

FRANCIS BACON AND WESTERN MYSTICISM

JEFFREY MISHLOVE, Ph.D.: Hello and welcome. Our topic today is Francis Bacon and the Western mystical tradition. My guest, Peter Dawkins, is an architect, a Cambridge scholar, founder and president of the Francis Bacon Research Trust, also founder and president of the Gatekeeper Trust, an organization which specializes in looking at sacred architecture. Peter, welcome.

PETER DAWKINS: Thank you.

MISHLOVE: It's a pleasure to have you here. I think it would be useful, in beginning our discussion, to define what is the Western mystical tradition, and how would it differ from the Eastern mystical tradition?

DAWKINS: Perhaps one think of it as a more scientific approach to the mysteries, particularly when we come to Bacon's role in it. In the East the emphasis is very much more on meditation and lifting one's consciousness into the heights. In the West there's been more emphasis on doing that, but not staying there but bringing the thoughts right down to earth and putting them into practice. And so the practical side comes into it very much.

MISHLOVE: Most people, when they think of Francis Bacon, would think of him as the founder of modern science, as a great empiricist, a philosopher who was anything but a mystic, from what we typically hear of him today. Yet in your scholarship you've come to the conclusion -- not just yourself, but many scholars, have come to the conclusion that he was really deeply involved in mystical thinking.

DAWKINS: He was. He was a very profound mystic, and his writings are not easy to read, and I think this is why many people miss the point. But every other sentence, virtually, he makes is an acknowledgment to God. And also he always says, whenever he talks about the knowledge he gains, that most of it comes from divine inspiration. So most of the world thinks of him as somebody who teaches the rational mind, the workings of the rational mind, and so on. We don't realize that he's really saying divine inspiration is the most important thing of all.

MISHLOVE: Now let's step back just a little, because I imagine that some of our viewers don't know anything at all about Renaissance England, or who Francis Bacon was. Why don't we give them a little context -- when was he born? What did he do? What is he known for conventionally?

DAWKINS: He was born in 1561, and he was born under an aura of mystery, and he maintained that mystery throughout the rest of his life. He became known, really, for writings produced under the name of Bacon after 1604, when King James I came to the throne, but his life during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, which was the time when he was born -- the first forty years of his life -- are shrouded in mystery. And yet when he died, in 1626, all the people at the time who knew him proclaimed him as a great poet, a great writer who filled the world with his writings. But when you look at only what he wrote under the name of Bacon, it's very few books indeed.

MISHLOVE: Today Francis Bacon is regarded as one of the pivotal figures of the English Renaissance, is he not?

DAWKINS: Very much so, yes.

MISHLOVE: The person who introduced empirical science to the English-speaking world -- would that be a fair statement?

DAWKINS: It's pretty fair. It's said that he brought in the process of induction of the mind, that sort of process.

MISHLOVE: Inductive logic.

DAWKINS: Inductive logic. In fact he taught both inductive logic and deductive. He wasn't saying don't deduce, but he added the inductive logic as well.

MISHLOVE: You say he wrote under the name of Bacon -- implying, as many people speculate, I suppose, that he's also the author of Shakespeare's writings.

DAWKINS: That's right.

MISHLOVE: I don't know if we can get into that too much, but let's step back a little bit, because it seems as if much of his writing is in the same vein as is the earlier English writer Roger Bacon, who was also an empiricist.

DAWKINS: It's very true. It looks as if Roger Bacon sort of prepared the way, for what Francis Bacon later did, and included in that is the sort of alchemical approach to science. Francis himself carried on that scientific approach, and he's really an alchemist. Nowadays we misunderstand what alchemist means.

MISHLOVE: Now, Frances Yates, a great Renaissance scholar, has written many books about the occult tradition in Renaissance times, and I suppose it's fair to say that during the English Renaissance, which in many ways represented the height of English culture -- Bacon and Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth, and so on -- these occult views were the dominant philosophy of the time, were they not?

DAWKINS: Very much so, yes. I mean, it was almost natural to be a mystic or occultist in those days. But if you were you had to be very quiet about it, because of the religious quarrels that were going on. It was quite a dangerous period to live in.

MISHLOVE: It was a time of great turmoil.

DAWKINS: Yes.

