

InPresence 0068: My Friend, Saul-Paul Sirag: The Early Years with Jeffrey Mishlove

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(00:19) Hello, I'm Jeffrey Mishlove and today I'd like to talk about my old friend and good friend, Saul-Paul Sirag. Saul-Paul is such a complex person that I realize I'm not going to be able to cover the entire story of our adventures together in one ten minute monologue. There's just too much to talk about. So, we'll call this the early years, the beginning of my relationship with Saul-Paul. I remember very distinctly the day that I met him because it was my birthday in 1971. He showed up at a little birthday party I was having at the health information program on the Berkeley campus. It was a house that the university had provided for us. I was the director of the program on Haste Street, just off of Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley.

(01:12) This unusual person, with a big bushy head of hair, showed up at my birthday party and we started a conversation about LSD. He explained to me at the time the latest scientific thinking on the subject, which he had just written about for a column that he wrote called "The New Alchemy," which was published - it was syndicated in college and university newspapers around the country. He wasn't a university student. He lived off campus but that's what he was doing. I think he learned maybe \$15 a week or something for writing this weekly column.

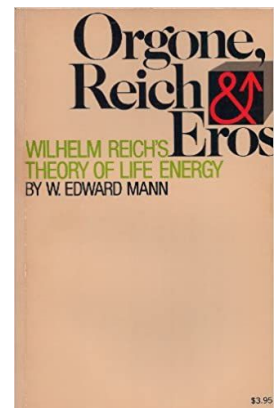
(01:54) He explained that LSD, to the best of his understanding, was a molecule very similar to serotonin, a known neural transmitter and important neurotransmitter. Because the molecule was so similar, it could replace serotonin in the synapses of the brain and have a very different effect on consciousness than serotonin itself would have. I was fascinated by this and developed a friendship with Saul-Paul that has lasted now for many, many decades.

(02:32) Let's talk a little bit about his background, it's very unusual. He was raised by missionaries as a young child, very young child, 5, 6 years old. Saul-Paul's missionary parents were working in Borneo with the Dayak natives there, converting them hopefully to Christianity. Well, this was during the Second World War and the Japanese came in. They were put into a Japanese concentration camp on the island of Borneo. The conditions were very, very harsh in those circumstances. I can tell you that Saul-Paul's father died in the concentration camp because of those harsh conditions. And Saul-Paul tells me that the reason he survived is because he and his brother were given the duty of cleaning out the camp latrines. What that enabled them to do is to eat the slugs that apparently hung out there in the latrine, probably the slugs were eating what was in the latrine. Saul-Paul and his brother got to eat

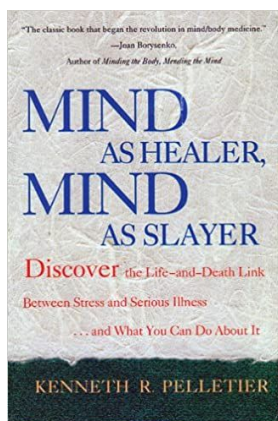
the slugs because they were available since they were cleaning the latrines. He believes it was that protein source that saved his life, or otherwise he might have starved to death, which presumably was the fate of his father.

(04:07) Now, after the war, Saul-Paul's parents or his mother, who survived and who was a missionary, put him in an institute known as the Prairie Bible Institute somewhere in the Canadian Midwest. There he was raised with a very devout fundamentalist Christian education. He learned to memorize the entire Bible at a very young age but he also began studying science. At some point he had a revelation. You see, his name was not always Saul-Paul. His birth name was Paul. Of course, we know now in the history of the Christian religion Saul was a person who had a revelation and converted, changed his name to Paul and became Saint Paul - one of the founders, perhaps the most significant person in shaping Christian theology. But, when Paul Sirag had his revelation it was about science. He realized that Christian fundamentalist theology was totally inconsistent with the science that he was learning. He changed his name from Paul to Saul-Paul as a way to sort of, I guess you could say, undo the revelation of Paul. He devoted his life to science.

(05:42) Now, I once introduced Saul-Paul to a visiting scholar, Professor Ted Mann, from the University of Toronto. I've spoken about Ted Mann in the past on the segment on Wilhelm Reich. Ted Mann is the author of *Orgone, Reich, and Eros*. He came to visit me in Berkeley and I introduced him to Saul-Paul and he said, "this man is a monk in the service of knowledge." Saul-Paul's library was just full of books on science and math. He devoured it.



