

ESP, CLAIRVOYANCE AND REMOTE PERCEPTION with RUSSELL TARG



JEFFREY MISHLOVE, Ph.D.: Hello and welcome. Our topic today is ESP, or clairvoyance, or what modern parapsychologists now term remote viewing, and my guest, Russell Targ, a laser physicist, is probably one of America's foremost parapsychology researchers. Russell founded the parapsychology research program at SRI International with his partner, physicist Hal Puthoff. He is currently a senior staff scientist with Lockheed Corporation; is the president of the Bay Research Institute, an organization which is actively involved in parapsychology research; has authored numerous professional articles on parapsychology research, and co-authored three books, *Mind at Large*, *Mind Reach*, and *The Mind Race*. Welcome, Russell.

RUSSELL TARG: Hello. I'm happy to be here.

MISHLOVE: It's a pleasure for me to have you here, especially since you were one of the people who inspired me to do remote viewing research when I was a graduate student at Berkeley.

TARG: I remember you came to our laboratory, and were one of the first people to go through our protocol when we were first learning how to do remote viewing in the laboratory.

MISHLOVE: That was over ten years ago, I was very impressed with your research then because I had the opportunity to experience myself as a successful psychic percipient in that work, and I know that subsequently your research has been replicated by dozens of laboratories around the world.

TARG: Yes, the biggest favor that a scientist can do for another scientist is to successfully replicate his experiment. The strength of the remote viewing is not that we investigated it, or that something psychic happened in California, but rather that people all over the world have been able to do remote viewing under good laboratory conditions, even in the Soviet Union.

MISHLOVE: Your research diverged a bit from the parapsychology research studies of J.B. Rhine. It was pretty much all card guessing that was the predominant research paradigm, until you developed this new protocol, which we should explain.

TARG: Probably for two decades, Rhine had popularized the card-guessing protocol, where a person in the laboratory would be asked to describe what somebody was thinking of -- was it a circle, a square, or a star? What Rhine found was that people could do that pretty well, but no matter how successful they were at the outset, they always got worse. So that although Rhine found statistically significant ESP in the laboratory, it's as though he found a way to extinguish psychic abilities, which isn't at all what he was trying to do. This decline effect plagued two decades of research.

MISHLOVE: I suppose you could say card-guessing tests just get awfully boring after a while.

TARG: It's boring, and it tries to develop an ability that people don't have. Guessing things is an analytical ability. You try to figure out, is it a circle, is it a square, is it a star? What we found is that if I ask you to describe a place that I've been to, anywhere in the world, and we agree that you have never been there, that's an easier task to do than to guess a number from 1 to 10. And the reason it's easier is that if you close your eyes and see your house, or the outside of this building, you'll know that's not the right answer. But if you see some peculiar, hard-to-describe thing that's a surprise, what we have found is that it's the surprising character of this that allows you to

get in touch with the psychic image and not tell that it's some kind of mental noise or imagination or memory.

MISHLOVE: And also, rather than spend maybe a half hour having a person go through a hundred or two hundred trials, you might spend all afternoon working on a single trial.

TARG: That's right. In the laboratory I have acted generally as a kind of psychic travel agent. I would sit with you, as we did, and say, "Jeffrey, can you tell me about your mental impressions with regard to where somebody has gone to hide?" And you would begin to describe fragmentary images. If you then say, "I know what it is. It's Macy's department store," I would say, "Let's take a break. Don't tell me about Macy's, which is an analysis; rather, I want to know how you feel about the place, what your mental images are, what you're experiencing." Over the years I've become skillful as an interviewer, to help a viewer describe the psychic signal and separate it from the mental noise. The strength of our work is that the viewers with whom we've worked for many, many years have gotten better and better at remote viewing. So the big distinction between our work and the card guessing is that in remote viewing people can get a grip on this intellectual ability, learn to do remote viewing, improve the skill, and incorporate it into their lives, rather than this other rather banal task that they get worse at because of no intrinsic interest.

MISHLOVE: I also think it's fascinating, Russell, that of all the people who have come to visit you in your laboratory, such as myself and various government contract monitors and the like, who have participated as percipients or subjects in your research, you almost inevitably are able to develop a successful experiment with them.

