

Tony Parsons – February 4, 2012

Buddha at the Gas Pump

Rick: Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer and I'm very honored to have as my guest this week, Tony Parsons. Welcome Tony.

Tony: Hi, hi.

Rick: You know Tony, Jesus said something - as being an old Christian way back you may remember – about not being lukewarm. And I must say that you don't seem to evoke lukewarm reactions from people.

Tony: That's true, yeah, one way or the other.

Rick: I've been getting some people come to my site every day, they say, "Is the Tony Parsons interview up yet?" And there are other people, like there's this one guy who wanted to come on the week after you to rebut everything you said and I said, "No, I don't think so."

And you yourself present your teaching as radical, uncompromising, you use adjectives like that, so you know, you don't pussyfoot around. I don't know if that's a British expression but it is over here.

Tony: Yeah.

Rick: And I appreciate that and so I approached this with a little bit of trepidation, but the more I read of your book *All There Is* and I read every word on your website, I listened to hours of your audios, I read Dennis Waite's book, I read your rebuttal to Dennis Waite, yeah, I really did my homework on this one.

Tony: You did.

Rick: Yeah, and I must say that I have some sticking points but for the most part I really appreciated all this. I really sort of felt a resonance with what you were saying and I think I understand. And actually, I wanted to start this by making a little deal with you, which is, if you don't mind my using personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'you', I promise not to ask any stupid questions like, "Hey Tony, when did you get enlightened, you know?"

Tony: Yeah, that's good. I'm good with 'I' and 'you', it's an apparent-I and an apparent-you.

Rick: Yeah, and it's a little awkward trying to talk without using them and it's a little awkward trying to stick the word 'apparent' before everything you say, same time you have to presume that that's the understanding.

So perhaps intentionally you don't have a bio on your book jacket and you don't have a bio on your site. And I think that perhaps that points to the heart of your message, and you can say it better than I but

I've heard you say it a thousand times, there really is no, sort of, entity in there that we would define as Tony Parsons.

Tony: No, absolutely, and the story - the apparent story of Tony Parsons - has no relevance to this message at all. Because the apparent Tony Parsons seems to be there seeking something and the inside of me just collapsed and there was nothing left, so that message comes out of that nothing.

Basically, shall I just go through that?

Rick: Yeah please. I may interject a question or two but you just go ahead.

Tony: Basically the message is simply saying that all there is this, all there is is wholeness, oneness. I like to call it "boundless energy". Boundless energy is all there is and it arises as everything there is and everything there isn't.

And so this boundless energy is immeasurable, it can't be tamed, it's wild and it's chaotic and it also appears to be ordered. And one of the things that it appears to be is a separate energy, a contracted energy that seems to happen uniquely to human beings. And in some way or other, that sense of being separate begins a clock. A clock starts ticking and throughout the separate energies there the 'me' story begins, and the story and 'me' are both the same thing. 'Me' can't exist without the story and the story can't exist without 'me', and that all happens in a separate reality. And for the individual it seems as though that reality is real.

The whole idea that the person has free-will and choice and that their life has a purpose - and that story also includes cause and effect, all of those things arise and all of those things seem real to the individual. And so the individual goes into what it thinks is its reality, but in some way or other that reality can at times seem dissatisfying, because of course the 'me' is living in a separate reality. And so the 'me' never sees a tree naturally, never sees the sky naturally, never has feelings in the natural way they are, because all of those things are experienced through separation, as though those things arise through cling-film.

Rick: Aha, cling-film meaning like a filter of some sort?

Tony: Yeah, a filter, a separate filter.

So the tree is somehow always an object out there, everything else is an object because already the 'me' has seemingly become a something. So the 'me' lives as though it is a real something and it lives in a world of real somethings - everything real out there is something else that's happening to this real something here.

And somewhere there's a sense of dissatisfaction about that, it feels unfulfilling to somehow live in this separate world. And so some people start to try to find an answer for that sense of dissatisfaction and they go to teachers, but of course they have with them that belief of free-will and choice, and the way they can "learn" how to find that fulfillment, would be through their own choice and their own action.

And so they go to teachers who also speak within the dream story about personal enlightenment and the way that that can be attained. But of course what's happening all the time is that the 'me' is living in a circular world, in a separate world, and those things that it experiences come and go because they are happening in a world of time only, they are just time-orientated happenings or experiences.

So the things that people learn from teachers, like self inquiry or meditation, bring up experiences that come and go. They are transient experiences and they never have any permanent or constant satisfaction about them. So the Open Secret basically is, we're revealing that myth – revealing the myth of the 'me' and the myth of the story, and it's pointing to the possibility that all of that is an illusion, that that whole story and the 'me' is living in an illusory world which is circular, just with experiences coming and going, coming and going.

And the strange thing is that what seems to be happening when that is revealed in meetings, obviously, usually, is that the whole *sense* of 'me', the whole idea that the 'me' is real or the embodied sense that the 'me' is real seems to crumble. And the other thing that happens in the meetings, and obviously this doesn't have to be at meetings; this dropping away of the 'me' can happen anywhere and at any time, but in the meetings it seems that somehow the contracted energy of the separate 'me' seems to melt back into the boundless energy of what is, and there's nothing that's left in that. And that is what I would call liberation; it's my term for liberation from the illusory imprisonment of being a 'me' in the story.

Rick: Yeah, I often heard you say that it's not so much what is *said* in the meetings, but there's sort of an energetic resonance or something that enables people to kind of entrain, and maybe drop into as you now just described.

Tony: Yeah, because the other part of the meetings is that essentially seeking is starved. There's no agenda to please the seeker or give the seeker anything at all. In fact, I have to say that the seeker isn't even recognized as a seeker; the seeker is recognized as being in a dream story about seeking. And so that whole energy of feeding the need of the seeker drops away and in a sense, that could be very powerful as far as the separate 'me' is concerned.