MISHLOVE: Francis Bacon was a person whom the scholar Frances Yates suggests was actually the founder of a major Western mystery school known as the Rosicrucians.

DAWKINS: Yes, that's right. But of course he did it secretly, did it quietly. The Rosicrucians were known to be a secret body of people. They called themselves the invisibles. They worked behind the scenes, and they didn't want people to know who they were at that time because their work would have been stopped. And so one of their rules was that whatever they did, in terms of writings or whatever it might be, they did it under pseudonyms or

anonymously. They didn't use their own names. If they used their own names it would have identified them, and there were forces that would have come in and stopped it.

MISHLOVE: And they were writing about themes that are still very important to us today, such as building up civilization and developing a worldwide brotherhood for the betterment of humanity.

DAWKINS: That's right, they were really trying to build up the basic theme of developing friendship, justice, and freedom -- freedom of the human soul from tyranny and ignorance and so on, looking towards a world of peace.

MISHLOVE: Bacon himself wrote a book -- The New Atlantis, as I recall -- which developed all of these themes, didn't it?

DAWKINS: Yes it did. Only part of it was published -- again, part of his method was to only publish part of something. You leave something concealed, so there's a treasure hunt, and if you get interested in it you get drawn into the treasure hunt.

MISHLOVE: In other words, this is deliberate.

DAWKINS: It's deliberate.

MISHLOVE: In order to interest the most curious minds?

DAWKINS: That's right.

MISHLOVE: And I gather you're one of those --

DAWKINS: I'm one of those curious ones.

MISHLOVE: You've been drawn into the treasure hunt.

DAWKINS: Yes, yes. The New Atlantis was a utopia type of writing, but it was very grounded. It's not a sort of wishy-washy dream; it's something that could be achieved. And not only did he have it as an idea, he set in motion the process that would actually make it possible to achieve.

MISHLOVE: Let's talk about that. First of all, what was his idea? What was he proclaiming in The New Atlantis?

DAWKINS: He was proclaiming a land that was ruled by a government of wise people -- wise, compassionate people, elected by the country -- a democratic ideal. But the people there who are in politics, if you like, the government of the day, are actually the wise people -- the seers, the sages, and very compassionate.

MISHLOVE: In the tradition of Plato's Republic, I suppose.

DAWKINS: Absolutely, yes, that's right.

MISHLOVE: In fact Bacon saw himself as a philosopher in the tradition of Plato.

DAWKINS: That's right, yes. And that means a great deal, because Plato is acknowledged as a supreme poet -- not just a poet; poet doesn't mean somebody who writes down verses that rhyme, or something like that. The original meaning of a poet was a teacher, a great teacher who could inspire others and really motivate the population to do better things, and somebody with a vast imagination, and a mystic. Plato was an initiate of the Orphic mysteries, so the whole stream of the Orphic mysteries, with its Platonic love, its divine love and friendship, was a basic part of Bacon's life.

MISHLOVE: When we look at the Western mystical tradition, we really do need to go back to the ancient Greeks.

DAWKINS: Yes we do, and to other places too, like the ancient Egyptians, Hebrews, Persians -- all the others involved in that whole Western mystery tradition.

MISHLOVE: What you're suggesting is that somehow Francis Bacon, who we think of typically as an empiricist, a scientist, a logician, was a conscious and very powerful continuation of that very ancient Western mystical tradition.

DAWKINS: Yes. He's what would be called an emissary of the Brotherhood of Light. He was following a plan that had been passed on down the ages, a plan carried out by the initiates, and he played his part in that plan. And his role was a very big part that he had to play.

MISHLOVE: I presume that most historians of the Renaissance period would claim that there's not a lot of evidence for what you're saying. Or is there? Is it known?

DAWKINS: There's an enormous amount of evidence, but it's carefully hidden as a treasure hunt. You have to find it, and you have to work jolly hard to find it, but it's there.

MISHLOVE: And what is your evidence?

DAWKINS: Well, it would take a long time to show the evidence.

MISHLOVE: What are some of the highlights?

DAWKINS: Some of the highlights are lead-ins to the mystery. Like at the time of the English Renaissance, it all happened in virtually twenty years. Some of the greatest writings and dramas that we still have were done in that time, in twenty years.

