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IN THE PROVINCE OF THE MIND with JOHN C. LILLY, M.D.

JEFFREY MISHLOVE, Ph.D.: Hello and welcome. Today we are going to explore the province of the mind. With me is Dr. John C. Lilly, a noted pioneer of mystical states, of states of consciousness, and also interspecies communication. Dr. Lilly is a former researcher with the National Institutes of Health and the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center. He is the author of some five books on human-dolphin communication, including Lilly on Dolphins, Man and Dolphin, The Mind of the Dolphin, Communication between Man and Dolphin. He has written many books on deep inner exploration, including The Deep Self, The Center of the Cyclone, The Dyadic Cyclone, and The Scientist, and he is particularly known for Programming and Metaprogramming the Human Biocomputer. In fact he introduced that term, the biocomputer, into our language. Welcome, John.

JOHN C. LILLY, M.D.: Thank you.

MISHLOVE: It's a real pleasure to be with you. I think it would be good to start with your famous maxim about what is true in the province of the mind. Could you begin by repeating that?

LILLY: In the province of the mind what one believes to be true, either is true or becomes true within certain limits. These limits are to be found experimentally and experientially. When so found these limits turn out to be further beliefs to be transcended. In the province of the mind there are no limits. However, in the province of the body there are definite limits not to be transcended.

MISHLOVE: You've probably devoted your whole life, and certainly many decades recently, to pushing to see what really were the limits -- by going into new realities, taking on the belief systems of those realities, and then coming back to your basic working reality and challenging those beliefs, integrating those beliefs with your own. In your writings you've explored almost every state of consciousness I could imagine -- the various mystical levels of satori, communication with extraterrestrials, communication with other species. You've established probably a more significant mapping of inner space than almost any other modern person, and I think we all owe a great debt to you for that.

LILLY: But don't get stuck with those. I've abandoned all of them. It's impossible, because there are infinities within the mind.

MISHLOVE: I think that's the beauty of your work, is that you keep moving further and further out. In The Center of the Cyclone you described a state -- you had a whole system, virtually a quantitative system, for mapping states of consciousness, and you talked about one that I found most fascinating, which you call +3, Mega Samadhi. In that state you describe going so far out of your body, even out of the physical universe, to the point of being at the level of essence, in which the physical universe is created.

LILLY: Right.

MISHLOVE: That almost seemed to me, in reading that book, like an ultimate state of consciousness, but I know you wrote about it some fifteen years ago. How does it look to you now?

LILLY: Well, there's one state beyond +3. That's +1, but you're not allowed to remember that once you go into it. It's union with God. That's the true yoga, and so you're nonhuman, so there's no way you can recount what happened. You have no way of saying it, because it's beyond language. Well, all those states are beyond language. Language is a very poor instrument to express it.

MISHLOVE: In some of your other writings you've described language as being a thin film that separates us from reality. Much as we try to use language to describe what we mean, it really puts barriers up.

LILLY: Well, there's one use of language that's valid. That's the injunctive use -- telling you how to do things. The descriptive one's very poor, and William James said that the other realities are separated from this one by the filmiest of screens. I found that this screen is language, so you have to abandon it when you're going to these other realities.

MISHLOVE: In addition to +1 and +3, you've mapped out +6. That's a state of consciousness, as I recall, in which the mind can travel to any point in physical or nonphysical space.

LILLY: Right. But you maintain your individuality.

MISHLOVE: That must be a basic mode of the psychic explorer. I gather from reading much of your work that you spent a great deal of time in +6.

LILLY: Right, and in +12. Plus 12 is the blissful idiot. You're in your body; you're right here and now, but everything is happy. There's gold dust particles in the air, and everything is good.

MISHLOVE: You can feel energy moving in and out of the different psychic centers of the body.

LILLY: And if a bird calls, you hear it echoing through the galaxy. But that's not much use, unless you can find another bliss being in the same space.

MISHLOVE: Many of the mystical teachings warn against getting stuck in some of these realities.

LILLY: Right. I haven't been in any of them since that time.

MISHLOVE: You also refer, in your mapping of states, to +48, which is sort of a perfectly neutral state.

LILLY: Right. Plus 24 is the professional state of any discipline that you're involved in, where you're lost in the discipline. Forty-eight is where you're communicating with everybody else. Then there are the minus states, but I don't go into those.

MISHLOVE: No, but at one point you wrote about the importance of going into the minus states and remaining perfectly aware, being conscious in those negative states, not trying to block out the negativity. You described that, as I recall, as burning karma.

LILLY: Yes. In The Center of the Cyclone there's a chapter called "A Guided Tour of Hell," which is -6. That was awful. So I never had to go back to that. And I was never frightened again. I was totally terrified in that one.

