

Richard Land - BATGAP Interview (# 237)

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{BATGAP theme music plays}

Rick: Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer and my guest today is Richard Lang. Richard attended a workshop in 1970 with the author of *The Headless Way*, Douglas Harding, and by doing Harding's experiments was astonished to find that he saw his true self. He was so impressed with the effectiveness of the experiments that he became involved in the work of sharing this method with as many people as possible.

And when I was listening to Richard's interviews and talks in preparation for this, and was reading his book, I was reminded of a song by *The Incredible String Band*, which for some reason is called *Douglas Traherne Harding* – was the name of the song – but Harding's middle name was Edison, wasn't it?

Richard: Yes, that's right.

Rick: Why did they call it Traherne?

Richard: Because Thomas Traherne is a well-known English mystic from the 17th century, and he spoke a lot about having a single eye and being capacity for the world. And Mike Heron of the String Band was reading Traherne and actually, Traherne was a favorite of Douglas's so it was a good choice -it combined Traherne and Douglas really.

Rick: Cool. I'd actually like to read a few lyrics from that song, one of which I sometimes use as my little blurb on Skype – you know, you can put little messages there. The song starts out, "When I was born I had no head. My eye was single and my body was filled with light. And the light that I was, was the light that I saw by, and the light that I saw by was the light that I was."

And then there's a bunch more in the song, then there's a refrain, "One light, the light that is one though the lamps be many," which is the little thing I sometimes use on Skype. And then it ends up, "You never enjoy the world aright, till the sea itself floweth in your vein and you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars."

Richard: Yes, that last bit is Traherne.

Rick: Ah, nice. So for those of you listening who have never heard of *The Incredible String Band*, check them out, they are one of the highlights of the late 60s, early 70s.

Richard: Douglas met them in the late 60s in York, in the North of England, and showed Mike Heron that he was headless and they became friends. And Douglas went to see them perform at the Royal Albert Hall a couple of times.

Rick: Cool. So when I first heard of headlessness a few years ago, I probably had the sort of reaction that many people have, which is, you know, “Of course I have a head. If I didn’t have a head, I’d be dead. Just because I can’t see it doesn’t mean I don’t have one. I mean I can’t see my liver either but I’m reasonably confident that I have one, otherwise again, I’d be dead.”

Maybe some people have that kneejerk reaction, so let’s take plenty of time and really explain to us why it’s called ‘headlessness,’ what the whole thing is, what your experience with it is? We’ll take a couple of hours and really unpack this.

Richard: Lovely, well I just want to say “thank you, Rick,” first of all, for inviting me into this interview. So great, I’m very glad to be here, I’m glad to share the headless way.

Rick: Sure, and you know, quite a few listeners also *wanted* me to invite you, which is one of the criterion I use for inviting people – they kept writing in saying, “Get this guy on” - so here we are.

Richard: Great, well, thank you. It’s called the ‘headless way’ because the basic question of this really is: who am I? What am I? And one takes a fresh look at what one actually experiences of oneself. So before we go into all that it might mean and whether it’s true or not, one just notices the plain, neutral experience, which is that you can’t see your head.

Now we can debate whether we’ve got one or not, but I don’t think you can argue against the fact that you can’t see it in the place you’re looking out of; you can see it in the mirror and in photographs and so on. And so I can see the tip of my nose, but from my point of view it’s vanishing into nothing and I’m convinced it’s the same for everyone.

If I do this (moving his hands away from view) my hands disappear and then (moving them back into view) reappear, yeah?

Rick: Yeah, people can try these experiments while they’re watching.

Richard: Yes, that’s the point really, is do the experiment, viewer, and notice your hands disappear. So this is the basic experience and it’s nonverbal and non-emotional; I don’t need to understand this in any particular way to notice it. I’m just noticing I can’t see my eyes now, I can’t see anything right here, and I don’t have to feel good or I don’t have to understand it in any way to actually experience it.

And Douglas developed *lots* of experiments for testing this point of view out, whether it’s true or not. It’s not just “can you see your head,” but what happens when you turn around? Well, you don’t see you moving, you see the scenery moving. If I’m looking at you now Rick, I see your face, not mine, so we call that face the “no face.”