MISHLOVE: In a city of approximately fifty thousand people.

DAWKINS: That's right.

MISHLOVE: Which was about the size of London. It's amazing. It would be like Green Bay, Wisconsin all of a sudden producing a Shakespeare and a Bacon and a Marlowe and all of this great talent.

DAWKINS: And not of many of them out of that lot who had a very high education, either. You know, you can count only a few who had a sufficient education to produce these things.

MISHLOVE: I suppose it's fair to say that the entire English-speaking world has been deeply affected by what took place at that time in London.

DAWKINS: Very much. You know, that's a question mark

-- how did it happen in twenty years? Also, how did the English language suddenly increase its vocabulary by ten times, virtually, during that period of time? In the Shakespeare works alone you get approximately twelve thousand new words; I think the Shakespeare works use about thirty-five thousand words altogether. Well, even nowadays a writer doesn't use a fraction of that, virtually.

MISHLOVE: That's very interesting. So something happened that was very powerful, that changed our culture, and somehow Francis Bacon was in the center of all of this.

DAWKINS: He was in the center of it, because as you start to look into how did it happen, who could have created this -- because it's obviously created. You know, words are created by human beings to express something.

MISHLOVE: And if one assumes, as I gather you do, or deduces, as I gather you do, that Bacon not only wrote the philosophical works attributed to Bacon, but also the poetry attributed to Shakespeare, it's quite significant. But even if he didn't, I suppose the fact is that these writers, these individuals, virtually changed all of the English-speaking Western world and beyond.

DAWKINS: Yes. My own researches and those of others who've done this work before me are that there was a small group of highly intelligent people, very gifted people -- poets, writers, artists, dramatists, and so on -- who were called together by Francis Bacon, made into a tightly-knit group, and they dedicated themselves to doing this program, following a vision that Bacon had, which was translated into an actual method -- for the world, for future generations. But it was started then, at that time.

MISHLOVE: Bacon had his teachers as well, though, did he not?

DAWKINS: Oh yes. When he was born he was given a very careful upbringing. He had the best teachers of the time. When he was quite young, twelve or thirteen, he went to university. He had his great vision at that time, his illumination if you like; he knew what he had to do. Then he was sent to France, in banishment really, and he spent several years in France, which he writes of as the greatest time of his life. He loved it. He fell in love with a French lady, a French princess in fact, wanted to marry her but found of course he couldn't, and once that part of his love was stopped, he put all his love into creating this program of enlightenment for mankind.

MISHLOVE: A twist to the story, which I think is worth introducing at this point, is that from the perspective of people such as yourself, who feel that Bacon wrote the works of Shakespeare, concealed in the works of Shakespeare in a cipher code is the story of Bacon's true life, and that he was in effect the illegitimate son of Queen Elizabeth.

DAWKINS: Yes, that's right. In fact he wasn't even illegitimate, because she married secretly just before he was born, so in fact he could have been named as a heir to the throne, but he wasn't.

MISHLOVE: He was never recognized.

DAWKINS: Never recognized.

MISHLOVE: And that whole story emerges from this treasure hunt, from clues found by deciphering Shakespeare's plays, using ciphers that Francis Bacon was well known for generating.

DAWKINS: That's right. He joined the Elizabethan secret service. I think he was told to go into it, because he had such a brilliant mind, recognized from childhood as a genius. And the Queen and her officers used him in encipherment works, and he loved it. He loved ciphers, and he developed a lot of good ciphers when he was quite young, and then he used those in his work, not just to help Queen Elizabeth with state matters, but to put down various secrets, like the real history of the time, also some of his own scientific investigations, which you might call alchemical, and also to put down the wisdom traditions so that they wouldn't be lost.

MISHLOVE: And scholars such as yourself, who take this perspective, believe that you have the codes to decipher these things.

DAWKINS: Some of them. There are still some waiting to be deciphered, I'm sure.

MISHLOVE: Do you think that Bacon, with that enormous genius and vision that he had, still has developed a message that speaks to us now, four or five hundred years after his life?

DAWKINS: Yes, he did. I mean, he did that deliberately, and he says himself that what he's done is for future generations and ages, and he knew what he was teaching could not be accepted by man at large at that time. So he prepared something that could be discovered later on, once the minds of most of us had got to that level where we could comprehend what he was talking about.

