

# The PK Man and Mercurial Hermeneutics

with Jason Reza Jorjani

Video Transcript - *New Thinking Allowed* with Jeffrey Mishlove

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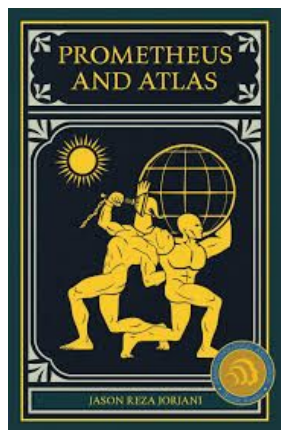


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(00:21) **JM:** Hello and welcome. I'm Jeffrey Mishlove. Today we are going to look at The PK Man and Mercurial Hermeneutics. My guest is Dr. Jason Jorjani, who is on the faculty in philosophy at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. He is also author of a very significant book, *Prometheus and Atlas*, which is the winner of the 2016 Book Award from the Parapsychological Association. Welcome, Jason.



(00:53) **JRJ:** I'm especially looking forward to this discussion, Jeffrey.

(00:55) **JM:** This will be most interesting. I'm looking forward to it as well. I think many of our viewers will understand our reference to *The PK Man* as I've done three interviews on this subject earlier, based on my book, *The PK Man*. But when it comes to Mercurial Hermeneutics, we better unpack that term for our viewers.

(01:17) **JRJ:** Well, Mercurial Hermeneutics is playfully redundant because of course, Mercury is the Roman version of the god Hermes. So, I'm really sort of saying, Hermetic Hermeneutics. Hermes is the trickster and thief in the Olympian pantheon. He is the courier of Zeus, who transmits messages from Olympus to humanity. But he's also a joker figure who sort of confuses, deceives and misleads with those messages.

(01:45) **JM:** Hermes is also the god associated with the Hermetic tradition, which is the esoteric tradition in Western culture.

(01:54) **JRJ:** That's right. Carl Jung wrote an essay on the trickster archetype, focusing on Mercury, or the Latinate version of Hermes.

(02:03) **JM:** And Hermeneutics?



(02:05) **JRJ:** Hermeneutics is the art of interpretation. I believe in the dialogue, *Cratylus*, Plato tells us that Hermes invented the art of language, both to lead and mislead people. When you have written language, the possibilities of gaining a second order of reflection on things is such that you are also able to manipulate people by the use of words.

(02:30) **JM:** So, Hermeneutics is the art of proper interpretation of words, would you say?

(02:35) **JRJ:** Yes. Because writing is not as transparent as communication in an oral culture, you also now need an art of exegesis.

(02:45) **JM:** So, if I were to use the term Hermetic - Hermeneutics - the Hermetic part would mean sealing esoteric wisdom up so that it's not accessible to the exo-terric mind. And the Hermeneutics would be unpacking that and making that wisdom available.

(03:01) **JRJ:** Right. And historically Hermeneutics first referred to the interpretation of religious texts specifically and then developed a wider significance. So, one of the things that I argue in this chapter on Mercurial Hermeneutics is that religious scriptures involve the communication of a trickster figure who has been shaping and reshaping human societies. In order to understand the dynamics of our interaction with this archetype we need to very carefully interpret these texts.

(03:35) **JM:** And you, in my opinion, wisely selected *The PK Man* as an exemplar of a contemporary case in which this Mercurial figure, this trickster figure, is manifesting itself.

(03:50) **JRJ:** That's right. Ted Owens [1920-1987], his case is significant in two regards. One, it highlights the inextricability of psychic phenomena and UFO phenomena. And also, Ted Owens explicitly compared himself to the prophet Moses, claiming that the Space Intelligences, who were guiding his tremendous feats of psychokinesis, had been searching for centuries to find another figure as capable as Moses was, to carry out their mission. He compared his eventual struggle against the United States government to Moses' stand against Pharaoh.

(04:28) **JM:** It's an interesting comparison, and yet, at the same time, I guess because we live in a Judaeo-Christian culture, Moses is a highly revered figure and Ted Owens, the PK Man, existed always on the fringes of society and very close to poverty throughout his life.

