs. Modern Discourse

Now, one could argue the degree of harm, right? That's a reasonable thing to unpack. And that's why our system is designed to be more nuanced and flexible. The idea of freedom of expression is essential because you cannot have informed debate if people are afraid to speak up about what their thoughts are, what they believe, and then what the logic is behind that.

And debate; we used actually to teach it as a practice. There are rules, right? You don't attack people in an ad hominem way. You provide evidence for your claims, right? That's citable, right? Those rules of debate were designed to help us navigate difficult discussions amongst each other.

The problem with our current situation is that we need a clear set of agreed-upon ways to discuss with each other. Now, more and more, it's evolving naturally without the debate rules of the past. If you're a compassionate human, you listen, right? And then you try not to attack the person.

We get into trouble when we start to make it about the person.

Edward Bernays was the first psychological scientist to bring propaganda into the media. And you can see that in the newsreels of the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. One of his "fans," someone who watched him very closely, became Goebbels, who was Hitler's propagandist.

And now, in the 21st century, we see those techniques of psychological manipulation being extremely prevalent across social media, regular media, print media, television, media, film, and media where people are being subconsciously coerced into identity politics and then battle lines, division lines are being sowed.

There are certain small classes of people who, if we figure it out, they are not going to be in power anymore. I'm a big fan of Bob Marley, and one of the things Bob Marley said about cannabis was he said, the reason they don't want us to smoke the weed is because if we smoke the weed, we're all going to think alike.

And if we all think alike and we come together in unity, those people are all going to be pushed out of power.

Coercion and capitalist dominance, those don't work, or they work all too well, and that's the problem, but it would be a better world if people had self-determination and free enterprise, free from vertical monopoly and horizontal market manipulation and all of the horrific aspects of capitalism.

We have a lot of work to do, and we don't have discourse about what the actual potential solutions are. We're all too busy making each other wrong to discuss the solutions. And that's where the keystone is missing.

Because when we look at history, especially in our privileged, American culture, we've always been able to come up with new innovations, a fantastic way to solve our problems. Humans, in general, can do that if we're allowed to, if we can come together under certain conditions, we can create solutions. And there's a lot of people out there creating solutions, and they get less publicity, or they don't get as much thoughtfulness because we're also busy trying to classify which side we're on, et cetera, et cetera.

The Nature of Truth

Jessica K: Oh, Oh yeah. One of the things that have become more prevalent over the last several years is this concept of relativism in truth. Like my truth, like speaking my truth, like honoring someone else's or someone else's view on a situation versus looking at a more objective truth.

Their truth is looking at the world, and they have a view on how the world functions or what is going on, and they say it is their truth when it is their opinion or their perspective, which may be flawed.

The other problem is that when you want to debate it, they see it as an attack on themselves versus an attack on an idea, or a dissection of an idea. Do you feel that that

type of transition we're seeing in society may be contributing to some of the issues that are going on nowadays?

Marc: Absolutely.

And the whole idea of objective truth needs to be revised. You can see that relatively easy if you use critical thinking or have any philosophy education.

I'm gonna go up to 30,000 feet and back thousands of years. There's a book called the Kybalion about seven hermetic principles.

And this book calls up Ancient Egyptian philosophy from a person who is known in Kemet, which is the traditional name for Egypt, as Thoth. He's also known as Hermes Trismegistus. In the Kybalion, one of the principles is that the universe is mental and that all truth is a half-truth.

This is interesting if you bring Einsteinian relativism into our thoughts if the universe is thought. Relativity is physics, I can have a point of view, which feels like truth, but I am observing from my conscious place in the universe, in time, space, and intellect.

What truth is, from my point of view to me, is objective. Only if I'm able to take my own sense of self and put it outside that placement and try to take a different view of what we might call intellectual empathy because empathy's typically feeling in nature. But if we are able to put ourselves in another's point of view, we have the opportunity to see why our objective truth may only seem like a half truth to them.

When you think about the physics of how we navigate the time and space, and the idea of thoughts being truth to one person from their point of view and truth to another person from their point of view and how they may appear opposite. What emerges is this idea that right and wrong or not as cut and dry as we like to think.

Relativism is a slippery slope into anarchy, right? Because pretty soon, you have no values because you have nothing to rest your values on if there's no objective truth or no code of ethics, right?

In a world where we have free will and the actual experiment that's happening on a human level is about what will you do with it when you actually can choose to do anything you want, what will you do with that? As the evolution of human beings continues, will we evolve into a place of mutually beneficial peace and harmony? Or will we devolve into a place of hellacious battle and suffering and toxicity in the environment?