So that’s the first introduction to the nonverbal, non-emotional experience, which doesn’t sound very attractive but there you go.

Rick: And as I recall, Douglas first stumbled upon this, he was a spiritual seeker, he was hiking in the Himalayas and all of a sudden he kind of popped into this realization.

Richard: That isn’t quite true actually.

Rick: Alright, straighten us out.

Richard: He was a writer about 20 years or so after he first saw who he was. In brief, Douglas's story was that he grew up in this fundamentalist Christian group, left when he was 21 having had enough of being told what to think, and began to work out his own view. And he first of all was influenced by the relativities, the relativity – in other words, what something is depends on how far away you are from it, partly.

Rick: You mean in a scientific sense, like Einstein's?

Richard: Yes, that's right. I mean in a very simple way, you're looking at me through the camera so you see my face, but if you place the camera closer you wouldn't see my face; you'd see a patch of skin. And if with other instruments you could come closer, you could see cells, and so on. On the other hand, if you went away from me you would see my whole body, and then England, and the planet, and the stars and so on.

And so Douglas began to realize that he wasn't just human; that he had layers. In fact, I'll probably show this several times (holding up a model), this is a model he made in the 70s of the layers of his being.

Rick: Cool.

Richard: Yes, it's fantastic. So this represents what you are at zero distance, this nothingness, and on the outside are what you appear to be at different ranges. So at this range, can you see that - there's a person. So that's what you are through the camera; you're viewing me at that range. But if you come up to me you'd find cells and molecules and particles and so on, but if you went away from me and then you'd find the rest of humanity and the planet and the stars and the galaxy, right?

Rick: Yeah, neat, great model.

Richard: Oh it's fantastic. It's body-mind in one map.

Rick: Of course some people might say, "Yeah that's fine, that's the molecules and then zooming out that's the galaxy, but that's not me. Me is that 3rd or 4th little thing that you swung out there, which is that guy standing there. That's the me, everything else is kind of the non-me" - just to play devil's advocate.

Richard: That is the normal view, yes, but when Douglas looked into it objectively he realized that that normal me, which we identify with and quite rightly so - the one we see in the mirror - is nonsense without all the other layers. You see I can't breathe without my lungs, or the cells that make up my lungs, or the molecules that make up my cells, or the atmosphere of my planet, or the warmth and light of my star, and so the whole thing is one living system.

Now what Douglas realized was that the question 'who am I?' is not just what I am in appearance or in body, which is absolutely vital, but who is at the center of all these layers, and the nearer you get the less there is.

And he was well aware – this is in the 1940s now or late 30s –he left England in 1937, got married, went to India to work there as an architect – he had an architect job there. The war

broke out, his wife and kids went back, went to America actually, but he was intensely involved with this question 'who am I?' And working on it, and working on this idea of layers, and not just body but mind as well.

And he was *deeply* convinced that at the center there was what you might call 'no-thing,' and all the great religions talk about this. But it was more of an idea as much as anything, until one day in 1942 or three he saw a picture by Ernest Mach in a book he was reading on philosophy. And this was a self-portrait by Ernest Mach who is an early relativist and scientist, and when you talk of speeds, Mach 5, that is the Mach.

Rick: Oh wow.

Richard: Yes, and so Ernest Mach, in this book that Douglas was reading, decided to go back to the beginning and just describe his direct experience before he verbalized. And he drew a picture of himself, which is a headless body with an arm reaching out to the piece of paper he was drawing on and the room beyond, and a big nose. You see, if you would close one you're your nose goes from the ceiling to the floor, and in this picture Ernest Mach's nose curls down from the ceiling to the floor.

When Douglas saw this he realized he was in the same condition, and that instead of just trying to penetrate into himself from *outside*, peeling away the layers to get to the center, his picture was a view *from* the center out. And so although Douglas was really already almost home, this picture made very clear what home looked like.