Rick: I would suggest that traditional teachers to whom you elude - you know, Shankara, Ramana Maharishi, all these teachers - knew very well that ultimately there is no 'me', there is no person and so on, but they used what they referred to as "a thorn to remove a thorn," that they kind of met the so-called seeker, or the apparent seeker, on his own ground and then offered him something which ultimately might be absurd or meaningless or useless in the final analysis, but which from where the seeker stood had some utility in bringing him to a greater readiness to drop into the realization that you've been describing.

Tony: As far as I'm concerned, that sort of way or method or teaching, or helping of somebody, simply goes on reinforcing the sense of separation, and there's nothing that can be done about creating a readiness in the 'me' that's separate in order for liberation to happen.

Rick: Well, you do say though in your book ... let me see if I can find the passage. I wrote it down here someplace. Umm, well I can't find where I wrote it down – but oh, here it is! You said, "There is only so much oneness that a body can stand and then it needs to go back into contraction until the time comes when that can be totally accepted by the body. It's a very energetic thing."

And as I understand them, spiritual practices, at least effective ones – maybe some of them do exactly what you're saying; they totally reinforce the sense of a 'me' – but effective ones actually just culture the, sort of, capacity of the body to "stand", to use your word, oneness, to sustain that state.

Tony: Okay, so the implication there is, is that there's someone or something that can choose to take on those exercises in order to prepare the body for liberation. Again, you're back into the dualistic idea that there is someone with free-will and choice to take action to bring something about, and that is what the Open Secret is exploring and revealing as illusory. It sure keeps the idea that there is something that will happen one day when I'm ready, or when this body is ready.

The reality is that actually, that preparation can seem to happen but there's no one that can bring it about.

Rick: That's fair enough. Preparation can seem to happen but it's not that a "person" is in there, like a puppeteer you know, making it happen, but by the same token, that is not to say that the preparation – if we're referring to spiritual practices – don't have any influence.

Tony: Well they don't have any influence because there is nothing to influence. Boundless energy doesn't need any influence for it to arise as something separate or wholeness. The boundless energy doesn't need anything for liberation to apparently occur. And incidentally, boundless energy, or wholeness, has no interest in anybody becoming liberated because seeking and separation is the absolute expression of wholeness.

Rick: As is everything, wouldn't you say?

Tony: Yeah, absolutely. There is only wholeness but there isn't anything trying to get something liberated, there's no need because everything is perfect as it is.

Rick: Um-hmm. Coincidentally I happen to be listening to a quantum physicist this morning for a little bit, and he was saying how from the perspective of quantum physics there are no electrons or particles or universe or anything else, it's all just sort of, you know, unmanifest potential that appears to bubble up into all the forms and shapes and phenomena and laws of nature, and so on, that we see. But that understanding doesn't absolve the quantum physicists from the laws of Newtonian physics – he can't go up on the top of a building and jump off, and because he understands that all this is just ephemeral potentialities he's not going to go splat on the sidewalk.

Tony: But you're suggesting that people have responsibility.

Rick: That would be a crude – I'm not impugning the way you said it but – there are no people who have responsibility, I'm with you on that, but I'm suggesting that ... well let me take another example.

Tony: Well hold on a minute. Who would choose to throw themselves off the roof?

Rick: Well nobody in their right mind!

Tony: But nobody at all. The whole idea of free-will has already been exposed as an illusion by neuroscientists and biologists. All of that study in the last few years has established that there is no such thing as an individual with free-will and choice.

So what the Open Secret is suggesting actually is, that all there is is what apparently happens, there is no one that it's happening to, there is only life happening, for no one.

Rick: And I can't disagree with that but I keep coming back to this sort of paradoxical way of looking at things, where ... you know, in Sanskrit there's this word called 'mythya,' and it means apparent reality, or dependent reality. And the example is used of a pot, where you have a pot and it's made of clay – you can put beans in it or water, or whatever – but really there is no pot; it's only clay.

Tony: Yeah, absolutely. Everything is apparent.

Rick: Yeah, so we have this apparent universe ...

Tony: But the dilemma for the seeker is that the seeker lives in only a fixed, real world. The seeker in that dream story can only see the world as real. There's no possibility of seeing the whole world, the whole manifestation and itself, is real and unreal. In other words, it's only apparent.

So this isn't pointing at something that might seem to be wrong like dualism and so on. There is no dualism, there is no nondualism, there is only what is. So the whole idea that there's something that needs changing is within only the story of the seeker, and that's what's exposed as illusory in the Open Secret message.

Rick: Right, and when the person – excuse me for saying the “person” – but when the person, or let's say people coming to your meetings, you know, something may click at some point and the seeker drops away, the search drops away and all they're left with is this, or that which is ...

Tony: But hold on, there's no “one” left with it; there just is what is.

Rick: Correct, what's left. You have to be very careful with the way you phrase this stuff. I would, just to beleaguer the point a little bit ... let's take an experiment. You take two hundred apparent people – I used this several interviews ago, so apologies to those who heard me use it before – and we're going to set up a control group. The control group is going to take methamphetamines for 10 years and the other group, the experimental group, is going to, let's say, engage in spiritual practices.

Now at the end of 10 years half of the control group is dead or has lost their teeth or they've aged 30 years, or whatever, and in the experimental group, or the people doing spiritual practices - I would, from my observation of the whole field of so called spirituality out there - a good number of them may have had the sort of realization that you talk about.

Tony: Well none of them will have had it.

Rick: *None* of them will have.

Tony: Nobody has it.

Rick: Correct, but let's say all those hundred people came to one of your meetings and started talking to you, you started talking to them, you know, mutual discussion. You might very likely discover that the sort of realization that people who come to your meetings sometimes have, like Richard Sylvester or various other people, had occurred to a significant percentage of those apparent entities sitting in the room.

Tony: It's a lovely idea, it's a lovely idea, but liberation happens *despite* the story you've just told, not *because* of it. Liberation can happen to somebody lying in the gutter having filled their bellies with beer and smoking pot or whatever, because liberation has nothing to do with the person or what they're doing.

