

InPresence 0008: My Hero William James with Jeffrey Mishlove

Video Transcript - *New Thinking Allowed* with Jeffrey Mishlove
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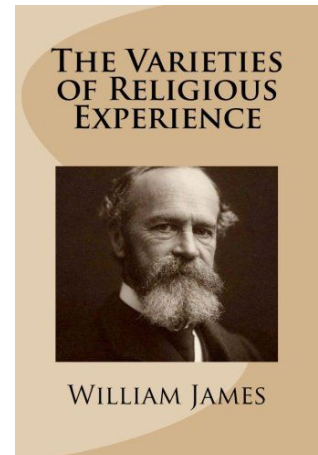


Recorded on March 5, 2018

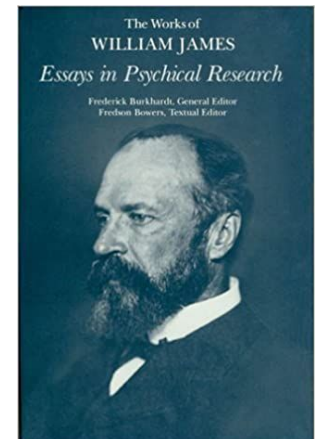
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(00:39) Hello. I'm Jeffrey Mishlove. Today I'd like to talk about one of my heroes, William James, and an interesting episode that occurred in my life. You see, William James is one of the great thinkers in American history. He's considered the founder of American psychology, and the founder of American religious studies. And a great philosopher, too, one of the founders of the American Pragmatic School of Philosophy. In fact, I believe, one study recently listed him as among the hundred most influential Americans of all time.



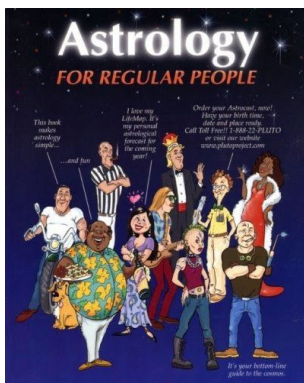
(01:23) I admired William James particularly because he was actively engaged in psychical research. He was deeply concerned about the question of life after death. He became, in fact, at one time, a president of the Society for Psychical Research in England, and one of the founders, as I recall, of the American Society for Psychical Research. Now, I liked William James and found so much inspiration in his life that I actually have the URL of WilliamJames.com. If you click on it, it will forward you to the New Thinking Allowed video channel on YouTube.



(02:14) Many years ago - about 20 years ago - I was interviewing medical doctor Walter Semkiw, who had written a book on astrology. I was

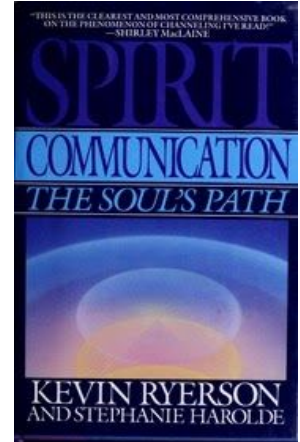
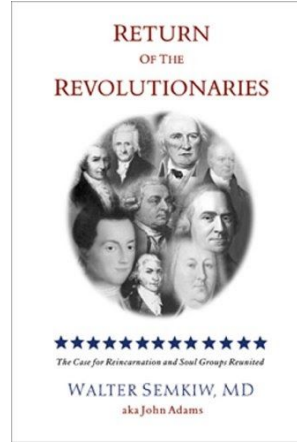
interviewing him, and he said to me, he noted that I had the WilliamJames.com website, and he said,

“Could you have been William James in a past lifetime?” I mean, there's some reason for him to have thought so, I suppose, because of my fascination with William James, of the fact that I acquired that URL WilliamJames.com, and the fact that William James was an important pioneer in the field of psychical research, the study of unusual mental abilities and particularly survival after death, and here am I, the only person ever to have received a doctoral diploma that says Parapsychology anywhere in the world. So one might think there was a linkage, but I told Walter, “Of course not. I wasn't William James

