

InPresence 0030: Psychic Liberation

with Jeffrey Mishlove

Video Transcript - *New Thinking Allowed* with Jeffrey Mishlove

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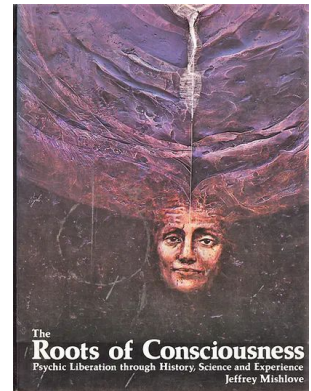


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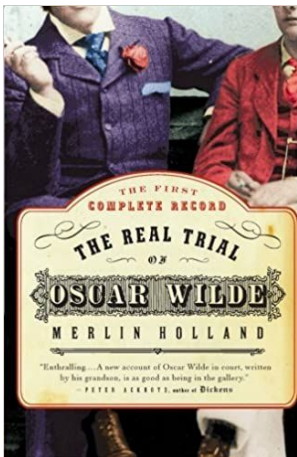
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(00:39) Hello, I'm Jeffrey Mishlove. Today I'd like to talk about "psychic liberation". It's been an important theme in my work since 1975, when the first edition of *The Roots of Consciousness* was published. The subtitle was "Psychic Liberation Through History, Science and Experience." Let's step back for a minute though, and talk about liberation movements. In the United States, liberation movements have been part of our culture from the very beginning - from the American Revolution, in which we overthrew the yoke of the British monarchy, to the Civil War, when we abolished slavery. And in my life, having been born in 1946, I grew up in an era in which segregation was the law of the land in many states. I grew up in Wisconsin, in a small community where there were no people of color, so it was never an issue for us.



(01:44) But, in the 1960s we passed the Civil Rights [Act], and, when I went off to college in 1965, there was an Anti-War movement. People were, for the first time, actively, in huge numbers, especially on the college campuses of the country - the University of Wisconsin, where I did my undergraduate work, was a big center of radical political activity. Interestingly enough, all the leaders were men. Then we saw there was a Women's Liberation movement that began at the same time, and women were criticizing men for trying to dominate the Anti-War movement. The Women's Liberation movement has made great strides in my lifetime. I consider myself a Feminist, and I'm proud to be one, but I know this: if women continue to make progress in the workplace at the rate which they have been, they will achieve full equality in only another 1,500 years or so. We have a long, long way to go.



(02:56) Subsequently, we've seen the Gay Liberation movement, and in my lifetime - in fact, in recent years - gay marriage has become legal. Now we have transgender people arguing for equality. So we've come a long way since the days when Oscar Wilde and Alan Turing were convicted of crimes simply because of their sexual preferences. But we have a long way to go. Now I think the time is ripe for a Psychic Liberation movement to begin to emerge. Let me explain.

(03:37) In 1980, I got my doctoral degree through an individual interdisciplinary program in parapsychology at Berkeley. To my knowledge, nobody else has a doctoral diploma [in 'parapsychology' or 'psychical research'] either before or since. Why is that? Psychical research, or parapsychology, is a discipline that's been around for more than 150 years. The first Society for Psychical Research, as I recall, was founded in 1882, and the founders of that society were amongst the most brilliant men of the era: Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Arthur Balfour (a Prime Minister of Britain), William James (the founder of American psychology). And the list goes on and on of eminent scientists who have contributed to the field. Hundreds of books have been published, hundreds – maybe at this point over 1,000 – of scientific papers.

(04:41) Yet, the field is still marginalized. If you talk to anybody who works in the field of parapsychology – there are about 200 members of the Parapsychological Association today (I'm sure many, many more academics are interested in the field) – they pretty much all have horror stories about how they were treated and mistreated by their colleagues. In my case, for example, the closer I got to getting my degree, the more hurdles were put in front of me. Then after I got the degree, the Organized Skeptics launched a movement to have the degree revoked. This is not a situation that's different than is faced by anyone else who attempts to make a contribution in this field.

(05:32) Even the great scientists I mentioned earlier, whose contributions in other fields are well-acknowledged, when they engage in parapsychology they're treated like bumbling idiots. Like, "Too bad such a great person made such a horrible mistake." There used to be a few hundred courses in parapsychology taught at colleges around the country. In the United States I think there are probably less than a dozen right now. It's not as if it isn't a valid field. But, I can tell you this, there are armies of people who subscribe to the skeptical point of view – that this simply can't happen (it contradicts what they think of as the rational universe in which we live) – and they are determined to stamp it out. If you get on Wikipedia, for example, any time you see an article having to do with parapsychology or related phenomena, you will see that these armies of people have made sure that something negative – often completely untrue – is posted.

(06:43) When people in the parapsychology community attempt to correct these mistakes, their corrections get deleted. I'll give you an example, personally. One time, there was a Wikipedia article about me. Now, I really don't care about Wikipedia. I don't regard it as an accurate source of information about anything that I'm knowledgeable about - and that includes not only parapsychology, but consciousness research and related areas – but somebody actually had the audacity to delete my Wikipedia page, because, they said, "I don't think he really has a degree in parapsychology. He's probably making it up." And so the page was taken down.

(07:28) The pages concerning virtually every other contributor to parapsychology have been similarly desecrated with lies and misinformation. There needs to be an army of advocates for psychic

liberation, for liberation of the truth of parapsychology research, to counteract these armies of well-intentioned but certainly misinformed skeptics, people who are well too certain of themselves. And I'll tell you this, to call them a skeptic is a misnomer – although they like the call themselves that, just like certain people love to call themselves “patriots” even as they may be destroying the country they supposedly love – well, skeptics do the same to the truth, people who choose to call themselves skeptics.

(08:19) I'll explain. A true philosophical skeptic is a person, first and foremost, who is skeptical of themselves, skeptical of the certainties that they hold. Yet, I can say the enemies of parapsychology are full of certainties. They are certain that yes, it exists, but it's the work of the devil, or no, it doesn't exist, because it represents the rising tide of superstition and must be suppressed. Kick out the parapsychologists from the workshop of science. That was an editorial published once by a great physicist, John Wheeler (“Drive the Pseudos out of the Workshop of Science”), who later had to apologize to J.B. Rhine for publishing false information about Rhine, claiming that Rhine engaged in fraudulent activity.

(09:12) It becomes almost a truism for some people: if you're involved in parapsychology, you're an idiot, a fool or a fraudster. Yes, parapsychology has its share of idiots, fools and fraudsters, just as every field of human endeavor has, but no more than that. I'm convinced parapsychology is not always going to be a fringe science. The day will come – whether it takes 100 years, or 50 years, or 1,000 years or more – parapsychology will be understood at the very center of our scientific world, bridging the gap between the inner and outer worlds, between mind and matter, resolving some of the most difficult problems in philosophy, like the hard problem of consciousness.

(10:11) That day will come. It may take a long time, but we can hasten that day by doing whatever we can do to help bring about a Psychic Liberation movement, to counter the misinformation that is being spread, to establish an environment where people in academia – students and teachers and researchers – feel supported in conducting their research, and in receiving research grants, and don't get laughed out of a job. Not to mention the millions of people who are having these experiences and are puzzled about them, who could conceivably make great social contributions, but instead are afraid, or confused, because there is no social support available for them. The need, as I see it, is very great, and I don't know why a Psychic Liberation movement shouldn't really be launched right now. So my question for you, that I'd like to leave you with – if you've been listening this far to my rant – is, what could you do to help encourage, foster, hasten a Psychic Liberation movement in our lifetime? Thank you for being with me. (11:37)

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