The person in the story and what they're doing is simply wholeness arising or pretending to be that energy. So liberation doesn't happen to a person or happen because of something they're doing or they're not doing; it happens *despite* that. It doesn't happen to a person, liberation doesn't happen to a person.

Rick: No, I understand that.

Tony: When the person falls away, there is that which is liberated already.

Rick: Yep, that's beautifully put and no disagreement with that. The word "despite" has the connotation that people who do so-called spiritual practices might actually be *impeding*...

Tony: Oh, no question about it.

Rick: You think, hm?

Tony: Of course, because what they're doing is reinforcing the sense of a higher self who is trying to attain another level of spirituality, and all that does is to reinforce the sense that something has been lost or there's something that can be attained. All of that maintains the wheel of seeking, that's all it does.

Rick: Well it may do that but I mean practically, realistically speaking, from observing the field of this, there does seem to be a higher incidence of so-called realization.

Tony: How do you know that?

Rick: Just in many, many friends, talking to people ... I mean sure, if you take a bell curve you're going to find on the fringes of the bell curve people in the gutter - you know - realization happening to them, but the likelihood, the probability seems to improve with certain types of, you know ...

Tony: Like I said, I've heard various apparent people describing their realization and it has no connection with the sort of liberation I'm talking about, because it's a personalized, apparent realization. They describe what I call personal enlightenment or personal liberation, and as far as the Open Secret is concerned, those are passing states.

Let's go a little further with this ...

Rick: Sure.

Tony: When the 'me' collapses, when the contracted energy of 'me' melts back into the boundless, what has apparently happened can't be described because it is unknowing. There isn't something left that knows consciousness. There isn't something left that knows its true nature. There isn't something left that lives in absolute love. There isn't anything left that could be described by anyone.

Rick: And if there were it would have to be a matter of squeezing the ocean into a drop.

Tony: Yeah.

Rick: And so would it be correct to phrase it that that which is left kind of knows itself?

Tony: No, not at all.

Rick: Okay.

Tony: After liberation there is nothing left that *knows* anything. Knowing is part of the story.

Rick: No isolated entity of any sort.

Tony: No, none at all. All that's left is what is, as it is.

Rick: Yeah, well there are verses like that in traditional scripture. The Gita says, "The Self knows itself by itself," it's not the individual that knows anything.

Tony: No – hold on. You're now saying then Self knows itself. No, that is not liberation.

Rick: Because it sets up a duality.

Tony: Of course it does, and this message that's being communicated here is as old as seeking has ever been - if you pretend that there's a history of seeking – it's simply is that it's always been hidden, it's not known this hidden message, which is available when there's readiness to go beyond Self seeking. But the final result is unknowing.

Rick: Fair enough. Why do you think it's hidden?

Tony: It's hidden because it's overlaid by the teaching of "endeavor" or "attainment." The seeker in the 'me' story is longing to find an answer and so the most popular teaching through the years, through thousands of years of seeking, have been those teachings that seem to give an answer or provide a formula – Christianity, Buddhism, all of those things, and recently contemporary teachings - are there to

help somebody to find an answer. That's always going to be far more popular than something which offers absolutely nothing to the seeker and that's what the Open Secret is.

Rick: Well it's not only hidden to so-called seekers; it's hidden to the vast majority of humanity who aren't even seeking. I mean, it's occluded or obscured to virtually everyone.

Tony: It is, yeah, and, so what?

Rick: Well, I don't know. Let me read another passage from your book and maybe it will take us further into this. You say, "It is quite common to hear so-called teachers using nondualistic language and then directly contradicting the real meaning of nondualism by recommending processes and practices to presumed individuals. Many highly revered Gurus and teachers, past and present, are classified as communicators of the Advaita-Vedanta tradition when in reality their teaching is dualistic.

This kind of contradiction is either rooted in a deep ignorance about the nature of liberation, or it comes out of a need to satisfy a personal agenda." Now I don't know if you intended to do so, but in saying that, but you implicitly refer to people whom are greatly respected, like Ramana Maharishi and Nisargadatta, and characters like that. Do you really mean to say that they are deeply ignorant or trying to satisfy a personal agenda?

Tony: I'm not necessarily saying either, but that all communications that seek to help the person find something, come out of the conviction that there is a person there who needs to be helped. So obviously there's a personal agenda there to help people. There's nothing right or wrong with that; it's just simply misconceived.

Rick: So how do you differ, let's say, from those teachers? Because you have meetings and people come and sit there, and pay money, and listen, and so on and so forth.

Tony: I differ in not being there.

Rick: Well, do you think that you are not there anymore than Ramana Maharishi and Nisargadatta were not there?

Tony: I wouldn't even attempt to compare. I'm answering the question, the difference is what is being shared or communicated is coming out of no-thing, it's coming out of no person, it has no intention, it has no agenda, it is simply a description. That's the difference.

Rick: Yeah, well, I mean, but this is an ancient wisdom that ... I mean, the Gita is full of verses about there being actually no doer and mistakenly assuming the authorship of action.

Tony: Okay, so please tell me who is out there that's teaching that doesn't have something for sale? In the Open Secret there is nothing for sale, there is nothing available for the seeker. The seeker's needs are constantly starved in that setting. Where else is that happening?

Rick: I think you have a unique approach - unless there are other people who are talking about it the way that you do - and I think it's an effective approach. To be frank, I think it's a niche, it's not something that's going to appeal to everyone, but you would agree with that, I think?

Tony: Absolutely! Of course it won't, it never has, it's always been hidden. It's only recently when there's been a shift in the psyche of people that people are throwing away their respect for authority with religious figures, with spiritual teachers and with politicians. In the whole world we're seeing a revolution take place because the psyche of people is attracted now, or more open, to that which has no authority, to that which has no direction, to that which has no discipline. That's why there are more people hearing this at the moment than there were before.