TARG: We have a very high hit rate with all sorts of visitors. In fact, let me show you a government contract monitor that I have right here on the floor. This was a scientist who came to our laboratory; he wanted to see something psychic. He'd been supporting our work for a couple of years. As we sat down in the laboratory room, he said,

"Well, who's going to be the psychic? Who's going to do this?" I said, "You are." He was shocked and said, "I don't even believe in this stuff." I explained to him that it's not a matter of belief: "Our experience is that if you will just do what I tell you, this will come out all right, and if it doesn't it'll be my fault; are you comfortable with that?" He said he could go along with that. I interviewed him, as we started to do earlier here, and I said, "My partner Hal Puthoff and your partner have gone to some randomly chosen San Francisco Bay Area location. I would like you to tell me about your mental impressions of where they are." The fact that he wasn't even familiar with the San Francisco Bay Area was to our advantage; it would eliminate guessing. Around the edge of a page he made a whole bunch of little pen-and-ink sketches and said, "What this thing really comes down to is some sort of big rectangle superimposed on a long rectangle. It looks like a building with some kind of columns in front of it." He then made this very nice pen-and-ink sketch in the middle of all these fragmentary drawings, and he said, "It looks to me like a building something like this." And that nice drawing came out of seven or eight little fragmentary bits that just were the things that he first saw. I thanked him very much; I couldn't tell him whether it was successful because I didn't know where the people had gone, of course.

MISHLOVE: Double-blind conditions in your research.

TARG: Yes, all of our experiments are double-blind. As an interviewer, I can say anything I want to the viewer, because I don't know where the people have gone, even in principle.

MISHLOVE: You worked very hard -- and I think our viewers should understand this -- to eliminate any possibility of cheating here, or of sensory leakage.

TARG: That's right. This was a kind of demonstration-of-ability task for a contract monitor. They went and hid, and I had to extract from this reluctant viewer what his mental pictures were. When Hal and

the other fellow came back, they had taken a Polaroid picture of where they were. They were at the Stanford University Art Museum, about five miles south of SRI in Palo Alto; our laboratory was in Menlo Park. They stood in this building talking to each other and taking pictures while my viewer in the laboratory five miles away was making this drawing. In blind judging, judges had no problem deciding that this drawing probably pertained to this building.

MISHLOVE: In other words, the judges would be shown the drawing, and then maybe five or six possible targets, and they would have to match up or rank-order the possible targets against the drawing.

TARG: That's right. I could give you another example at a longer distance. The viewer in this case was again not a famous psychic; he was an SRI physicist who felt that he was using some kind of psychic ability in the analysis that he did for a living. In this case I was in New Orleans, and my task was to randomly choose a hiding place. I was actually traveling across the country visiting ever more distant places from SRI, to see if it was harder to describe a distant location than a nearby location. Incidentally, I recognize that all this sounds very impossible, and as a physicist I'm a little uncomfortable that we don't have an explanation. I can tell you in some detail how to do remote viewing, how to help other people do it, but we as yet don't have an explanation of the physics underlying this.

MISHLOVE: Although there are some interesting speculations.

TARG: Yes, there are. This fellow was sitting in an electrically shielded room on the SRI campus. I was 1500 miles away standing at the Superdome, which I had chosen with a roll of the die in New Orleans. He said, "I see some kind of circular building." And he made the drawings that we show here, as I stood at the New Orleans Superdome. There was an interesting thing that happened here, that confuses how we characterize psychic functioning. As I stood with my little tape recorder, I said, "I'm at the New Orleans Superdome. It looks to me like nothing so much as a flying saucer shining in the

noonday sun." Meanwhile my poor viewer back in the laboratory said to the interviewer, who's another physicist, Elizabeth Rauscher, "I don't know what to do. When I close my eyes, all I see is this damn flying saucer." As a good interviewer, she said, "Don't worry about the UFO. Just tell me what you're experiencing." And they went on and did this very successful experiment.

MISHLOVE: In other words, you try to get to the raw sensory impressions, without any intellectual overlay.

TARG: That's right. We try and do everything to get the person to describe his impression, and not to guess at what it might be. He knew this was an important, expensive experiment, and was upset that he saw something that he knew was an imaginary construct. We'll never know whether it was stimulated by this building that does resemble a drawing of a flying saucer, or whether it was a telepathic image that I had that he picked up on.

MISHLOVE: And your subjects were not in an altered state of consciousness, had not gone through any particular preparation prior to the experiment. You just said, "Close your eyes and see what imagery you get."

TARG: That's right. No drugs, no hypnosis, no meditation. We always felt as people came in through the entry of SRI and saw millions of dollars of expensive equipment, that in a sense they were blessed by SRI. It said, "This is a big laboratory supporting it. The government says it's OK. SRI says it's OK. Even though being psychic is a slightly forbidden activity in the society, we will give you permission to do it now." We think that's one of the reasons that we had a lot of success.

MISHLOVE: You had all the accouterments of the priesthood of our modern culture.