MISHLOVE: Now, I'd like to hear what it is he has to say about what would be relevant for our generation, but let's step back just a second and let me ask you this. There are many conventional university scholars who study the Renaissance period, who study the works of Bacon, and they have encountered these theories such as the ones that you're discussing. I don't believe they have accepted these theories. Why not? What is the opposing attitude?

DAWKINS: Well, the main opposing attitude is what Bacon called "idols of the mind," which is a weakness of the human mind. I mean, we all have it; I have it. It's something we have to guard against, especially when we're young. We get taught certain things, and we don't question it. We accept what our elders tell us. It goes into our mind, and we begin to like it, and later on in our life, if that should be challenged, we want to fight back and say, "Oh no, what I've got in my mind is right. This is the truth I have." And so we don't like challenges to it. We have in effect set an idea up as an idol in our mind, and never bothered to check whether it really is a true thought or not. This is a real weakness in our minds, and one of the things Bacon set out to change is this tendency of the human mind to do this, because we have to be more open-minded all the time as we go along, and always realize that we're fallible, that we can make mistakes in our thinking.

MISHLOVE: Are there other objections to your perspective that scholars bring up?

DAWKINS: Yes, I think there are probably lots of objections, depending on who the scholar is.

MISHLOVE: Are there any dominant objections?

DAWKINS: Well, I think the main objection is that of course with the Shakespeare plays, Will Shakespere of Stratford must have written them because his name is on the title page, so of course he wrote them. Well, there's lots of people who wrote things and put names on title pages which are not their own names, but scholars studying Shakespeare don't want to think of that, they don't want to think of that possibility. They're quite happy with the situation as it is. And that's fine -- I mean, Bacon set it up to be like that. He deliberately veiled himself. But the aim is, one day there will be this breakthrough, and people will see who the real author, or authors, were. I think there was a group of people who wrote the Shakespeare plays; Bacon was just the main author of them. Once you get into that, you find that that group wrote other things too under other names, like Marlowe, Greene, Spenser, and so on -- all the great characters, if you like, of the time.

MISHLOVE: You mean virtually the whole of the Elizabethan, the English Renaissance tradition, came from this secret school, so to speak?

DAWKINS: It was created by this secret school who called themselves the Knights of the Rose Cross, and they took Saint George, the red cross or rose cross knight, as their main symbol -- Saint George piercing the dragon of ignorance, as they looked at it, the dragon of ignorance and vice. So they were out to teach morality, and they were out to raise man's consciousness into a state of illumination. But of course they had to work secretly, because a lot of people didn't want that to happen.

MISHLOVE: Some of these people were public about their work. We know the history of the Rosicrucians in this period. John Dee, for example, was a known Rosicrucian and occult scholar, was he not?

DAWKINS: No, not at the time. It's only recent scholarship that can pinpoint this. At the time they were very secret; they weren't known. If they were known, their lives would have been forfeit, because it was very, very dangerous.

MISHLOVE: I see. Let's talk for a moment about how you got drawn into this treasure hunt, Peter. How did that happen?

DAWKINS: Well, I'd studied quite widely, first of all, having been trained as an architect. An aspect of an architect is you have to learn something of everything, and my mind works like that. I seek for sort of universal type knowledge.

MISHLOVE: Architects were traditionally associated with the mystery tradition in the West.

DAWKINS: Yes, they were.

MISHLOVE: The Masons, and the cathedral architects, and so on.

DAWKINS: That's what it took me into. I wanted to learn about sacred architecture, that was teaching the real laws of life in the architecture. And so I studied that deeply, and it took me

into a study of the philosophies of the world and the great sages of the world, and the wisdom traditions that lie behind all the great religions. So I studied that deeply and widely, and then one day we went on a retreat, my wife and I, and on that retreat was a lady who was the secretary of the Francis Bacon Society in England, and she introduced me to Francis Bacon, who I hadn't really studied before. You know, I knew of him, but hadn't really bothered much about him. A great sort of gap in my education, that was. But what she said was so important, and I went away not really knowing what to do about this, except that I was lacking in my education about it, and I was woken up with a vivid dream. Now, I don't often remember dreams, but this one I was woken up to remember. It was quite vivid. There was a certain gentleman making a certain gesture that was important in the dream, with a very short message to send to this lady. So I had to do this at four o'clock in the morning. There was no way I could not do it.