So this was 1942 or three, he'd been working on this for ten years. He had already written two books, unpublished. He then worked on this during the rest of the war and then he got back to England in 1945, and he took five years off before going back to architecture, because having seen that he was headless, that the center is visible ... you see, he'd been trying to penetrate the center from outside. He kind of knew what it was, but suddenly it was visible, he was looking out of it, and saw a headless, clear space, full of everything, and it inspired him.

And he realized that he needed to make sense of it, in terms of modern science and philosophy, and so he said to his wife, "Look, I'm going to take a year off and finish this book - I've been working on it for three, four years, plus" - and anyway, because he had saved a bit of money.

He then, after a year he was nowhere near finishing and it took until 1950, another five years. Fourteen hours a day, seven days a week, no holidays.

Rick: Wow, amazing. That's *The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth*?

Richard: Yes, an incredible, sustained achievement of attention and depth. And he went into every question; it is the most inspiring book. He went back to the beginning and he draws on tradition, he read everyone, he stands on everyone's shoulders, and so that came out in 1950.

So you were referring earlier to his description on having no head when he was walking in the mountains, well he did walk in the mountains, he went up to the Himalayas, but that wasn't when he first saw it; when he first saw it was looking at this picture in this book.

But *On Having No Head* he wrote in 1961, and he decided in order to attract the public he would kind of, you know, write it up a bit – say he was walking in the Himalayas when he first saw it.

Rick: I see!

Richard: You don't have to be walking in the Himalayas. But then you see what happened is he got back into architecture and then he continued writing. He realized - he felt he had discovered something of just incredible importance, and the first person who really recognized it, that book, was C.S. Lewis.

He sent out the manuscript to lots of people and eventually Lewis wrote back and said, "I've never been so drunk with a book of philosophy for years and years and years. Who are you? Why haven't I heard of you?" And C.S. Lewis wrote the preface and gave him a leg-up, but then he got back into architecture, wrote other things.

And within *On Having No Head*, he had just discovered Zen and Ramana Maharishi, and visited the London Buddhist Society summer school in the late 50s, and that brought him out into contact with the Buddhists. And the Buddhist Society invited him to write this book, or publish this book anyway, and then from there he began to get better known. So in the late 60s when he met Mike Heron, he was sharing the headless experience more and more.

The first person he *really* shared it clearly with was a lady called Helen, who was actually his secretary in his architecture practice. And she got it and went head over heels with it. It was a very powerful experience ...

Rick: 'Headless' over heels maybe.

Richard: That's right, headless over heels. I know, it's full of potential puns. I think that blew his mind because Lewis had understood the ideas, but when someone got it in such a powerful, emotional, intellectual way as Helen did, his thought at the time was, "Well I can die now, I've shared it with one other person," because it being a lonely path - aware of this most obvious thing and yet unable to share it.

But then it gradually, more and more people began to say yes, and he developed his experiments, along with friends, in the late 60s and 70s. And I met him in 1970 and some of the experiments were developed then, and the experiments were really a breakthrough because they made it very easy to share.

One of them is you point out – and viewer you can try this – you point out at objects in front of you, and you just look at what you're pointing at. And notice in the simplest terms that you're pointing at some *thing*, it's got color and shape, and you point at your arm and you're pointing at some *thing*. But then you point at where others see your face, well you *don't* see your face, you don't see anything – I don't. You just see your finger, or you don't see a solid object here, and that is direct experience.

So from the late 60s Douglas was making more and more friends and sharing this more and more widely, and had an open house – inviting people, you know, "If you were interested in this..." and I used to go every other weekend and made a whole load of friends. And the wonderful thing about this is it's non-hierarchical, because you can't be better at seeing nothing.

Rick: Yeah, let me just interject a comment or two here. I tried a few of these experiments a little bit, and you know, I've been on my own spiritual path for 40-odd years, but I found them very effective, particularly the one where you point and then you spin around.

And I was out putting seeds in the birdfeeder one morning, about six in the morning in my pajamas, spinning around. I don't think any of the neighbors saw me, but it was cool because I mean, here is this absolute clarity and stillness, unmoving, and then the world kind of turns around, you know? But the nothing, that clarity and stillness doesn't move at all; it's just solid as a rock.