(04:47) **JRJ:** Well, if you look back at the story of Exodus, you see the same elements that you see in the Ted Owens case. Moses engages in wondrous feats of telepathic and psychokinetic ability in competition with the magicians of Pharaoh's court. And, the Exodus is led, is guided, by an aerial object that's described as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The pillar of fire by night reference is actually quite specific when you read the text carefully. This is an illuminated cylindrical object which gives off enough light so that the Israelites can march during the night time. During the

Red Sea episode, the Egyptian army is at the back of the Israelites. So, when they camp that night, the object shuts its light off so that it won't give away the position of the Israelites. The next morning, the Israelites wake up to see this cylindrical object hovering over the Red Sea and a channel has been cut through the Red Sea. When they start to cross the Red Sea, they notice that the water has been dammed up into almost perfect walls on either side of them. What should be a very muddy seabed is perfectly firm, so somehow it's been pressed down and all the moisture has been pushed off to the sides. The Israelites cross the Red Sea with this cylindrical object overhead and then when the Egyptian army enters the channel in pursuit of them, there's a very curious description of how suddenly their horses and chariots appear to be moving in slow motion. Then the chariots are pushed down, the wheels are basically.... They explode off the sides of the chariot as if a force is crushing them from above. Then the walls of water all of a sudden pour in onto the Egyptians. But, they do that unevenly. They start to drown the Egyptians whereas they remain in place ahead of the Egyptian army so that the last of the Israelites can finish crossing the channel. People often leave this out of their account of the Red Sea story, the fact that an object appears to be causing these effects on the ground.

(07:08) **JM:** Well, I gather what you are saying here is that the god of the book of Exodus is the trickster archetype at work.

(07:19) **JRJ:** Yeah, and this trickster, you know, is rather merciless. At several points in the Exodus narrative we see him lash out terribly against the Israelites. First of all, he sanctions Moses's massacre of the Israelites who are worshipping the golden calf.

(07:35) **JM:** Yes, some 20,000...

(07:38) **JRJ:** Yes, and later on the object descends on the Israeli camp and starts to attack their tents. So, you know, this is a rather harsh god. And at the same time there are various examples of a kind of diabolical humor on the part of this entity.

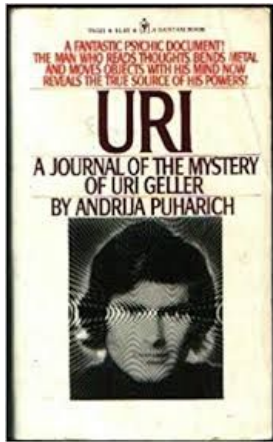
(08:02) **JM:** Now, if it wasn't for the case that I had engaged in a 10 year study of Ted Owens, the PK Man, and had good documentation for many of the psychokinetic feats that he produced, involving control of large scale phenomena including earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, volcanos and so forth...

(08:25) **JRJ:** Hurling lightning bolts, which is one of the trademarks of Zeus and of Indra...

(08:30) **JM:** If it wasn't for my actual study of these things, I'd be inclined to consider all of this as, you know, pleasant myths to consider, not real history.

(08:44) **JRJ:** Well, I take my lead from William James in this chapter. James suggested, because of his experience in psychical research, that perhaps we ought to interpret religious scriptures as veridical

accounts of human experience. Of course, not every detail is going to be accurate. But, his approach to religious scriptures was that we should treat them as phenomenological descriptions and not necessarily buy into the ideology that is being promoted in these scriptures, to evaluate them scientifically. This was an example of his radical empiricism.



(09:23) **JM:** I'm certainly 100 percent in favor of assuming William James' approach to these matters. Let's look at the UFO component now because Ted Owens is one of many UFO contactees who claims to have psychic powers connected with that relationship. Uri Geller was another, also noted for psychokinetic powers. If one reads the book, *Uri*, written by Andrija Puharich, there are many episodes in that book involving UFO sightings that were connected with Uri's abilities. I have interviewed some of the witnesses to those sightings. And Uri himself, while he likes to downplay that, he has never denied that these things occurred. So, it would suggest based on the contemporary UFO circus, if you will, these religious scriptures, that there's a trickster like archetype, the god Hermes if you will, that has been interacting with humanity for a long time, and often whose intentions are not at all obvious.