MISHLOVE: You were instructed in your dream to convey a message to this woman who you had met who was with the Francis Bacon Society.

DAWKINS: It was a request, but a request that couldn't be refused. I wrote, and I got a letter back from her by return post saying, "Thank you very much. I've waited twenty years for this. Now we can begin our work." And she asked me a series of questions, and as I read them, suddenly I could answer them, whereas a few days before it probably would have been alien to me.

MISHLOVE: The knowledge or information came to you intuitively.

DAWKINS: It came to me intuitively, or inspirationally. And something changed in my consciousness at that time, and it opened the doorway to another level of consciousness, which I've been working with ever since.

MISHLOVE: Now let's talk about what message you have deciphered or discovered in the writings of Francis Bacon, clearly one of the great figures in the Western tradition by anybody's book. What does Bacon have to say to us today in the twentieth century?

DAWKINS: The greatest message is that we should be concerning ourselves with finding the real law of life, and living that truth in our lives, rather than messing around with other things. If we find that one truth, we can live everything. And that one truth he pinpointed for us as being love, divine love, which all the sages have talked about throughout the ages.

MISHLOVE: It sounds like the basic message of Christianity.

DAWKINS: Yes. We don't tend to understand it properly, because it has such deep meaning. It's difficult to grasp what love is. We tend to think of it as a very wishy-washy emotion and so on, not worth bothering about. But love is the great life force in the universe, and he pointed that out, and he used the teachings of the ancient sages about Cupid. Cupid is the name for love, or Eros. Using the parable stories of the ancients, he interpreted it very simply for us in modern scientific terms, and only now some scientists have suddenly grasped what he's saying. He's saying that love is an emotion. E-motion is the motivating power of the universe; the key is in the words. It's the motivating power. It's movement. Movement is the basic principle of life, of the universe. There are great scientists now who've suddenly got into that secret -- that movement is the basic principle behind everything. And you can start translating in terms of mathematics and so on.

MISHLOVE: And has Bacon taken it that far?

DAWKINS: Bacon knew it, yes. That was the basis of his teachings.

MISHLOVE: So this in a sense might really encapsulate the difference between the Eastern mystical tradition, which certainly also talks about love, but not in terms of movement, almost in terms of non-movement --

DAWKINS: Stillness, yes.

MISHLOVE: Stillness. And the Western tradition, epitomized by Bacon, which suggests that an action or a movement is the fulfillment or expression of love.

DAWKINS: It is love, yes. Movement is love. As soon as you love, you are moving; you are alive. You know, we associate death with non-movement. The more alive somebody is, the more movement they have in them, and they start to shine, they start to light up, because that movement creates a vibration which is light, which is sound, and everything is built on vibration. In actual fact there isn't any difference between the teachings of the East and the West, on the deeper side of it. It's only outwardly that it's presented differently to people. If you go deeply into the Eastern teachings, they'll also give the same.

MISHLOVE: Is there anything more specific about Bacon's work -- we have about a minute left -- that addresses us today? You said he set things in action.

DAWKINS: He set in action a worldwide revolution in thought and action, to raise people's level of consciousness to receive illumination, and to put it into practice to achieve real knowledge. Once you've done something, you can say, "I know." And then he said you have to check what you've done to make sure it's good and useful. If it's good and useful and stands the test of time, then you can begin to say, "Well, perhaps I know truth," and you can live it more and more, because you know it works. He also -- part of this whole work was not just for the whole world, for every country of the world, there was something very specific and special for the United States of America.

MISHLOVE: Can you say it in ten seconds?

DAWKINS: In ten seconds, he set in motion the birth of a new race -- something that had been planned down the ages by the sages. His job was to actually put it into action, so he was behind a lot of the colonization --

MISHLOVE: Of the United States.

DAWKINS: Of what became the United States of America.

MISHLOVE: Peter Dawkins, thank you very much for being with me. I think that your talk has probably inspired many of our viewers to launch themselves on the same treasure hunt which has inspired you so much.

DAWKINS: Thank you very much.