And I listened to a lot of your interviews, all the ones you have on YouTube with various people, and I just want to say that it's a very sincere, intelligent group of people. I mean I don't know what percentage of people who do these experiments actually *get* it, maybe that's a hand-selected group obviously that you interviewed. You interviewed some others who said, "Nah, it didn't work for me," but obviously these people had been profoundly impacted by it.

There was even one fellow who [for him] it was such a powerful experience, that he was psychologically destabilized and had to be hospitalized for a day or two, and Douglas kind of took him under his wing and helped him out. Which is not to say that this is dangerous, but which is to say that it is not just a mere 'mood' or 'mind trick;' it can really rock your world if you *get* what you're talking about.

Richard: Oh yes, yes. Yes, all those people are very good friends of mine, well most of them, that I've known for 40 years. And so I really wanted to introduce people to friends of Douglas, mainly, for whom this had been central in their lives, for years and years. And also just to show how different the expressions are of this, how everyone expresses it differently and there isn't a standard response - yeah, really delightful.

But in terms of how many people get this, I don't know, it's so hard to tell. But Douglas would say he shared it with thousands - he died seven years ago - but shared it with thousands and thousands - of course how many people actually value it is another thing.

But I set up the charitable trust, the Shollond Trust nearly 20 years ago. We've got a website and we've got, as you know, all the experiments on the website. And I regularly get emails saying, "I've just been to your website, done the pointing experiment and blown away! I've been reading all the books for years and years, and now I know what they mean! I've got the direct experience."

And we have free Skype meetings and some beautiful people have just turned up recently, out of the blue! And we were saying this morning - we had a Skype meeting this morning - so delightful to meet new friends who are enjoying this, and you don't have the *slightest* feeling that you're doing it any better than they are. When you see it as we are doing now, you see it perfectly, but you have your own unique expression and it is so interesting to enjoy different expressions of it.

Rick: Yeah, well if you experience the "BATGAP bump," as many people I interview do, then you should have new friends in your Skype meetings. Usually people get a pretty good response from doing these interviews.

And what we're talking about here ... let me state that these experiments we're referring to are, you know, a bunch of things you can do which point out to you or make you see things in a way you might not have been seeing them, and make it kind of obvious who you are in an essential sense, and of course this is what practically every spiritual practice is designed to do.

And I never got any sense from Douglas or you that you are in any way putting *down* other spiritual practices; in fact, you yourself after being with Douglas for quite a bit, went into a Buddhist community and ardently practiced that, and also went into psychotherapy and ardently looked into that. So this is not necessarily in lieu of other things or in conflict with other things, but you do assert that it is something new and something fresh, and that it could perhaps be effective for people in ways that other things haven't.

Like for instance, Ramana Maharishi is always famous for advocating self-inquiry. This is, in a way, like a mechanical form of self-inquiry – some little techniques which actually could be an *aid* to self-inquiry, which would be completely harmonious with Ramana Maharishi's intentions.

Richard: Absolutely Rick, and Ramana Maharishi was a favorite of Douglas. Douglas found lots of quotations in Ramana that he felt very sympathetic about. But a simple one that comes to mind which we found, was something like, "Seeing who you are is staring into vacancy," well I mean I'm looking into vacancy now, I'm looking out of vacancy. This pointing is a powerful thing, you have to do it – so the viewer can do it – but you point, you just look. And I see my finger and then I don't see anything here, so I could in words say, "I'm pointing into vacancy."

Now if I point with the other finger out, as you can see (Richard has back of his hands against each other, and one index finger pointing at his face and the other index finger pointing away from his face), I'm pointing at fullness. And this is a Buddhist idea as well, isn't it? – "Form is void and void is form." Well the emptiness is full and there's no dividing line between this emptiness and Rick, and our voices and sensations and everything.

Yes, so it doesn't exclude any genuine way, this is a nonverbal, non-motional, I would say non-dogmatic experience, and then you express it in your way.

Rick: I didn't read your entire book but I read maybe the first half, and then I read the whole last section, where there are interviews with you and with Douglas. And I'm glad I got to that part because you know, some people might have the impression when they hear you speak that you know, you do a few experiments, you get it, you're done. And you made it clear that this is something that you continued to work at for many years, and *still* continue to work at, and it's not just a sort of 'snap your fingers, you're finished,' kind of idea.