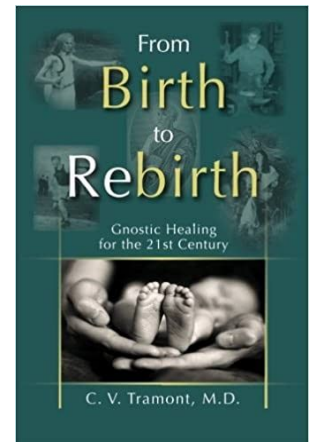


in a past life. He is one of my heroes, how could I have been him?"

(03:32) And Semkiw said to me, "Well, the way he sees it, people incarnate together in soul groups.' He had, at that time, not published his book *Return of the Revolutionaries*, but he was working on it and he told me he believed he could identify many people alive today who were members of the Founding Father group of the United States. The Founding Fathers of this country were reincarnating today. He had a method that he used. He worked with a trance channel to confirm his thinking in this area. Then the trance channel was my good friend Kevin Ryerson, so Walter said to me, "Here's what you could do. See about people who are close to you, members that you might call 'of your own' soul group, and see if they match up in some ways in terms of personality, interests, talents and facial features, with people who were known to have been close to William James."



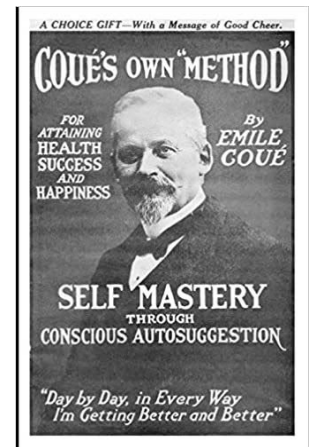
(04:41) And so I did that, and to my surprise, yes, quite a number of people who were important in my life also seemed to bear a resemblance to people who were important in the life of William James. And I allowed Walter to publish a section about that in his book, *Return of the Revolutionaries*, but I have to say I wasn't fully convinced, especially because I had no memories of having been William James. So, I actually participated in a series of hypnotic regressions to see if I could come up with memories of William James, and those regressions were performed by my friend, a medical doctor, Charles Tramont, who later wrote about them in a book he wrote about past lives. But honestly, nothing came up by way of memories.



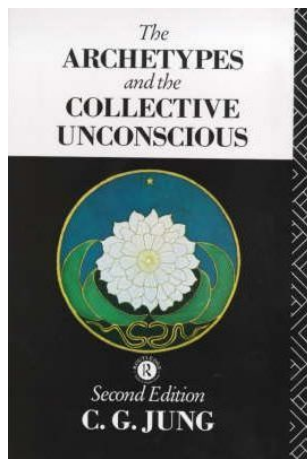
(05:46) The most that I could say is that during the hypnotic sessions, I would often come out of it with a feeling in my stomach, a painful feeling. And the truth is, William James, for all of his greatness, was a sickly man, and he suffered from depression, he suffered from a variety of bodily ailments. And under hypnosis I seemed to experience some of those. But, I don't count that as evidential, because I knew about all that to begin with. You know, the power of suggestion is quite strong. But there were these - I guess you'd have to say 'coincidences', probably not synchronicities in the Jungian sense, but coincidences - that many people in my life, including myself, seemed to match up with people in the life of William James. And I think I even do bear some physical resemblance to him.

(06:51) But what I want to talk about is the fact that William James overcame his depression, overcame his illnesses. Back in the 19th century - he lived, died in 1910, as I recall, or 1909 - he became

acquainted with the American Transcendentalist movement. His father was a close friend of people like Emerson and Thoreau and Chandler and the other leaders of that movement, American Transcendentalism, a very important literary and philosophical movement centered in Boston, where he lived. He became acquainted with the work of Émile Coué - a French pedagogue, I believe - who used to have people repeat the positive affirmation: "In every day, in every way, I am getting better and better." And James discovered that by using mental suggestion he could overcome his own depression. In fact, he wrote that the greatest discovery of his generation is that we can change our life by changing our thoughts. As a result of that he achieved a life of greatness.