The Christian dichotomy they set up was a helpful symbol before we had the intellectual capacity to see how each decision affects future decisions from this point of view of what I'm calling spiritual relativism or relativism of truth. Many great academics could make this argument better than me, but because of my privilege, my curiosity, and the internet, I've been able to do my own research. I love that phrase. I'm prefacing this and saying this to poke fun at myself. Because, of course, I think I'm, what I'm talking about actually means something important. Well, great. Thank you, boomer. Right?

Jessica K: Hey, I'm an Elder Millennial. I'm not going to say that.

Marc: But my point is that to the extent that we're so committed to our own righteousness is to the exclusion of what's possible for us in terms of our evolution as human beings.

It's curiosity and a willingness to gather new evidence that's the key to transformation, the key to the next gateway opening, and the next possibility for myself as an individual and then ultimately collectively as humanity.

So there's this idea of looking deeply into our ability to reason and coming up with our best guess, or our best reasoned, logical outcome and assessment and our critical thinking pattern, and then being in what the Buddhist call Beginner's Mind, even at that stage.

The Kybalion is so important because it outlines these seven principles, one of which is that all truths are but half-truths, and then from that point of view, you can be like, well, what is compassionate listening? What is compassionate speech? If I'm sitting across from someone who vehemently disagrees with me, how can I speak to them in a way that has them feel safe enough to reveal what they think so that I could learn from that? And how can I listen when they speak so that I'm not thinking of what I'm going to say to rebut them but to let in what might enlighten me, what might allow me to become wiser?

This, to me, is the bottom line of human interaction, compassionate listening, compassionate speech, and this idea of truth as relativism and learning to understand our fellow humans through the lens of curiosity.

Democracy 2.0

Jessica K: So, with that in mind, where do you think society is heading?

Marc: There's a multiplicity. Where we're heading is where we've always been heading.

Of course, I'm particularly fond of an idea I came up with, right? Because I want to be excited by myself, egoic to do that. But there is something to this idea, so I'm gonna share it with your audience, which is Democracy 2.0.

And Democracy 2.0 looks like we take technology, audio-visual technology, smartphones, and computing, and we take the representative government model and we increase the ratio of representation at a massive scale so that instead of a hundred

senators, we have a hundred thousand senators, and instead of 486 or whatever representatives, we have 486,000 representatives.

And we reconfigure the system to have the structural, functional capacity we've used for so long that's helpful. And then we explode the sample we take of whose opinion we're counting and how we're having conversations about it so that I could talk to my senator instead of donating ten million dollars just to get a five-minute appointment with them.

The other thing I like about it is that you can't coerce that number of people to shift the majority. You can't blackmail, bribe or otherwise cajole people into submission around getting their vote a certain way. So that's just a purely scientific mathematical principle that wouldn't be that hard to solve.

If I can do my banking on my smartphone, I should be able to vote on my smartphone, and my Senators and Congress people should be able to conduct a debate and have a quorum and vote on legislation using data technology at a level of 10 to the 10th power beyond where we are.

Jessica K: What do you think is holding us back from that point?

Marc: The results of divide and conquer and polarization are to make it feel like there's no way to win unless we destroy each other. That the only option is to defeat the enemy when the true option is to innovate together to all get what we need.

You and I having a highfalutin conversation about democracy and the evolution of polarization, and it's a very privileged conversation.

There are people that are struggling just to get their basic needs met, and that's even in America, right?

Now, let's not even talk about what's happening in other parts of the world, but what's the missing ingredient? People don't know what to hope for.

The reason I talk about Democracy 2.0, and it's leaking out slowly in all of these podcasts that I appear on, is because somebody's gonna take that, and they're gonna figure it out. Maybe during my lifetime, maybe not during my lifetime. And that tool could begin to push away some of the remnants of colonialism and some of the remnants of capitalist dominance over cultural evolution.

And from that, humanity could bloom into a whole new set of possibilities and a whole new personality. Well, we do not hate each other all the time because we have hope. I want to breathe life into the possibility that there is something to hope for and that we are creating new solutions.

The doom and gloomers, zombie apocalypses, they're fixated on a disintegrative approach to life. What you think about, you bring about, so if you keep worrying about and thinking about the collapse of Western civilization, then you're going to act accordingly. But if we build in some ideas about how to have reparations and how to restructure things and create more equity in the world, pretty soon, those people will bring the brilliance of their ideas to the table. And if there does no impede the innovation, then as a species, We can create a fantastic world, and maybe we could actually do interstellar travel without destroying our biome, right?