And some people actually say that, you hear people say, "Well I had such and such an awakening, I'm done," and that always makes me laugh because I don't think anybody's done.

Richard: Well rather sad if they are done! There's a friend who is a Buddhist monk, Amaranatho Samanera, and he was on our Skype this morning, he's an old friend.

Rick: Yeah, I think I heard your interview with him.

Richard: Yes, that's right. Well Sam, who I did an interview with as well, mentioned something. He was in a meeting with Amaranatho and someone said, "So what's the difference between

awakening and mindfulness?" And Sam passed it straight to Amaranatho and Amaranatho said, "Well awakening is seeing this, mindfulness is going on seeing this." And going on with it is the thing, isn't it? And if you go on with it, this simple, very humble gate to seeing to seeing into nothingness, which doesn't really advertise itself - it's called 'the valley,' isn't it, right at the bottom of everything - you stay with this and it brings you moment by moment gifts.

I mean this situation now, where I am capacity for Rick and also capacity for two voices – both are in me now. So as Richard I've got this voice, and you've got that one as Rick, but as the one, this openness, this silence, both voices are mine. And this is a different way of listening, just as it's a different way of seeing - everything is in you, so ongoing awareness of that is the thing, yes.

Rick: Yeah, "You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your vein and you're clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars."

Richard: I know, *literally, literally*. You look out at the night sky and it's all in you. If you see this and go on seeing this, if you don't spend half your time lying on your back trying to recover.

Rick: Well that's a good point, "going on with that" you mean integrating, stabilizing, having it become richer and fuller and just more continuous. I would say, ultimately, it should be a deal where you're not having to think about it or do little exercises or anything else; it's as natural as breathing, it's just the way you function, it's just the way you naturally perceive the world.

Richard: Yes, I think the experiments are like the directions to show you the door. Well go through the door, step over the threshold, but don't stay at the threshold; go in and enjoy the spaces indoors, live there. So not to get attached to the experiments but my God, they are powerful. And anyway, they're very practical, I mean I'm noticing, *when* I bring my mind to it, that I only see Rick's face now – I can see Rick's face down there at the bottom of this window.

Rick: At the bottom of the Skype window.

Richard: Yes, so this picture is showing me what you look like at this range, and that one is showing me what I look like at this range. But I'm noticing that I have *no* appearance here and I'm rooted in that. So we call that "face to no-face," if you like, but I don't have to think it; it's just the way it is that I'm capacity for you know. And not just for what I see, but for what I feel and hear and sense, you know, it's very rich.

So you know, as you were saying, movement - well we walk around, here we are noticing we're still, or we get in a car and the scenery moves, or you travel to another country and you don't go anywhere; it arises in you. It is astonishing and fun and relaxing and true.

Rick: I'm just thinking of some line from the Gita that says, "Know that to be indeed indestructible by which all this is pervaded," and that implies that all that we see is pervaded by being, by this indestructible being. And that doesn't move, it's just the surface appearances are moving. And we are that, so if we know ourselves to be that, then we don't move; we pervade that which moves and things appear to move through us, but not we through them.

Richard: And this is verifiable, here and now, you just pay attention.

Rick: I learned to meditate back in the 60s and still do it. I and others whom I know who practiced it went through a *lot* of physiological change, in fact, it's still [bringing] about physiological change, in a way, because the nervous system has to – I mean any experience we have, looking at a flower or anything – there's some corresponding activity in the brain, in the nervous system, which enables us to have that experience.

And if we're talking about a radical transformation of our experience of the world, then we are implying a radical transformation of the way the nervous system functions. And indeed through the practice of meditation I've experienced that taking place over the years, you know, a real sort of purging of stuff that was occluding or clouding my ability to perceive, and so on. So did you notice something similar with seeing? Did it kind of trigger physiological transformation?

Richard: Oh yes, and continues to do so. It affects one at every level and I don't think one ever gets to the end of it, but it is profound, *profoundly* transformative. And one of the indications of this is just direct experience.