Rick: I think it's hard for people to understand how there's no sort of purpose or motivation though, you know? It's like you go to the trouble of setting up meetings and going travelling ...

Tony: No, hold on

Rick: No, you don't go through the trouble, right.

Tony: It's what *happens*.

Rick: Okay, meetings get set up.

Tony: And they happen; nobody "does" them. You didn't arrange this interview and I didn't arrange to sit here; it's what's happening. The problem for the 'me' and the self is that it believes it's living on a journey in time. And the other thing that arises for that seeker is the hope that in some way or other, the life that they lead has some sort of purpose, and that's what keeps them locked in the journey of time, looking for that purpose.

What the Open Secret is and other messages like that – very rare – is revealing and exposing, is that that whole construct keeps the seeker reinforced in the hope that one day they will reach the end of their journey. The Open Secret is saying, "There is no one to reach the end of the journey and there is no journey, because what you are seeking is already all there is." Already this is it! This is what people are seeking: what is happening right now.

Anybody who's listening, anybody who listens to this message, when they're listening to it, are sitting in what they long for. It never came and it never went away. Very simple and very ordinary.

Rick: Yeah, to use the old analogy of fish swimming around looking for water, you know?

Tony: Absolutely.

Rick: But, as you said earlier, through some mysterious mechanism it's hidden to the vast majority of people. They're immersed in it, they are nothing other than that, but it's somehow occluded. How is that?

Tony: Only because they're in the journey of 'me', which is an artificial reality. They live in the separate reality, so they're completely convinced that that is real, and that they are real and they are in it. And they are so completely convinced that they are in control and they can take action to make that story better, so they're locked in a prison – in an apparent prison. What the Open Secret is saying is, "There is no one and there is no prison, and what you seek has never been lost; it's this!"

Rick: Yeah, and that prison can be very convincing you know? And the perception or perspective that we are in control can be very compelling.

Tony: And also the attraction of having a purpose in life is also a very attractive thing. That's what people don't like about my message, that it seems to have no purpose and it gives no hope, and of course that's absolutely true, it gives no hope. But also, people misinterpret this message in the way that they think this message is saying, "Stop seeking." If it was saying, "Stop seeking," it would be implying that there is such a thing as free-will and choice. There isn't anybody that can stop seeking; 'me', the story, and seeking are all one energy.

Rick: I got that feeling a lot when reading and listening to your stuff, that there is a lot of misinterpretation. Because you're saying it in a way that is easily misconstrued you know, if you don't kind of tune into what is actually being said, and you know, it can get people rather incensed.

Tony: Oh very, very. I mean, the other thing that other people try to say, especially teachers is, "Well Tony Parsons is saying that all you have to look for is there being no one." Well that again is just a misinterpretation of the message. The message is simply pointing to the reality that all there is is what is.

Rick: Here's a way you phrased it at one point that I thought was rather nice. You said, "When absolute clarity is heard by absolute clarity which is overlaid by confusion, the absolute clarity can take over, confusion can drop away." [I] kinda like that.

Tony: Yeah, it's true, but the other thing I have to say is that absolute clarity is not liberation. Essentially, the whole separate experience is not a belief, it's not a thought, it's not an idea; it's an embodied energy, the whole body grows up and takes *on* a sense of separation. So essentially, liberation is an energetic shift, it's not a shift in the mind or anything to do with understanding, so clarity is not liberation.

Rick: And you referred earlier to neurophysiologists and so on, and their take on free-will, and would you acknowledge that this clarity, or liberation, or whatever we're talking about, also has a physiological component? That there's an energetic shift and then there's also a sort of neurological counterpart to that which enables it to occur? Does that make sense?

Tony: Yes certainly, because the brain is the machine that constructs the artificial 'me', and when that artificial 'me' falls away, then obviously there's some sort of shift energetically in the brain and in the body.

Rick: There must be, yeah, perhaps even measurable for all we know.

Tony: I've no idea.

Rick: I don't know.

Um, let's see here. You commented a couple of times about ... well here's one that I like, let's go for this one for a second. "Such idealistic communications often go hand in hand with a relentless reiteration of the idea that separation is fine because there is only ever oneness. This is like telling a blind person that blindness is fine because all there is is seeing. Of course there's only oneness, but what apparently arises in oneness is a deep sense of separation, which doesn't *feel* fine."

Tony: Absolutely.

Rick: I really like that.

Tony: Yeah, and that's what drives people on to try and resolve that feeling of longing or frustration, but their difficulty is they're trying to find an answer for something that has no answer. Life is the answer. There isn't an answer to find fulfillment because when it, the thing that drives their need for fulfillment is the separate me and the separate reality.

There's nothing wrong with that separate duality; it is wholeness pretending to be in a separate reality.

Rick: Yeah, I heard you say in one of your things that it's almost like wholeness is playing a game where it's like hide and seek, you know, where it kind of loses itself so it can find itself?

Tony: Absolutely.

Rick: I wonder if we can attribute *any* sort of higher purpose or motivation to that?

Tony: Not at all, no. Not as far as the Open Secret is concerned, there's no such thing as a higher purpose. There's no purpose so there's no higher, there's no lower, there is only what is.

Rick: So the whole notion that's popular in some circles of there being some kind of evolutionary drive behind the whole manifestation of the universe and its unfoldment, and the greater complexity of forms and phenomena, from your vision that's ...?

Tony: It's just part of the dream story, all of that is part of the dream story.

Rick: And I suppose you could say there are dream reasons for it – just as there are dream laws of nature, dream gravity, dream photosynthesis and so on.

Tony: Yeah, but it's only that need for there to be a reason is only another part of separation. There is no *reason* for anything. You know, energy, wholeness, is absolutely wild. It's completely wild and immeasurable. It doesn't need any reason to be, it just is!

Rick: Yeah, it certainly is.