MISHLOVE: I suppose it's what the Christian mystics sometimes refer to as the dark night of the soul.

LILLY: Well, it was the dark night of my soul.

MISHLOVE: Perhaps this is a necessary part of everybody's journey, is to go through the epitome of terror.

LILLY: Right. For instance, there's an Iranian psychiatrist, an American psychiatrist, that put a hundred patients in a mental hospital in Iran through what they feared most, on Ketamine, and they all left the hospital. Now, I tried the same thing, after I read that. That evening I took 150 milligrams of Ketamine, and suddenly the Earth Coincidence Control Office removed my penis and handed it to me. I screamed in terror. My wife Toni came running in from the bedroom, and she said, "It's still attached." So I shouted at the ceiling, "Who's in charge up there? A bunch of crazy kids?" The answer came back, "Well, you had an unconscious fear, so we put you through it, just the way the Iranian psychiatrist did."

MISHLOVE: In the realm of the mind, the province of the mind, we can face all our fears.

LILLY: Well, you may not be able to live with it, but you should try it.

MISHLOVE: I often find in dreams that the things that would destroy the body, in the realm of the mind, don't.

LILLY: That's right. The survival programs, as I found out earlier from doing neurophysiology, are built into the brain. The rewarding systems, euphoric systems, and the sexual systems, and the painful, punishing, anger systems are all built in. And then you realize that the cerebral cortex has many, many paths to these systems and from these systems, so you don't have to go through these states.

MISHLOVE: Let's focus a little bit on some of the terms you mentioned a moment ago. You mentioned Ketamine. What is Ketamine?

LILLY: Ketamine is the most commonly used anesthetic for very young children and old people. In the literature there are emergence symptoms that are described, emergence being coming out of the anesthetic. Some doctors don't like those emergence symptoms, so they won't use it. Others know what they are, so they just hold the hand of the patient and help him come out. It was the most commonly used anesthetic in Vietnam. Some places won't use it at all, but are frightened of it.

MISHLOVE: Basically, what a strong dose of Ketamine will do is make you unaware of your body.

LILLY: Yes, it can. I don't like it anymore.

MISHLOVE: But it creates a state where one can enter into inner realities free from the attachments of the body.

LILLY: ECCO told me to stop using it, and get back here and learn how to be human.

MISHLOVE: In your book *The Scientist* you describe going through a period of very intensive explorations with Vitamin K, as you described it at that point -- to the extent that people thought you were -- and it's not clear to me whether you were or not -- addicted to the substance.

LILLY: Well, when one is doing research on a substance, one takes it so frequently that outside observers can say you're addicted, but that's a very bad definition of addiction.

MISHLOVE: I think in many ways whether you were or weren't, one has to admire your willingness to always push the frontiers of our knowledge further, and it's clear that that was your motivation for the work that you did.

LILLY: Any good research is obsessive and compulsive.

MISHLOVE: You also mentioned the term ECCO. What is ECCO?

LILLY: E-C-C-O. In Italian it means, "This is it." But it means to me the Earth Coincidence Control Office, which is one of God's field offices. ECCO runs our lives, though we won't admit it. If you're an ECCO agent, you can be very, very careful to use your best intelligence in ECCO's service, and you realize there are no discoveries, there are only revelations. That was a come-down for me as a scientist.

MISHLOVE: Well, I've found in my own work in the media and parapsychology, that I'm very much guided by coincidences.

LILLY: Right.

MISHLOVE: And I guess it's looking to coincidences as signs along the way that defines this relationship with what you've defined as ECCO.

LILLY: Right, the Earth Coincidence Control. It's coincidence control that they do, and they say, "We control the long-term coincidences; you control the short-term ones. And when you find out how we do the long-term ones, you no longer have to remain on earth; you don't have to return there."

MISHLOVE: It seems to me as if your concept of ECCO is a way of modeling a mechanism behind what Jung has defined as synchronicity.

LILLY: That's right. Jung defined synchronicity only in a good fashion in his introduction to the *I Ching*, and he uses the term coincidences.

MISHLOVE: Meaningful coincidences.

LILLY: But of course the coincidences are in your own construction, your own language construction of the events. So that's all a fake too. As I say at the beginning of my workshops, "Everything I say here is a lie -- bullshit, in other words -- because anything that you put in words is not experience, is not the experiment. It's a representation -- a misrepresentation."

MISHLOVE: And here we are misrepresenting to each other in order that we can learn from these lies.

LILLY: Right. Now if you use language injunctively, as a set of directions, then it's not as bad as it is otherwise.

MISHLOVE: So in other words, for example, when you talk about ECCO, when you talk about perhaps going into an inner reality using sensory isolation, which is one of the other technologies in which you pioneered --

LILLY: In 1954, I invented it.