I'll just give a little resume, if I can, briefly, of the four stages ...

Rick: Oh yeah, that's nice, please.

Richard: Yes, because then I'll be putting in context some of these things. There are four main stages: the baby, the child, the adult and the seer. So the baby in these terms is headless. There you are, you are space for the world, you look in the mirror and you don't identify with a face there, and you're open, built-open, headless. And your feelings and thoughts, whatever they are, however developed, are kind of happening in the view. Like your hand, you know, it's not yours; it's all going on.

Now you're preverbal, so you don't put a name on it, but there you are. This is highly infectious. If you are with a baby it gives you permission to be headless. I mean, you're talking to an adult and then you turn back to the baby and, "Ahhh, goo goo goo," you know? So the baby gives you that permission to be headless.

So we all started in this condition, which is actually the condition of the One, isn't it, without knowing you're a little one, a person, you're the One space for the world.

The second stage is the child. Now growing up in these terms is learning to see yourself from outside, understand you have an appearance. And the mirror shows you what you look like so you learn to identify with the face in the mirror, you learn to identify with what others tell you you are – you're a boy, you're a girl, you're Rick, and so on - and you're learning to get in this box that you see in the mirror.

Now when you're a baby, your sensations are not localized, your thoughts are not localized. Now growing up is learning to get in the box and kind of bring your thoughts into that box, and your sensations, and localize yourself. As a child you're learning to do this but quite a lot of the time you forget, and so you're half in the box and half not-yet-in, but you want to get in, you want to join in because you can't function without that.

And again, children at that state of consciousness are highly infectious and, "Go and play with the kids Richard." "Oh yes, please! I can play, I can be creative, I can make things up as I go

along, I can be an airplane, I can be a train," I'm not fixed in one box yet. But as we grow up we learn to completely identify with the one in the mirror, what we look like.

And the mark of being an adult is when you look in the mirror and just without thinking at all; you just take that to be you. In other words, you're going sort of outside and seeing yourself as others see you. And in that third stage of the adult, the idea of being headless is nonsense and stupid and mad – "Of course I've got a head, I just can't see it!" Headlessness is either stupid or childish.

So what you've done by the third stage is you're the one, the emptiness, and you've now forgotten you're the one. You're not aware of being headless, being the one, being this spacious openness, and you're identified with what you look like and acting as if you're Richard or Rick, and so on, and you're separate now.

So most people think that that's what life is about: life is about growing up, it's about finding out who you are as a person, more or less taking responsibility for being that one, and making the best of the cards you were dealt because you don't have much choice about ... you don't have *any* choice about which one you were or became.

But the headless way is indicating that this is not the end of the story, that the next stage of the story is reawakening to what's always been true, this openness, that now you have a profound understanding that you manifest as a separate person. And so the idea that in order to be who you are you should get rid of your little one, or get rid of the ego, is not what I see as being the case. I see *where* my ego is, my face is in there, in that little box in the screen (referring to BATGAP Skype screen) and in the mirror, and in some way it's happening between you and me, but here is this openness.

And so the journey of life is an *extraordinary* journey, because when you see who you are, you see you're the one, and self-evidently you realize you've always been the one, and therefore throughout this whole journey you were the one. So you're the one, kind of forgetting you were the one, and reawakening to being the one.

And reawakening as we are enjoying it now, is so different from the first stage. Because I've got a deep sense of being Richard and manifesting as Richard-as-the-one, now when I'm with Rick, I have this profound sense of you being a separate person *and* of being the one. Whereas when I was a baby, I had no developed sense of you being a separate person.

So growing up is a deepening sense of self and other, and awakening to who you are *celebrates* the two of us in the one, now. Yes, a wonderful journey that celebrates our individual selves; it doesn't deny it.

Rick: You're probably aware of that T.S. Elliot poem of, "Coming back to the place from which we started and discovering it for the first time."

Richard: Yes, yes, and once you see who are, you see people are talking about it all over the place.

Rick: Of course sometimes people, you know, you hear it in certain spiritual circles, people blaming society or something for causing babies to lose their innocence and become adults, as if it's some kind of conspiracy.