TARG: That's right. No white lab coats; we tried to make people comfortable. An important aspect of making them comfortable is

that this activity was always a very happy occasion. It would be a game. We would be talking about going out for coffee or ice cream afterwards. We expected this to be successful. We were not twisting the person's arm to see whether they were one of this weird group of psychic people, but rather we were investigating the phenomenon. We expected it to work, and we found that people could describe in great detail bridges, buildings, swimming pools, beaches, over the whole length and breadth of the globe.

MISHLOVE: And you also found that people could describe very small objects as well, didn't you?

TARG: Yes. We did a series of experiments, after we found that you could do intercontinental remote viewing as well as across town. We then started looking at smaller and smaller objects. We hit Raggedy Ann and trumpets and telephones, and people could describe those intermediate-size objects. And then we went to little objects in film cans, and then we went to microdots, and people could describe the whole range of objects that we eventually went through.

MISHLOVE: And then you began looking at precognition: can people describe targets that hadn't been chosen, or wouldn't be chosen until a future time?

TART: That's right. One of our most successful viewers was the ex-police commissioner of Burbank, California, Pat Price. He came to us and said, "I've been using this kind of ability all my life to catch criminals. Would you like to work with me?" We thought that was very interesting, since he had his scrapbook with him and showed us all his clippings from his successful exploits as police commissioner. We did a number of trials with Price and sat in the screened room with him. One day he said, "You know, we really don't have to wait for the travelers to get to their distant location. I could tell you right now where they're going to be when they get there." He then gave us a detailed description of little boats in a marina, and a restaurant and a manicured lawn. A half hour later they arrived at their site, and

a half hour after that they came back to SRI, and that was one of the most accurate descriptions we'd ever had. We have found in a recent trip to the Soviet Union that in the psychology laboratory in the Armenian Academy of Sciences in Yerevan, a professor told us a story just like the one that I related to you -- that they were doing remote viewing experiments with psychology students, and from time to time, unasked for, this student in the shielded room would describe where his brother student would go, even before the target was chosen. And that of course gave us the clue that there are many avenues open to psychic functioning. The person in the laboratory might describe where his friend is hiding because they have mind-to-mind communication, some kind of telepathy; or the person might remotely view where he is by clairvoyance, direct perception of the place. The third opportunity, in our experiments in particular, is precognitive, because as you remember in each of our experiments we would always take the viewer to the location for feedback after the experiment. So it's possible that the viewer was simply looking into his own future, as though he was reading his mind in the future.

MISHLOVE: Looking into the state of their brain, you might even say, into the future.

TARG: That's right. That led us to do a collection of experiments where we tried to differentiate those things, and we found that precognitive experiments were every bit as reliable as ordinary remote viewing. In fact, Dean Robert Jahn at Princeton has now catalogued almost three hundred precognitive remote viewings done at Princeton, and the University of Mundelein College in Chicago, and SRI. He has three hundred experiments, all evaluated with a computerized program, and he found them significant at odds of more than a hundred billion to one, an enormously significant body of data. He said that we have to conclude that there's some kind of not-understood information channel that allows people to systematically describe hidden places; he calls this precognitive remote perception. This is an ongoing program at Princeton, just as there is an ongoing program at SRI.

MISHLOVE: Russell, for many, many years your research at SRI was funded by the United States government. Was there any sense that the government was looking at potential applications?

TARG: Well, when we were in the Soviet Union, that question came up. We spoke to the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and one of the physicists stood up in the audience after we had made a presentation, and he said to the audience, "From the work you have described and from the work in the Soviet Union, it seems clear that an experienced remote viewer can focus his attention anywhere on the planet and describe what's there. Doesn't that mean that it's not possible to hide anything anymore?" Certainly the idea that it's not possible to hide anything anymore is of interest to all governments. It's especially a revolutionary idea in the Soviet Union, where they are really obsessed with secrecy. So the idea that there may not be any secrets is a whole new view for them.

MISHLOVE: Do you think this idea is being taken seriously now by the governments who are in possession of this research data?

TARG: Well, the work at SRI is funded even at a higher level now than when I was there, so I have to assume the government is still very interested indeed in remote viewing and its applications.

MISHLOVE: After you left SRI, you began doing more extensive work in the practical applications of remote viewing.

TARG: Well, we became very interested in teasing out the fine points of precognition. We wanted to see, for example, is feedback essential? And we found that feedback was not essential. We also wanted to find out if it's harder to predict an unlikely event than a likely event. We were interested in applying precognitive remote viewing to the stock market, and we wanted to make sure that if all America felt silver was going up and it was really going down, we didn't want the viewer to be erroneously influenced. So we did an experiment and found that it is no harder to correctly forecast an unlikely event than a likely event.