MISHLOVE: Or using a number of different molecules which can be used for this purpose, or mystical disciplines -- when one enters into these realities, each set of instructions carries with it usually a belief system.

LILLY: Right.

MISHLOVE: And basically what you're saying is that all of these belief systems are wrong, but one needs to entertain or to hold the belief system in order to follow through the instructions.

LILLY: That's right. Our brains are so small we have to do this.

MISHLOVE: So the belief system itself becomes a tool that we work with, and then eventually we have to let go of.

LILLY: Right.

MISHLOVE: And using these belief systems, you've been able to in effect map out the inner terrain of inner space in a manner which has as rich and varied flora and fauna and geography as one would find on any continent, perhaps richer.

LILLY: But if you take the same kinds of trips, you'll find a different flora and fauna at different times.

MISHLOVE: Each time.

LILLY: So in the province of the mind there aren't any limits.

MISHLOVE: And yet if one pushes that very, very far, I guess no limits almost means nothing. There's nothing there. Limits is what defines things, it's what creates form.

LILLY: I hadn't thought of it that way. Well, there are no limits that you put on it previously, and new limits may appear, which define it in an entirely new way, which is much larger. That's all that means.

MISHLOVE: I almost have the sense, though, that if there are no limits in the province of the mind, that we humans and other beings create limits of our own to make it interesting, to make the game worth playing.

LILLY: Well, you can't live as a human without limits, and that's your body. They're built into your brain. The pattern recognition system is in your brain, for instance. If one hallucinates, say, on cocaine, one sees a bush over there as an old lady crying with a shawl over her head. You walk over and it's a bush. Now if somebody else is on cocaine and they look at that same bush, they'll see the old lady crying. So this apparently is pattern recognition systems that are built into our brains, and are given at birth probably.

MISHLOVE: In other words, in certain altered states of consciousness, there is an ability, I suppose, to be telepathic, to cognize the thoughts directly of another person.

LILLY: I think it's more than that. It's a particularly noisy pattern of the bush, in striking your brain, is reorganized, personified by the brain. All brains do the same thing, even if you're not in telepathic communication. So you have an alternate there. Do you know about alternity?

MISHLOVE: Alternity, that's a wonderful word. No.

LILLY: I experienced alternity very dramatically when I came back from Chile. I sat in Elizabeth Campbell's living room in Los Angeles, in what I call the prophet meditation

-- sitting on the floor, my spine ramrod straight. Suddenly a line of light comes down through my spine, and there are leaves of different realities all around me. I can look into the future, and the present is here in each of those as it goes on out to many years from now, and goes to infinity upwards. There's a tremendous amount of power going through this. Well, the next morning I was thrown out of bed by the Sylmar earthquake, and I thought, "Gee, did I cause that? Or was it caused by the same energy that went through me?" And then I realized that this was hubris -- he whom the gods would destroy, he has hubris.

MISHLOVE: Filled with pride.

LILLY: And so I lost my pride, and I realized that I couldn't explain either of them.

MISHLOVE: Alternity, as you've described it, then, would seem to be a space in which you're in touch with many alternate realities, all simultaneously.

LILLY: Yes, and then you get caught with one, as I did.

MISHLOVE: It seems very similar in a way to what physicists are describing when they talk about the multiple-universe interpretation of quantum physics.

LILLY: That's right. Francis Jeffreys is writing my biography, and he describes alternity from the wave function of quantum mechanics, and when you collapse it you've chosen one alternate in future.

MISHLOVE: You've referred several times now to the fact that in the province of the body there are limits, and you yourself have thrown yourself up against those limits on many occasions and have written about it. In your writing you seem to be warning people maybe not to do everything that you've done.

LILLY: That's right. They don't have to. See this hand? I have to keep it in ointment, because on 11-11-87 I drove my car up a slight bank, turned it over, and totaled it. The battery acid burned this hand, and these knuckles were broken, and that's all. If I'd had my seat belt on I would have been decapitated. But ECCO was showing me something, that I wasn't exploring alternates properly. I was caught with one.

MISHLOVE: There's a wonderful section in your book *The Scientist*, in which you describe a conversation amongst different beings in an altered state, who are describing how carefully they worked to create all the coincidences so that you

could have an accident in which you nearly died, and were resuscitated by your wife Toni who had just learned mouth-to-mouth resuscitation three days earlier.

LILLY: Right. Then the other accident, the one that closed off Vitamin K for me, where I was on a ten-speed bicycle going down Decker Canyon Road, and the chain caught, and I hit the road and nine bones were broken. But I didn't say in *The Scientist* that I was on PCP at the time, forty-two milligrams injected. So I was out in the hospital for five days and five nights, and was taken by ECCO to planets that were being destroyed by supernova waves, by atomic warfare, and so on. It was incredible. When I'd try to come back here, I'd come back and Toni would be there and I'd grab on for six or seven hours, then they'd take me back out. I hadn't finished the lessons.