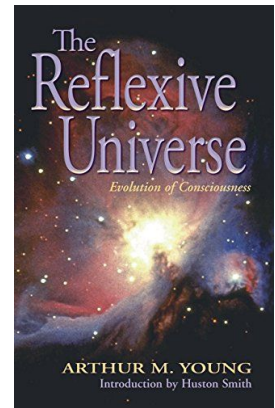
(06:16) I, at the time, was a graduate student in criminology and I managed to acquaint myself with a number of other graduate students in the sciences and who were interested in this whole question of consciousness, spirituality, the impact of psychedelic drugs, new research that was coming out in parapsychology, holistic health, healing. We met regularly to discuss these things as well as looking at some of the fundamental questions in physics and philosophy. Also around this time I was instrumental in bringing Uri Geller to the Berkeley campus. And, I was sponsoring symposiums, as a matter of fact, on the frontiers of consciousness.



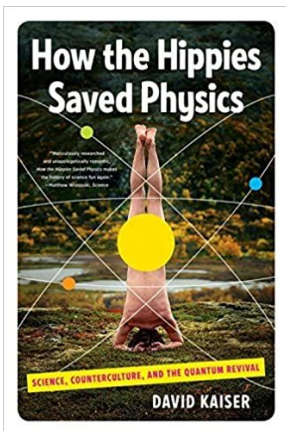
(07:08) So, one of the graduate students was Kenneth Pelletier. He was a psychology graduate student. Ken Pelletier organized a series of seminars for this group of graduate students to meet with a man he knew from the east coast named Arthur M. Young, who had been the inventor of the Bell Helicopter and about whom I've spoken on other occasions - multiple other occasions on this "In Presence" series. Now, I invited Saul-Paul to come along. Saul-Paul and I were, I guess you'd have to say in retrospect, we were thrilled and very interested in the theories of Arthur Young that were about to be published in his book, *The Reflexive Universe*. He was a cosmologist who would put together

what you could call a periodic table of everything. It included biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, mythology, anthropology. It seemed like a very coherent and comprehensive system of thought.

(08:24) We studied it eagerly and I guess Arthur Young was impressed by the questions that we asked, because a few months later Saul-Paul and I were both invited to move into the new institute that Arthur and his wife Ruth Young were creating in Berkeley. They bought a house on Benvenue Avenue near the Berkeley campus and set up The Institute for the Study of Consciousness. They were also at the time publishing the journal for The Study of Consciousness.



Saul-Paul and I were invited to move in and live with Arthur and Ruth Young and that was the beginning of a new breakthrough for Saul-Paul himself in terms of his scientific work and his work in mathematics, stimulated by Arthur Young.



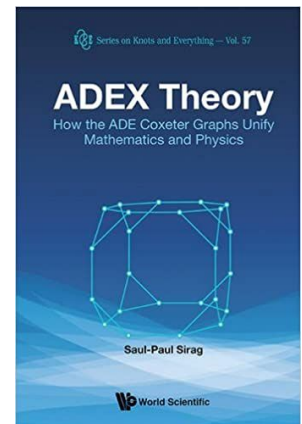
(9:17) I might mention Arthur Young and The Institute for the Study of Consciousness and Saul-Paul himself play a very prominent role in a fascinating book by the historian of science, David Kaiser. It's called *How the Hippies Saved Physics*. I'm in the book myself - I play a very minor part in that book - but it's there. I'm going to talk more in a future episode about Saul-Paul's work. But, what I will do right now - and if you look in the upper right hand of your screen, you'll see a link, it's been available in the past - it's a link to the table of contents online of a book I published in 1975. This is the 1987 revised edition, 2nd edition of my book *The Roots of Consciousness*. You can link from that table of contents to the appendix written by Saul Paul called "Consciousness: A Hyperspace View." That'll give you a little preview of the kind of advanced thinking he was about to do in relationship to higher mathematics and consciousness itself.

(10:37) Now, of course Saul-Paul had a fascinating life, but what does it mean for you, besides the fact that he was my good friend and I have had many adventures and stories to tell? Is there a lesson for you in all of this? I can think of two lessons. Think of how he survived that Japanese concentration camp by eating slugs. Now I know for myself, I would be far too squeamish to just eat raw slugs - far, far too squeamish. I might die first. But, I suppose I haven't been confronted with the fact. Maybe if I were that close to death, I'd get over my squeamishness.

(11:20) So, one question you might be looking at is: Where are you squeamish? How does your squeamishness, your sense of disgust, prevent you sometimes from doing things that might be necessary for you to do, or good, or healthy for you to do? When does squeamishness get in our own way? Another question to think about with regard to the life of Saul-Paul is his conversion from a fundamentalist Christian to a monk in the service of science and knowledge. Have you ever had a religious conversion like that? How have you and your life integrated your religious upbringing? How

much of it do you hold onto and how much of it do you reject? Do you think it's worthwhile for you to revisit those questions in your life?

(12:21) So, I'll leave you with those thoughts and I shall return on a future occasion - I'm not sure exactly when - to discuss more of Saul-Paul's work and in particular the book that he's published called *Adex Theory*. There's a great deal more to be said about my relationship with Saul-Paul, but this will give you a little taste of the background. Thank you for being with me. (12:52)



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