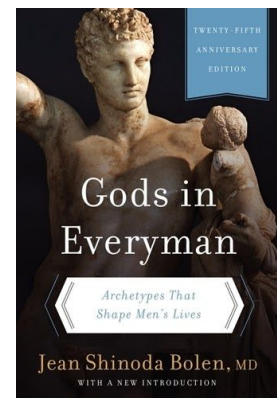
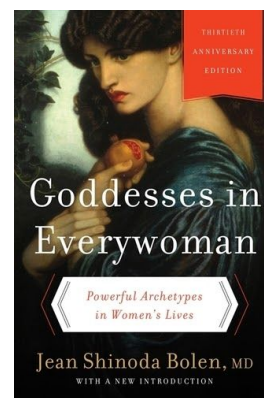


(08:20) Now let me come back again to the question of reincarnation, because it's worth mentioning that what I did do as a result of this and other potential past life identifications that seemed to me to be almost real but not quite. I developed a theory of my own, in conjunction with a psychologist from the East Coast, Brendan Engen, we call it "archetypal synchronistic resonance." It's where you have a resonance with, in our case in particular, heroic figures from the past where there seemed to be many coincidences and many - well, I guess resonances is the best word. We seem to be on the same wavelength, and many synchronicities and various kinds of paranormal events seem to occur when this happens at an archetypal level.



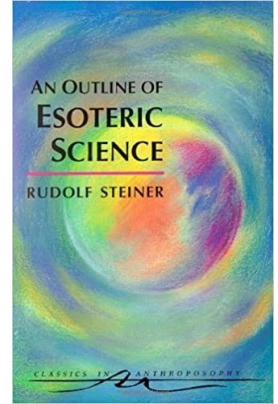
(09:25) Now, archetype is an unusual word. It's developed by the psychologist, the great Swiss psychiatrist, Carl Jung. Often, I've asked my students to define - what is an archetype? - and they all have good answers, I can tell you that, but the answers tend to be a little different. Archetype is a very elusive term, one could call it a constellation, a whirlwind almost, of energy and ideas, that exists in the psyche itself. And an archetype can take on a life of its own, like a deity, like a conscious being that exists only in the psychic or mental or spiritual world. These archetypes may be responsible for coincidences that occur in our lives, and much more than that in fact. Archetypes can affect the whole course of our destiny.

(10:28) Two wonderful books were written about archetypes by the psychiatrist Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Gods in Everyman* and *Goddesses in Everywoman*. This can be positive or negative, because, sometimes when your life is driven by an archetype, it has a dark side, and if you're not conscious of it the dark side can take control. So it's better to be conscious of the dominant archetypes in your life. I



think it's fair to say that William James functions as an archetype in my life, in the sense of being, I'd like to think, a guiding spirit.

(11:13) And so, I want to leave you with the thought, as voiced by William James, that you can change your life by changing the way you think. And you can change the way you think through self-suggestion, or sometimes people use the term affirmations. The things that you say to yourself, the way you talk to yourself, can be so crucial and you can learn to stop talking to yourself in negative ways, if that's what you're doing, and to reinforce the positive things in your life, as William James did dramatically, by holding thoughts in your mind that are positive. You know, I mentioned in an earlier edition of "In Presence", that another great inspiration for me has been Rudolf Steiner, a philosopher and a mystic, who said that, "our thoughts, our very thoughts, are spiritual entities, they are alive, and we can learn to work with our thoughts in powerful ways." I think about that a lot and I'd like you to give it some thought yourself. How can you change your life by changing your thoughts? I'll leave you with that question to ponder. Thank you for being with me. (12:45)



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