I believe in the possibilities. That's how I was raised. I'm not oppressed, so my thinking and my hopefulness have been nurtured from a privileged place. That's, of course, how I show up. And, okay, then I must bring the goods. I want to bring that. And so my version of Democracy 2.0, looks like that.

Of course, it's flawed on some level I'm sure a computer hacker or a computer programmer, or even someone who understands the intricacies of how our democracy works, says that one never works. Instead of saying that to me, solve the problem that you see. Solve it. Figure out how to make it work. How do we make this work?

Because that's the world I want to live in, and that's what I'm willing to die for.

Jessica K: What can we do individually and collectively to change the overall trajectory of our society?

Marc: Recognize that you're not insignificant and the paradox that you are totally insignificant. If you are willing to look at yourself and constantly be in a state of:

What could I do better?

How can I be a better human being?

How am I showing up in my relationships?

How am I showing up in the choices I make in the economic sphere?

If you are in a constant state of awareness and refinement and willingness to be curious about the impacts of how you show up, then you begin to develop new patterning.

That's one of the ways we break the system. Organic food is prevalent, not because someone legislated it, it's because the market said we want more organic food.

That's just a natural law. When you realize the power of the individuals to arrive at an elevated awareness, and then implement that in how they act on their values day in, day out.

Veganism is a perfect example. And I am not a vegan, but those people stand for something, right? And that's it. Principled stance that moves all of us forward incrementally.

Learning about yourself, reflecting on yourself, and noticing where you've been tricked into giving up your power to other structures and reclaiming it. Then, when people like me, people of privilege, get much more conscious of our impact and the reparations needed to restore integrity, we can begin to act in large and small ways to restore integrity and to have reparations occur.

Ultimately, what does it do? It slows down fear. I guarantee you that a lot of white supremacists are just, they're just afraid.

One of the most brilliant stories I heard is about a guy who was 20 years in jail. He was Aryan Brotherhood. He got out of jail, and he had an awakening about white supremacy, and now he goes around, and he talks to white supremacists and Nazis about deconstructing that belief system in themselves and recognizing our oneness, which is the truth, man. We're all one. We're all one entity, ultimately. We might look different or have different philosophies, but the higher level aspiration is how can we overcome the illusion of disability and separation?

Those stories are out there everywhere, and you just have to look for them, and you have to be one. Go ahead, be one.

Jessica K: Thank you so much for your wisdom here. We had a lot that we covered and went all over the place. Then we came back together on how to move forward with everything, take everything separate or polarized, and get ourselves back into something more cohesive and a bit more functional.

Marc: We can do it. We just have to put our minds right. We have to get the right mindset and then develop the standard tools to enable each other to success in this arena, in this domain.

Jessica K: Is there anything else you want to share with our guests before we go?

Marc: The belief that it's possible is the first step in doing the impossible. Yeah. The quote is that if you think you can or can't, you're right.

Jessica K: Where are you online if people want to follow you or follow up with you afterward?

Marc: You can find me at marcwendtcoaching on Twitter. You can find me @markwendtcoaching.com. My phone number's listed on that site, so you could call and talk to me if you want to do that. No doxing, please. That's the easiest way. I'm also on other social platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram. I even have a TikTok.

Marc with a c, marcwendt.com, that's my coaching website. marcwendtcoaching.com, or just find me on the socials, send up a flare. I'll find you.

Jessica K: Perfect. Again, thank you so much for your time, and thank you for being here.

Marc: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.

Closing Summary

Jessica K: That was a fantastic discussion, and I hope you enjoyed exploring the intersection between spirituality and politics with us today. Before we go, let's quickly recap what we have covered so far. We discuss how our beliefs and values shape how we engage with political issues, and how media polarization can further divide us. We

also discussed how breaking free from social conditioning can help us see things in a new light and why modern political discourse often falls short of productive debate. And let's remember the truth, whether it's relative or objective, or both. It's a fascinating topic that could be explored further in future episodes.

Upcoming Episodes

Now let's shift our focus to what's coming up in future episodes. On March 5th, we're bringing on kinesiologist and life coach Amanda Kate to discuss prioritizing internal truth over external influence. We'll explore how we are conditioned into needing external validation and the steps we can take to break free.

On March 12th, we will discuss healing and how everything we've learned about this process is wrong. Jennifer Moore, Empathic Mentor and Master Trainer for EFT International, is joining us for this conversation, where she's going to share both her journey, as well as guide how you can facilitate your healing.

And with that, we're wrapping up this episode of Spiritual AF Sundays. Take time to reflect on what you believe, why you believe it, and how you expressed your views to others. Especially those who might think differently about that. Have a great week, and stay spiritual AF.

[Closing Credits]