Tony: It's us, it's the seeker that wants the reason, and wants the answer and a purpose. It can't bear the idea that things are as simple and ordinary as simply the isness of what is.

Rick: Yeah, I suppose reason by its very definition is a human thing. I mean, the tree doesn't need a reason and the sun doesn't need a reason.

Tony: No, only 'me'. 'Me' needs the reason.

Rick: One thing I picked up on in an interview that I read you did with some fellow in Holland is that you seem to be making a distinction between mere understanding, awakening, and liberation.

Tony: Yes.

Rick: And that's interesting because there's a Tibetan saying that I've harped on many times in these interviews which is that, it says, "Don't mistake understanding for realization, don't mistake realization for liberation." I wonder if you could comment on that whole point.

Tony: Yes absolutely. Understanding is really quite a superficial part of all of this, of course, it's only something that happens to the 'me' in the story – understanding. Awakening is an actual apparent event and a lot of people seem to have had an awakening. I did, or at least Tony Parsons that was there "seemed" to have an awakening, but the awakening didn't happen to Tony Parsons; Tony Parsons the seeker was walking along and then there was nothing. There was no Tony Parsons, no experience of nothing, just nothing and everything without any separation, just wholeness, absolute unconditional love, indescribable. And then Tony Parsons walked out of the other side and now *thought* what seemed to have happened, although he wasn't there at the time ...

Rick: It came and went, you mean?

Tony: Yeah, it comes and goes. And so there are many, many people who come to our meetings who are in what I call a 'state of awakening,' which is like a limbo between two realities: one is the reality of the seeker and the other one is the liberated reality, or what I call the 'natural reality.'

And in some way or another there seems to be a dance between "me-ing" and "be-ing". That can go on for the rest of that life but often it is mistaken for – and you refer to it; your people have referred to it – it's mistaken for enlightenment.

So people having an awakening experience believe they are enlightened, and believe they are enlightened because before the awakening event they meditated. So they then go round, very sincerely, trying to help other people have the same experience as they have, and that goes on reinforcing the myth.

Rick: Let's probe into this a little bit more. So would you say that realization, as you've just referred to it, is characterized by intermittency – it comes and goes – and it's also characterized by there still being a sense of 'me' who had this realization, whereas liberation is not intermittent nor is there a 'me'?

Tony: Yeah that's true but see, I don't like the word realization because realization doesn't come into this. Realization implies some sort of clearer seeing. After the satori or the glimpse of wholeness, there is still the contracted sense of 'me', but they're now diminished. There isn't something that's realized something; there just is an energetic softening of the 'me', and then eventually, possibly though not always, eventually that energy of 'me' simply collapses and there's nothing left.

Rick: So in your own case, when you were walking across the park and you had that whatever you want to call it ...

Tony: The glimpse.

Rick: The glimpse. And then later on – I don't know how much later, was it years, months?

Tony: Yeah, years.

Rick: Years, I think you said you woke up in the middle of the night and went downstairs and somehow everything had collapsed.

Tony: Yeah, 'me' had died. The apparent illusion of there being a 'me' and the story which supported that simply collapsed, there was nothing left. And that energy, that apparent energy melted into the wholeness.

Rick: So what was going on in the interim period between that experience in the park and ...

Tony: Oh, seeking, seeking was what was going on.

Rick: Practicing, teachers ...?

Tony: Not very strenuous, I was never a very strenuous seeker because already somewhere there was a sense that what I was looking for was beyond 'me', and beyond effort, and beyond attainment, so I've never been an ardent mediator or any of that.

Rick: You did spend a few years with Osho, didn't you?

Tony: Yeah, yeah, that was great.

Rick: Was that pre-'walk-in-the-park'?

Tony: No, that was after 'walk-in-the-park' but pre-liberation, because after liberation who would go and need to see anyone? But it was great, gorgeous.

Rick: I wonder if that experience with Osho somehow helped form your opinion of Gurus and teachers.

Tony: Well yes, it supports what I see as a very *sincere* wish to help people, which as far as I'm concerned still maintains the dream, the artificial dream.

Rick: Okay, let's shift gears a little bit. I've heard you say in a number of places that there is no God, but then I also keep hearing you use the terms "beloved," "the Divine," "the lover," so could you please explain that contradiction?

Tony: Yeah, no, as far as I'm concerned there is no greater authority; there is only boundless energy. There's nothing directing boundless energy; there just is boundless energy, and it is all and everything. It's nothing, appearing as everything, so there is no greater authority running or directing that, because there is nothing to direct, because that energy is completely purposeless and impersonal.

But, the word "beloved" comes out of me being quite sexy in being attracted to sexy words like the "beloved." "Divine" – I don't use so much these days because I have to say that in the ten years, or eleven years I've been doing this, my language has honed down, so there are some things that I used to say that I would never use now – "awareness", "the Divine," and many of those things – to imply that they are states of liberation.

Rick: Okay, well I won't hold you to old words that you don't use. Let me probe a bit more though, I mean, you do use the word frequently now, "boundless energy."

Tony: Yeah.

Rick: And traditionally, there's that term "sat chit ananda" and it implies not only energy but intelligence and consciousness, and certain other ways of referring to that energy. And if we look at anything in our universe, the functioning of a single cell, it seems there's a vast intelligence kind of orchestrating ...

Tony: No, well there's an intelligence in everything, everything has that intelligence within it, but there isn't any other intelligence that's actually directing that. It's simply what's happening and within that happening there seems to be intelligence.

The other thing is you used the word "consciousness," I never know what people quite mean by consciousness. What I gather they mean is awareness or knowing. So that consciousness, knowing or awareness only arises in the dream story of separation.

Rick: Yeah, I think it's a word that has a lot of connotations so you have to be careful how you're using it.

Tony: For there to be awareness there has to be something separate that it can be aware of.

Rick: True. Sometimes the word "pure consciousness" is used, meaning consciousness in and of itself without any *thing* that it is aware of you know, just whoosh, an ocean of consciousness or something.