I think it was you I was listening to, or no, maybe it was Peter Russell, but he was talking about how it's a natural process and God plays this hide-and-seek game with Himself. And if He didn't hide then He wouldn't be able to seek; it wouldn't be a fun game. So you kind of get lost in the parts, and then from there, and *only* from there can you seek to rediscover the whole. But I think as you were just saying, having come full circle, you have something that's more than what you started with.

Richard: Oh yes, yes, yes. And I have this feeling that the One by itself, which is as it were the baby stage, that "In the beginning was the One," it is as a kind of creation story, it's a *wonderful* place. I mean, you're there as the one, and you're aware that you are. That is the most fundamental and beautiful miracle – I am, I can't explain myself.

But the second thing that comes to me after that joyful, ongoing appreciation of being, impossible being, is the question that, "I'd like to share this with someone."

Rick: But there's no one else here!

Richard: Yeah, but I'm the only one! Well I've already achieved the impossible, which is being, let me achieve another impossible which is create others who are *really* other, who have achieved being and yet are myself. I mean that is so beautiful and deep and clever, and it is why we're talking today, isn't it? It's the One talking with itself.

Rick: Yeah, and it's an interesting process to consider because if the One had any sense of time, you'd have to credit it with having tremendous patience, because it takes billions of years to create stars which could live out their life cycles and then explode, and create heavy elements which move around, and eventually end up as planets and microbes, which eventually evolve into human beings who can have a conversation like this – that took billions of years. But of course in eternity there is no time, so I guess we can't really credit the One with having a lot of patience.

Richard: I would go for both actually; I think "Well done!" There's a rather nice phrase by the philosopher Kierkegaard: "Life is lived forwards and understood backwards," and I think that applies to the One. You know, "Oh my God, look what I've done! How did I do that? I haven't a clue! Did I know where I was going? No, but I'm kind of working it out now" - pulling the dots together, as they say. How amazing! I mean extraordinary, clever.

Rick: In some cosmologies it is said that consciousness, because it's consciousness, it becomes conscious of itself. And then in becoming conscious of itself, a threefold nature is set up – observer, observed, and process of observation, and then that bifurcates and expands and becomes of greater and greater complexity. So it is by virtue of the fact that consciousness is conscious and it is in its self-referral that the whole universe emerges.

Richard: Yes, I know. Well I think that we can see that in our own lives as the One. As a baby you're the One without any developed sense of others, and growing up is *learning* empathy, learning to place yourself in someone else's shoes and feel for them. And to realize that when

you do this you feel something, and then when they do it you can't feel it, but you grant that they are feeling something, and as a baby you haven't got that.

So growing up is learning, in a way, the One, to go out of itself and place itself in others, place yourself in others, and kind of be there, which includes looking back and seeing yourself. So I think those cosmologies have got a very good point.

Rick: Yeah, and actually you describe something in your book that illustrates the point, the point being that consciousness being self-referral is the font of creativity and creation. You spoke about how you were creating this online course and that you'd kind of run out of ideas. And that you were working and it was late and you had to create a new lesson for the next day, so you just got in the bathtub and just relaxed into the oneness, into being. And then by taking recourse to that, a whole new surge of creativity emerged from that.

Richard: Yes, I think that it's the awakening and the mindfulness thing that we were talking about earlier – awakening is seeing this, mindfulness is going on seeing it, living from it. And as you live from it, you start to know the ropes. And one of the ropes is, one of the things that happens is that things come and go, and they grow and they diminish.

And of course when we have something growing, a creative experience or *anything* joy, well we want it to keep on growing, but it doesn't. And when it starts to go away, it's tempting to think either you're doing something wrong or everything's gone wrong. But as you stay with this nothingness that's always full of something, after a while you begin to realize things come and go. And when they're going be patient, because something else will come and it will be more surprising and better than you could ever plan or know.

I mean this very interview is in my experience, pouring out of or into the great void, now. My voice is going out of nothing, your voice is in the nothing – two voices, the sensations that kind of clothe the scene, the thoughts that are *in* the scene, there's no mind here to mind. Well this is all an emerging out, what a clever nothingness!