MISHLOVE: What do you think the lesson is?

LILLY: Well, the lesson in that case was, "Look up the dose for PCP before you take any." It's two milligrams, not forty-two. And the other lessons, of course, were that I came back and wanted to put on radiation suits. This planet is not very stable. It can be destroyed at any time.

MISHLOVE: There's a sense in the way in which you live your life, right out on the very edge of what would be called not just normalcy, or the edge of what is conventionally safe to do, but the very edge of what is physically possible for a human being to do --

LILLY: Going to the limits of the body.

MISHLOVE: And in so doing -- well, of course you've discovered, like the Fool in the Tarot deck, you put yourself into this position of nascent wisdom, in which you're bound to make mistakes. One can't explore the way you have without making mistakes, and yet those very mistakes seem to propel you even deeper.

LILLY: I have a saying, "There are no mistakes, there are only correctable errors. There are no errors, there are only alternate programs." They just get the guilt.

MISHLOVE: There is a sense in which you have lived your life on the internal reality, that I almost feel like your being with me here in a TV studio is like you've come up for air a little bit to breathe together with us, and to share what it's like in these vast, vast realms, light years away from planetside reality.

LILLY: I call that in-sanity, and when we're talking together we're in out-sanity. And you should never try to express all of your in-sanity in the out-sanity, or they'll lock you up.

MISHLOVE: But in a way you've expressed more of your in-sanity than most people would ever dare to.

LILLY: Well, a lot of people take my books as permission to go further with that.

MISHLOVE: One would almost think an entire generation, perhaps several generations of people, now feel much freer to describe their own inner experiences because of people like you doing it at a time when it was much riskier.

LILLY: I'm always surprised at how many people have read my books and been influenced by them.

MISHLOVE: Well, I can certainly say that that's the case for me.

LILLY: I think you'll like the new edition of *The Scientist*. It has all the things I left out of the first one, seventy-five new pages in it, and fifty new photographs. And I admit that it was Ketamine, not Vitamin K.

MISHLOVE: But you're not using Ketamine currently.

LILLY: No. I don't like it anymore.

MISHLOVE: Are you still doing work in sensory isolation?

LILLY: Once in a while. But I never talk about what I'm doing currently. Remember Human Biocomputer? I was doing that work with LSD in the tank in St. Thomas, and the National Institute of Mental Health, from which I was on a fellowship, thought I was just working with dolphins. So when I sent them Human Biocomputer as the report for five years of the fellowship, they wrote back, "We didn't realize we were going to get a monograph from this work." I don't think they read it.

MISHLOVE: And they cut off your funding shortly thereafter, didn't they?

LILLY: Yes. Somebody told the people supporting the dolphin research that I had brain damage from LSD. Well, I got that rumor, so I took it to the head of the Mental Health Council that was supporting the work. He was the head of the Neurological Institute in New York, and he got angry when they said that, so he spent three days examining me. I never had such a thorough examination. He got angrier and angrier. He said, "Absolutely no evidence." He said, "Do you want any more research money?" I said, "No, I've quit that." So he said, "All right, I'm going to fire two people, one in the Institute and one on my committee." So he did.

MISHLOVE: Well, I suppose for our culture the really special thing about you is the fact that you really have a foot in both worlds, the scientific camp and the mystical camp. And in a way you seem dissatisfied with both of them. Neither camp seems to provide an adequate enough model of reality for you.

LILLY: That's right. My own beliefs are unbelievable.

MISHLOVE: And you seem to be saying that it's up to each person to in effect make the same bridge that you have, and to create their own belief system, so that in creating that belief they can move into the state that that belief leads them to, so that they can then discard it again.

LILLY: That's the gnostic point of view -- self transcendence, not transcendence through a church or a group.

MISHLOVE: Back fifteen years ago or so, you were exploring the mystical states, as described classically as the various levels of samadhi, in your work with Oscar Ichazo in Chile, in the Arica school.

LILLY: Right.

MISHLOVE: You had achieved, as we have described earlier, some of the very highest states of those mystical traditions, and you wrote about them from your own personal experience. People in the mystical traditions view these states as being ultimate states. I get the sense that you don't think of them that way. You think of them more the way a scientist would look at tools.

LILLY: Well, Patanjali, for instance, in 400 B.C. said, "When you reach the highest form of samadhi, you realize there are hundreds more beyond that." I agree; there's no limit.

MISHLOVE: Well, John Lilly, it's been a pleasure having you with me. Thank you very much.

LILLY: Thank you. It's a pleasure being here. You sure do know how to ask the right questions.

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