Tony: Yeah, well that's all there is.

Rick: Yeah, yeah. There's an ancient saying, I think it was Shankara who first popularized this that, "The world is an illusion, Brahman alone is real, the world is Brahman."

Tony: Yeah, absolutely. Yeyyyy!!! Absolutely, that's the beginning and end of it. That is the beginning and end of it.

Rick: Excuse me (door opens in background). So granted, I mean, no 'God up in the sky,' big old guy with a beard pulling strings, but this boundless energy has the quality, apparently, of intelligence, and it's all pervasive – just that alone is orchestrating everything ...

Tony: No, well, no it's not.

Rick: No? Okay.

Tony: It is everything.

Rick: It is everything, correct.

Tony: Because if it was orchestrating ...

Rick: Something separate from it, yeah, you're right. There would be something separate from it that it is manipulating, or something.

Tony: Absolutely.

Rick: Back to those three phrases by Shankara: the world is Brahmin; there is nothing other than that. And of course there are many what they call mahavakyas you know, "That alone is," and sayings like that.

Tony: Lovely words.

Rick: Yeah, but there's a reality that they point to.

Tony: Absolutely.

Rick: Yeah, let's see what we're doing here. Okay, here's a question somebody sent in and I promised I'd pose it to you: "If there is still the sense of self, how can you say that there is suffering but no sufferer? Ultimately I can understand the emptiness of every phenomenon but relatively I still experience myself as the feeler of my feelings."

Tony: Okay, so that's spoken from the dream story. In other words, you could call it the 'self', an 'I', or 'me' is still there, and when suffering apparently happens it seems to happen to the 'me'. After that whole illusion collapses, there is just suffering, apparently.

Rick: So let's say there's some suffering ...

Tony: The appearance of suffering.

Rick: Tony Parsons has a wound on the leg. Now it seems like there's some localization of that experience. The table isn't suffering, your lamp isn't suffering, or if there's three people in the room and

you're the one with the wound on the leg, they're not – you know what I mean – they're not experiencing ... there's some kind of ownership in a sense.

Tony: No, there isn't an ownership but you could say there's 7.2 billion realities, so every apparent person that is walking around is living in a reality that is unique. And so if this leg hurts, previously to liberation it would be an experience that the 'me' is having, after liberation there is just pain. But the leg is hurt, so what? It's what it is. And putting a bandage on it is also what it is, and not putting a bandage on it is also what is.

Rick: I understand.

Tony: There is nothing that runs this, there's nothing that controls this, there's nothing that can choose one thing or another; all there is is what's happening.

Rick: Would you say that boundless energy runs it – to use your phrase?

Tony: Well no, I would say there's only boundless energy and it doesn't run anything. Boundless energy is the same word as wholeness, oneness, nothing and everything.

Rick: Yeah, but sometimes you say things like, I hear you say things like, "Oneness walling," or "Oneness charring," and in fact someone even said that you once said that, "Oneness gassed the Jews." I don't know if you said that but, I'm sure that got a rise out of people.

Tony: Everything that we are, well everything that is happening, is simply the expression of oneness, wholeness, or boundless energy, it all is. The table is boundless energy appearing as a table. The whole thing is an appearance – it's both real and unreal and that's the end of it.

Rick: It's beautiful, I mean when you answer a question the way you just did, it kind of brings me right back to an appreciation of the bigger picture of it you know, because there's such a tendency to gravitate back into the individual perspective and you kind of keep bringing it back.

Tony: That's what happens in the meetings. The seeker comes with the idea of getting something and it's possible that they will walk out and reject what's on offer, but it's also possible for the seeker who comes to get something that they will go away with absolutely nothing.

And so the constant message that is really being expressed in the meetings continuously starves the seeker's needs, and continuously only points to what is. So there's a sort of nullifying of the mind, there's a nullifying of the idea of something to get and the seeker is sort of left with nothing. That's so beautiful!

Rick: Yeah, it's kind of the way chemotherapy works on a tumor.

Tony: Yeah! It's the killer! That's what I say to people, "In the room there's a killer" – it's not me, it's not my message, it's nobody's message. In Amsterdam I'm known as 'The Terminator'.

Rick: Yeah, you and Arnold Schwarzenegger ... (Rick speaking in Arnold-like voice) "I'm back".

Here's a few more questions if you don't mind, from a friend of mine named Don, who lent me your book *All It Is*, just lives just down the street from me and I think he may have actually gone over to England and met you and been to some of your meetings. He took a very keen interest in the fact that I was going to do this interview, so here's one: "When someone calls your name, does this mean that there is no personal aspect, no past history or what the Buddhists call conditioning? How does Tony talk about this?"

Tony: Oh, it simply is a response to somebody calling this name. It's a response to a question: Tony or you know, just calling my name, there would be a response but the response comes out of nothing. Everything comes out of nothing. All thought, all feelings, all responses to stimuli simply come out of nothing, because of course nothing is the source of everything, nothing is the boundless energy.

Rick: Good, here's another one: "There is no embarrassment; embarrassment happens," – apparently you said – "but Tony gets embarrassed and isn't that a personal preference from past habits?" – Oh, okay, Tony isn't embarrassed, right.

Tony: No, there is no Tony.

Rick: Right, but even though there is no Tony, and I think that's what this question is getting at, isn't there some conditioning of the body-mind mechanism which causes certain responses or reactions?

Tony: Absolutely, yeah, of course there is. The brain takes on trauma and conditions itself to deal with what it sees as a separate world, and the child grows up with that conditioning and that runs on. When liberation happens, the brain still retains some of that conditioning and rolls on after liberation with that conditioned response. But because there is no longer a 'me' that's taking delivery of that conditioning, it simply falls away and that conditioned rolling on simply slows down to nothing.

It's the same as thought. The thought process arises for the 'me', and the 'me' takes delivery of the thought process and gives it energy and tries to deal with it in some way or other, so there's a feedback circle happening. After liberation, thoughts arise but fall away because there's no one.