(10:36) **JRJ:** Let me give you two examples of that that I feature in my chapter. One is, I believe, a 1959 case, discussed by Jacques Valle, where six agents of the CIA and I believe one naval intelligence officer were sent to a certain Miss Keatch, who was a medium claiming to be in contact with an intelligence from Uranus. She would receive messages that she transcribed in the fashion of automatic writing. They took careful notes on her methodology. She even trained them to be able to produce UFO phenomena in association with this entity. They contacted a radar operator who should have been monitoring that sector of the sky where three of these officers witnessed the phenomena, and somehow radar returns for that particular sector were knocked out at the time the sightings were produced. So, some kind of psychokinesis was involved at the very least. The interesting thing is that this entity, who claimed to be getting in touch from out of Uranus, called itself Affa. In the Enochian language developed by John Dee [1527-1608], Queen Elizabeth's court occultist and advisor...

(11:55) **JM:** Going back to the Renaissance era...

(11:58) **JRJ:** Yes, in this Enochian language which was adopted by the 20th century magician Aleister Crowley, affa means "empty." Empty, as in there's nothing really here, as in hot air. So, I think this is one example of the trickster at work. Another one which is more disturbing is that in 1975 the cattle mutilations in Western states reached their zenith. A federal investigation was coordinated, based in Colorado, where I believe the governor of Colorado got directly involved. There was so much property damage to the cattle across 15 Western states.

(12:38) **JM:** To my understanding, these cattle mutilations are continuing to this day.

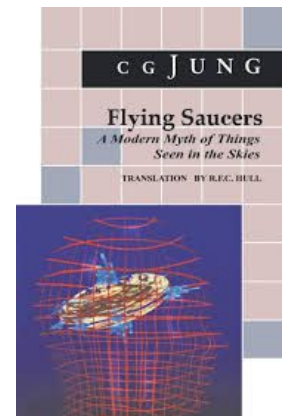
(12:45) **JRJ:** Yes, but the interesting thing is now we have laparoscopic surgery and in the 1970s and long before that, I'll come to that in a minute, in the 1970s they were seeing laser precision and extraction of organs through very small holes, things that we're just starting to be able to do today under highly controlled conditions inside of a laboratory or a hospital.

(13:07) **JM:** Sure, and the fact that we now have laparoscopic surgery hardly explains the cases in which cattle mutilations occur in the winter where there's snow around the mutilated body of the cattle but no footprints whatsoever.

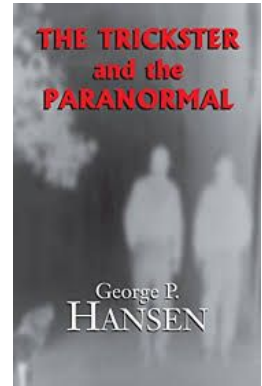
(13:22) **JRJ:** It gets more bizarre than that. Sometimes you see that the extracted organs are neatly placed on top of the carcass. By the way, no blood in the environs. The extracted organs are placed on top of the carcass. Sometimes they'll find a rusty army surplus knife, as if to make the joke that it's with this implement that the mutilation was carried out. At any rate, it got so bad in 15 of these Western states that they conducted a federal investigation. FBI couldn't even identify a suspect. Now, the interesting thing is that in Greek mythology Hermes is the god of the cattle sacrifice. So, I wonder whether this is in a sense the calling card of Mercury, these cattle mutilations.

(14:09) **JM:** Well, if one looks at the history of paranormal research, over and above parapsychology which is a very rigorous scientific field with a more limited focus than we are discussing today, there are many, many confounding and yet well observed phenomena that have been reported now for a good 150 years. You're suggesting that there's some sort of an autonomous, conscious, somewhat malevolent entity behind all of this.