MISHLOVE: In this experiment, as I understand it, you used a unique twist on the remote-viewing method called associative remote viewing, didn't you?

TARG: That's right. We can't ask a person to read the numbers on the big board at the commodity exchange. From what we've been saying, you know that you can't do that kind of analytical task. I can't say, "Silver is now closing at eight and a half today; what's it going to close at tomorrow?" The person will say, "Well, it's been going up; how about nine?" We don't want to encourage the person to get into a guessing game. Instead, we will say, "Here we are on a Thursday. Silver is going to trade Friday and Monday, and over the weekend there are often events that stir up things, that kind of cosmic random-number generator; and Monday we will show you a picture or hand you an object of some interesting kind. Now, Monday's object will be determined by whether silver goes up or down, and I would like you to describe now the object we will hand you on Monday." And you will say, "I see some kind of object." I would then go to my partner and say, "We have a description. Can you tell me about the two objects that you have chosen for Jeffrey to describe?" And he'll say, "Yes, I have two objects. If silver goes up, we will hand Jeffrey a champagne bottle; that was my randomly chosen object. If silver goes down, we will hand him a pancake." And I say, "Well, that's very interesting. I have a description from Jeffrey here. He's describing some kind of flat, squashy, soft thing with a funny smell." And my partner would say, "Well, that sounds pretty much like my pancake. It's a good description. We'll sell silver." Silver will then, in our experience, go down over the weekend, even though it had been going up, and on Monday afternoon we'll hand you a pancake, because that's the feedback object. And ostensibly, the thing that you were forecasting on the Thursday was the experience you were going to have the following Monday. We did an experiment like this in 1982 with Keith Harary as the viewer. Each Thursday he would make a forecast of what I would hand him the following Monday, and we made nine consecutive successful investments in the silver market, based on whether Keith saw an ice cream cone or a tuna fish

sandwich; and it took a very courageous investor to be willing to put money into the silver market based on Keith's perception on a Thursday. And in that I should mention that we were willing, as they say, to put our money where our mouth is. We made these investments and turned a profit of \$120,000, which our investor shared with us.

MISHLOVE: Are you still working in this area?

TARG: Yes. We're now doing a national ESP test, in which people from all over the country write in to us, take part in this adventure. They fill out a checklist of what objects they will get the following week in the mail, and working with people across America, who have just read instructions, we have 36 successes out of 51 trials, which is significant at odds of more than a hundred to one. What that means is that if you were choosing silver, whether to buy it or sell it, by throwing darts into a dart board, as many people do, with about that success, you'd be right about half the time. Our viewers were a hundred times more successful than that. So if you did this 99 times, only one time out of that group of 99 times would you do as well as our psychic viewers are doing. Very significant accomplishment.

MISHLOVE: Is it making money?

TARG: We're not in the market right now. We're planning to go into the market. After our nine successes, we then were not successful the following year, and we feel that greed interfered with it. Our investor wanted to invest twice as often per week and give us half as much, and that was probably a bad sign. We got our calculator going and discovered if we continued at only three-quarters of that rate, we would soon have more than a trillion dollars. So our view was also not exactly spiritual. I think we lost that single-pointed focus of attention that is crucial, and we began to focus more on the money than on the fun and excitement of doing new research in parapsychology.

MISHLOVE: So at this point you've kind of regrouped your efforts and are beginning a new program.

TARG: That's right. And our viewers are separated; this is arm's length. The people working with us are doing it for the feedback about how their psychic abilities are. They're able to get in touch with the part of themselves that is psychic through the feedback and reinforcement of the experiments. If they are interested, they can call us up and we will tell them what the group has forecast for that week.

MISHLOVE: So they might invest on their own at that point.

TARG: For example, in our first five-week experiment, we had one lady on the East Coast who wrote us that she had always been interested in this; her children always thought she was psychic. Each week she would call us up to see how she was doing, and she's the only person in that series who was correct all five weeks. So we think that she probably had some special insight, or intuition, that she was really doing pretty well.

MISHLOVE: Well, other than investing in commodities and futures and stocks and the like, are there other practical applications you're working on, Russell?

TARG: We think that every time a person has to make a decision where they don't know what the answer is, they can reach for their intuitive or their psychic abilities. The intuitive side, of course, is the sum total of everything you've learned and put into your unconscious processes. The psychic part is even beyond that, where you suddenly get an idea for how to do something that nobody has ever had before -- an entirely new idea. And it's probably not possible to separate out those two things, and you only do it probabilistically.

MISHLOVE: Russell, we're out of time. It's been a real pleasure having you with me. You've certainly demonstrated how hard-headed

physicists can approach this exotic field of psychic phenomena.
Thank you for being with me.

TARG: Thank you.