Rick: So they have less gravity, less grip.

Tony: Oh in that sense, there's nothing any longer that has any significance. That is what freedom is about. The freedom is that there's nothing that has any significance, there's nothing that is special and important to follow, or that has purpose. All and everything is simply what it is.

The joy of this is that's an in-love-ness with what is. No one's in love with what is; there's just is and in-love-ness with what is. Sitting on a chair, the carpet, this thing here (Tony points to himself) falls in love with carpets and bus stops, really! It's like that because all of that is the expression of wholeness, it's just the Divine wholeness— oh, I've used the word Divine, there we are.

Rick: O-oh, we'll edit that out.

Tony: Yeah, you'll have to otherwise ...

Rick: It's "the bleep wholeness." Ah, good one. Okay, let's see, you've already answered this question, you've already answered that question, here's one: "Sounds like Tony has pretty firm convictions, these are the truth. Is there some knowing that the average person doesn't have that gives you the ..." – okay, that's his question.

Tony: When liberation happens there's absolute poverty, there is nothing left. There's no knowing, there's nothing that knows anything, there is only, as I've said before, an unknowing. So there is no possibility of having anything, even convictions.

This message is coming out of nothing, it's a response out of nothing. It *sounds* very passionate and very clear, but that doesn't mean that it comes out of conviction. Conviction is belief and belief is married to doubt, this comes out of nothing.

Rick: And so the appearance of conviction ...

Tony: And knowing.

Rick: And knowing and certainty and ...

Tony: Would be read by the 'me'.

Rick: And perhaps that's just the way that the Tony mechanism is wired, you know? Another mechanism having had the same liberation or same realization may be quite ambivalent about things, or something, because that's just the way that one's wired.

Tony: And the physiology is wired that way. But going back to the question, essentially the 'me' thinks that it is some thing, lives in the world of being something that's separate, so it sees everything else including what it thinks is Tony Parsons as another 'me', so it then presumes the other 'me' could have convictions or beliefs or whatever. It doesn't see that there's no possibility that it sees that the other body called Tony Parsons is simply real and unreal. It's nothing appearing as is. So it applies to Tony Parsons all its own attributes, or what it thinks the person Tony Parsons has.

Rick: One thing that I might throw in as a note of caution, perhaps you might want to comment on is, I interviewed a guy about a month ago who said that someone called him up and told him that he wanted to have an affair, wanted to cheat on his wife, but he wanted reassurance that there really was no one doing that so that he could kind of just do it with a pure conscience.

Tony: But who wants the reassurance?

Rick: Yeah right.

Tony: This isn't a license to do anything, because some people say, "Oh, what you're now saying is there's nothing I can do so I can go out and raid a bank," which is a complete contradiction. Many people say Tony Parsons is saying, "There's nothing you can do," those words have never passed my lips. This message is far worse than that; it's saying there is no you.

Rick: There's a verse from the Gita which is that, "Let not the wise man create a division in the minds of the ignorant who are attached to action. Established in being he should direct them to perform all actions, duly engaging in them himself."

Tony: And that's a prescription.

Rick: Yeah, I suppose.

Tony: You won't find any prescriptions in the Open Secret. There's nothing is prescribed, only described.

Rick: That's an interesting distinction, yeah.

Tony: There are no recommendations. Obviously there aren't any because there's no recognition that there's anybody with freewill and choice to take up those recommendations or prescriptions.

Rick: Yeah, that distinction often comes up in these interviews, between de-scription and pre-scription, and I don't know if we need to dwell on it because you've just made the point, but it's interesting to consider.

One thing I've heard you say that I just remembered is, you said with quite adamant certainty, apparently, that there is no reincarnation because that implies the existence of someone to reincarnate and by the same token there is no karma because that implies a doer and a recipient of an action and a story, but can't we qualify those terms with "apparent?" Like you have a wife named Claire, you could say, "There is no Claire," but you could also say, "There is the apparent Claire doing this apparent thing."

Tony: That's slightly different to suggesting that there could be apparent reincarnation because the implication that there could be apparent reincarnation is somehow establishing the idea that there definitely is a story in time where somebody is born, lives, and dies. That is an illusion. There is nobody that is born, lives, or dies, so there's no reincarnation and there can't be any karma.

Rick: I think it is implying that there are sort of gross and subtle levels of apparent reality, and that there's a subtle entity which doesn't die when the body dies.

Tony: That's all tied to the dream story and in the Open Secret perception, all of that you just described is a total illusion. There isn't something that lives after death, in that sense, there isn't anything that was alive in terms of there being an identity. There is only what is and in that arises the dream of there being somebody.

Rick: Well I'm not going to debate the point with you because I have no proof.

Tony: Aww, well I don't.

Rick: Right, and neither of us do, but just to state the point that— my take on things — for what it's worth. Although the whole creation with all its complexity and strata and so on can be boiled down to pure energy, or as you put it, or pure essence, or nothingness or whatever, as an illusory world it has its

own rules, its own laws, its own gross and subtly realities. And those rules and laws, even reincarnation, souls migrating from here to there, can all be taking place without contradicting the essential truth that you so eloquently state.

Tony: No, not at all, I don't agree. First of all, what I speak about is not the truth, there is no truth, there is only what is. The whole implication that any of the things you mentioned - in the gross and whatever reality – are all locked into the story, the illusory story in time.

There is no time. There is nothing happening. This is no thing, happening. The whole idea of other bodies and other realities is simply a dream story. All there is is what there is.

Rick: So if Tony Parsons, the apparent Tony Parsons, gets up and walks into the kitchen and makes a cup of tea, that's just a dream occurrence, it's what is?

Tony: It's what is. All there is is what is. Walking across the room is what is, making a cup of coffee is what is, there is no story, there's nothing happening.

Rick: So by the same token reincarnation is what is, it's just another display of what is.