(14:47) **JRJ:** So, one way you can interpret all of this is as a series of projections from the collective unconscious. Carl Jung wrote a small book called, *Flying Saucers*, where he advanced this thesis. I don't believe that that's a sufficient explanation because we have plenty of cases of near collisions with UFOs, collisions with what appear to be structured objects, from very close, I mean they're near collisions, and landing traces. So, I think there's enough hard evidence that we're dealing with structured objects. Also, if you look through the history of close encounters, let's say at the Book of Ezekiel, there are fairly detailed descriptions of at least four different types of unidentified flying objects. Another element that's fairly consistent throughout the spectrum of close encounters is the phenomenology of the objects themselves. You see a certain set of structures to these objects, saucer shaped, cylindrical, triangular, they don't have an infinite variety, OK, so this suggests to me that there is some degree of objectivity to this phenomena and there are real entities of some kind behind it. At the same time, Jacques Valle makes a good point and one that is at the core of your book, *The PK Man*, some mastery of psychical ability is also evident in close encounter phenomena.

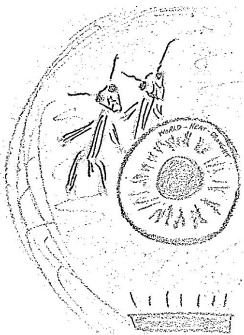


(16:24) **JM:** Another exploration that I think is worthy of being mentioned is George Hanson's book, *The Trickster and the Paranormal*.



(16:31) **JRJ:** Yes, it's a resource that I also draw on, in particular Hansen's idea that the trickster operates in the manipulation of binary opposites is very significant in *Prometheus and Atlas*, to the extent that we can identify an agenda to the activities of this intelligence that's engaging various human cultures. It's a destructuring force which seems to invert the binary oppositions that undergird the social structures of various cultures, different epochs of history.

(17:09) **JM:** Well, the observation that you make is that this same entity that manifests itself in contemporary paranormal observations has been involved throughout world history, and in particular, engages humanity through the implantation of miraculous events throughout the world, various religions have been formed around miraculous kinds of observations.



(17:41) **JRJ:** Right. I'm suggesting that Twitter and Tweeter, the grasshopper space intelligences of Ted Owens, were kind of using Mohammed as a ventriloquist dummy and pulling the strings of Jesus. That effectively, they represent an invasion from Uranus. I mean, this is absurd, OK. But the point that I make is that this absurdity is being used as a tactic of psychological warfare. When you hide behind the shield of absurdity you're able to infiltrate a society by getting past its intellectual and political vanguard. The phenomena seem too nonsensical to be treated seriously by the scientists of a given civilization. Even if it's the civilization of the Roman Empire. So, I think that part

of the way that Christianity was able to transform the Roman Empire was that none of the men of learning of that time took the phenomenology of Christian scripture seriously, they thought it was absurd. As absurd as we would take the Ted Owens case to be today. So, you're able to address the dregs of society. People who don't have the highest level of education are thrown into direct contact with this intelligence. And because they are mocked, because they are ridiculed, ostracized, they form a kind of close knit cult that's alienated from the rest of society. The more alienated they are the more fanatical they become. Eventually, this leads to the kinds of religions, the kinds of cultural movements that we see in the history of the Abrahamic revelations, which have been largely destructive.

(19:21) **JM:** Well, if I get your meaning correctly, Jason, you seem to be suggesting that this intelligence is deliberately creating many, many problems throughout human history, perhaps for the purpose of challenging humanity to wake up and see what's going on.

(19:41) **JRJ:** Yes, I think that if we were to develop a type of science which acknowledges the spectral then we would become less vulnerable to manipulation at the hands of this trickster.

(19:55) **JM:** And that perhaps as a species we won't achieve full maturity until we do so.

(20:01) **JRJ:** Yeah, my ultimate conclusion is that we need to engage this trickster by embodying the archetypes of Prometheus and Atlas.

(20:08) **JM:** Let's just talk then briefly about what those archetypes mean to you.

(20:13) **JRJ:** Well, Prometheus is the projector of the future. He is what allows us to get a grasp on phenomena for the sake of getting a better handle on the world. Atlas stands for models of the world, modeling the world and working with different maps of reality. So, these are emblematic of our titanic spirit of scientific exploration and discovery and of human self reliance.

(20:46) **JM:** And I gather that this is what higher consciousness means to you.

(20:53) **JRJ:** I think it's a kind of consciousness that allows humanity to determine its own future course of development.

(21:00) **JM:** As opposed to being under the sway of these powerful subconscious forces, even if they are projections of our own mind, of which we are usually not fully aware.