Tony: If either the reality of time in which the story of being reborn into another body happens, the Open Secret is continually pointing to the unreality of the idea that there's a story. It's exposing the myth that there's a story, that there is time, and there are things happening in sequence. There's no sequence, there's nothing happening.

This is – what's happening right now is nothing, happening.

Rick: And time is nothing, happening.

Tony: Absolutely.

Rick: Which doesn't mean there isn't an illusory thingy called time, but it's ultimately ...

Tony: Real and unreal.

Rick: Real and unreal, simultaneously.

Tony: But the problem for the seeker or the person is that they believe time is real, they *feel* time is real.

Rick: There was a story about Shankara which I've told before, but bear with me those who have heard me tell this, but he was invited to visit some king and the king wanted to test him. So the king let loose an elephant and the elephant came running towards Shankara, and Shankara scampered up a tree.

And the king said, "Aha, if all this is an illusion, why did you bother climbing up a tree?"

And he said, "Ah, the illusory elephant chased the illusory me up the illusory tree."

Tony: Absolutely! It's all an illusion. But the word 'illusory' only means, not what it seems to be, which is pointing to the real as unreal.

Rick: Mm-hm. I'm just scanning the page here to see if there's any more questions that my friend asked. Do you have any comment on the whole 'free will and determinism' conundrum?

Tony: Only that it's illusory.

Rick: Okay. My friend also asked: "You mentioned a free fall" – I've heard you use that phrase several times – "who is it that's falling?"

Tony: Nobody. In liberation there's just free fall, there's just this wildness, there's just energy, there's just what's happening, there's nobody it's happening to.

Rick: So what's the implication of your term 'free fall' when you've used it?

Tony: Well it implies there's no such reality as cause and effect, free will and choice, or journey with purpose.

Rick: Okay. Now can you tell me the year that this walk-in-the-park thing happened? Just out of curiosity.

Tony: I can't tell you the year but I was about 21 years old.

Rick: Okay, now you're in your 60s or something.

Tony: Oh ... I could be much older than that.

Rick: Could be, so it was many years ago, 50 years ago or [something like that]. And you know, after that then there was the liberation thing sometime later, and I don't know when you got married but you had kids and lived an apparently normal life on the surface of things, did this realization that had occurred have any impact or influence on your mundane, so called mundane, life as a father? I mean, were your kids just as crazy and rebellious as kids tend to be, and did you get just as frustrated as parents tend to do?

Tony: In the story yes, because in the story I thought I was a person who was a father. When liberation - not realization - when liberation occurred and Tony Parsons was no more and never had been, then all the roles that Tony Parsons adopted in order to try and deal with the world simply collapsed. There's no father ...

Rick: [There's] no kids.

Tony: There's no history. Yeah, there is what is.

Rick: Would objective observers such as your wife have noticed a shift in the way you interacted with your kids, and vice versa?

Tony: Well altogether yes, of course, because all the games that people play in the dream world simply collapse, so there aren't any games being played anymore.

Rick: So somehow you became – I'm still using the word 'you' with our original agreement – somehow became more simple, direct, honest?

Tony: No, no, no, no, no, no, no!

Rick: Okay, what do you mean about "no games" then?

Tony: So the 'I' collapses, there is no longer anyone that becomes more this or more that; all that's left is the life happening, there isn't anybody in that life. So there isn't something that changes and becomes slightly more relaxed or more open because there isn't anything left. There is only life.

Rick: No, I understand that but what I'm asking is, with that realization that there is only life, what changed in your – excuse the word 'your' – in the behavior of "my dad Tony" as observed by his kids? I mean was there like a, "Whoa! What happened to dad, he's like a different guy?" you know?

Tony: No, not in that dramatic way, no.

Rick: Okay, so there wasn't any sort of major ... your friends and family wouldn't have noticed that anything had happened unless you told them?

Tony: No, not in any particularly dramatic way, no.

Rick: Okay.

Tony: This is about something totally simple and ordinary. I think the problem that seekers have is that they have an idea or picture of what they think enlightenment is, I know I did. When I was a seeker, when I thought I was going to become enlightened, I thought I was going to be surrounded by gorgeous blondes you know, be loved by everybody and live in bliss. That's a complete dream of mind.

Rick: I can think of a few Gurus who actually ...

Tony: That whole thing collapses and what's left is totally ordinary and simple, but it's immeasurably different to what was there before.

Rick: Yeah, well that's beautiful and I think that's a good ending point.

Tony: It is lovely, thank you.

Rick: Thank you, Tony. I really enjoyed this conversation - don't hang up on me just yet because I want to make some concluding remarks. I've found all this study and preparation and the interview itself to be really a joy and very edifying, and I think I've gained a lot from it even though there is no 'I' to have gained anything, which proves that I've gained a lot! But wait a minute!

Tony: Oh my, thank you.

Rick: So to those listening or watching, you've been listening to or watching an interview with Tony Parsons who lives in the U.K. He has a website which I'll be linking to from BATGAP.com, and he gives retreats, or talks, or residencies, or whatever they're called, over in Europe and occasionally in the U.S. You can find about all that on his website.

Thanks to our mutual friend Shannon who's an old friend of mine, I've known him since 1970 and he helped to organize this. Those of you who are listening to this on YouTube or something, if you subscribe in YouTube you'll be notified when new interviews are posted. If you go to www.BATGAP.com, B-A-T-G-A-P and subscribe there, you'll get an email when new interviews are posted, you can also sign up for a podcast and listen to this while you're driving your bicycle or whatever, and there's a discussion group there.

So you know, two interviews ago the interview elicited 500 posts and became a very lively discussion, so perhaps this one will as well, so you're welcome to participate in that if you wish.

So thank you for listening or watching, thank you, Tony, and we will see you next time. The next interview coming up is Mariana Caplan. Thank you.

Tony: Thank you, Rick.

BATGAP theme music playing.