(21:15) **JRJ:** Yeah, it's an acknowledgment that scientific exploration and discovery have their own religious ethos. It's a very liberating and empowering religious ethos.

(21:23) **JM:** It gives us the possibility, this suggestion of yours, that we can begin to look inward and develop more of a science of our inner life and how it interacts with the world at large.

(21:36) **JRJ:** Right.

(21:38) **JM:** It's a lot to contemplate. I mean, it's a very deep and profound vision and I have to give you credit for taking my book, *The PK Man*, and placing it within a larger historical and cultural context to bring out the larger meaning of what was for me a 10 year exploration.

(21:58) **JRJ:** Well, you know, the credit really belongs to you. Because in some ways, I think, people don't really want to acknowledge cases like this one. Afterall, it was handed off to you by Russell Targ and Hal Puthoff who, I think, didn't want to deal with Ted Owens at SRI.

(22:13) **JM:** They were doing research for the CIA at the time and their reputation was already being questioned because they had brought Uri Geller into the laboratory and he was a flamboyant public figure. They just felt they couldn't handle another flamboyant psychic like that. I was an eager young

graduate student at the time. It seemed like an amazing case from all that I knew of it. Even today I can look back and say that I'm not aware of any other cases that has been documented in the history of parapsychology in psychical research that involve so many dramatic demonstrations of ostensible psychokinesis.

(23:00) **JRJ:** Well, it seems to me that it was more than flamboyance that scared them. I mean, this is a man that eventually, I think, by 1980 or so, started psychokinetically attacking nuclear power plants. That's quite frightening. What I'm suggesting is that this kind of capriciousness, or perhaps even malevolence, extends all the way back throughout history, in a phenomena that interweaves what we call the psychical and what has been identified as UFOs. You know, in Mohammed's extraordinarily and inexplicably successful series of military campaigns, sometimes people would report that a cloud-like object descended down onto the battlefield and released invisible horses, angelic warriors that fought together with Mohammed's armies. This manifested itself in heads being severed from the enemy soldiers without any apparent cause and their horses being cut down on the battlefield without being engaged by Mohammed's armies. And then if you go back to the initial revelation event in the Quran, Mohammeds first encounter with Gabriel in the cave, which terrifies him, he runs out of this cave and scampers down the hillside, at that moment he sees a bright glowing object and every time he turns its head, this object rapidly moves on the horizon. So, you can't find any more catastrophic or calamitous historical event than the initial spread of Islam over two world empires, the Persian and the Roman Empire. Within 100 years Mohammed's armies were at the gates of Paris. If indeed, Twitter and Tweeter are behind something like this, then we are faced with a very significant challenge, which is using absurdity as a shield.

(24:51) **JM:** So, you're suggesting that probably today a good half, at least, of humanity has been brought up and socialized within one of the Abrahamic traditions, largely Christianity or Islam, and to a much smaller degree Judaism. How many other religions have been developed on the basis of such miraculous events may account for practically all of humanity, I suppose. And you're saying we don't really understand what's going on. That the power behind all of these religions is not what it appears to be.

(25:30) **JRJ:** Well, once again, a point in response to that is I don't think, say, Buddhism has the same foundation. Buddhism, or the Buddha dharma, is not based on a belief in a certain doctrine on account of being awed by miraculous events. So, I think that this is very unique to the Abrahamic tradition, among those major religions that have survived. That's why I draw on Buddhism in *Prometheus and Atlas* as one resource for the development of a cosmopolitan spirituality.

(26:03) **JM:** So, in other words, what you're suggesting is, you're drawing a real distinction - I think it was Balzac who described the difference between the god of the philosophers versus the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.



(26:18) **JRJ:** Well, Gautama Buddha, you know, people often don't recognize that in the Tripitaka, in the Sermons of the Buddha, he explicitly says that some of the gods are tricksters and that they ought not to be followed. Sometimes they deliberately mislead people and they become drunk on power.

(26:38) **JM:** Well, Jason Reza Jorjani, this has been a very enlightening interview and I can't tell you how much I appreciate your willingness to apply your intellect to my work, *The PK Man*. Thank you for being with me.

(26:52) **JRJ:** Thank you, *Prometheus and Atlas* wouldn't have been the same without it.

(26:56) **JM:** And thank you for being with us.

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