And so I think that after awakening, mindfulness - after enlightenment the laundry, or something? After awakening, mindfulness. And the kind of astonishment in the long run of what it comes up with; we think it has run out of ideas and it hasn't begun yet, you know? Incredible!

I do a lot of kind of creative work, I'm writing a comic book with a friend who is the illustrator, I'm illustrating, I do a lot of video editing – I love it. And earlier in May I gave a talk at our annual gathering in Salisbury on the hierarchy, it was an hour-long talk and I know the hierarchy well. I've been studying it a lot because we're doing this book, and when you do a comic book you've got to put things very simply but communicate something real and valuable, of course.

So I had been really simplifying things and so I knew what I was going to say, more or less. But I didn't write it down; I just got some images together at that point. And at the last moment Amaranatho, the monk we mentioned said - just before the talk – “Look I've got my iPhone, I'll put it on the desk, I'll record it.”

“Oh, okay.”

So then I had the recording and then afterwards I thought, 'Well, I've had a few pictures on my computer that I've showed everyone that I could illustrate.' Well I'd been working on for three weeks so to illustrate an hour-long talk – no visual of me, but my God, it's a process of ... it feels as though the images come out of the great void. But you've got to be patient, and they're not always finished when they come out, you know?

And in the end you stand back in *awe* at the creativity of the One, and it's not just when you're doing something like that; it's now, it's when you're having lunch, everything is pouring from here.

Rick: Mm-hm. There was a story in the Vedas where Brahma, the creator, was supposed to create creation and he couldn't do it, it was like nothing was happening. And so some voice came to him which basically said, "Do tapas," which means "go within," to take a 180 degree turn, come back to the oneness. And he went and did that for eons or something, and then having done that he was then able to bring forth the whole creation.

Richard: Yes, I know, we tend to go in the wrong direction. We go for the thing. Well rest in the nothing and the thing will come.

Rick: Yeah, pull the arrow back on the bow and then it shall fly forward.

Richard: Very good!

Rick: You were mentioning the four stages: baby, adolescent, adult, and then I don't know if we spend enough time talking about the final stage, which is the sage or the seer.

Richard: Well let me run up to that just a bit more, just very briefly review one idea, the infectiousness of anyone's state of mind, in a basic sense.

So the baby says to everyone, broadcasts openness and everyone is given permission to be open. The child broadcasts, "I'm a bit in the box but I'm mainly out. Come and play with me." "Oh, alright."

The adult who is now suppressing his or her true nature is broadcasting, "I'm a thing, you're a thing," and this is mainly nonverbal. You only have to be *looked* at by someone and you feel looked at! And they are nonverbally telling you, "You've got a head, you're a thing, you're a person and so am I."

When you then go through to the fourth stage, which is the ongoing mindfulness of who you are, this is highly infectious too because you can't see who you are separately; it's seeing that everyone is within you.

But there's a double thing going on here because, say between us now, I am still broadcasting to you that 'you are Rick and I am Richard,' and you're broadcasting to me the same, in that sense. But now we also have this awareness of the space, the silence in which it's all going on, and this is highly infectious. This is, I think, satsang.

This is the many being together in awareness of the One and this is a whole new way of living. I think as a species we haven't been here before. I think we're at a very exciting time and that's why I love hanging out with friends and sharing our experience of this openness. It's what the

One, in my view, wants to do and loves doing. And this is living, and being each other. And you know, it's not always a high of course, it's a neutral thing, but it's ongoing attention to the obvious.

Rick: I remember one time, - oh I don't know, about five years ago – I was sitting in a place which is sometimes used as a ballet studio, so they have all these mirrors on the walls. And I was sitting there talking to a friend, and I happened to glance over and looked in the mirror and saw the two of us sitting there talking. And I was kind of startled because I'm used to regarding myself as this sort of vast presence, and then all of a sudden I realized, "Wow, that's how people see me," you know, this little guy that's kind of getting bald ... and has an earring.

Richard: I know! What a contrast? But then I think you can have compassion for that one, for yourself.

Rick: Yeah, sure.

Richard: But yes, I know. It's deep, it's highly amusing, and it's very practical, it is poetry in motion.

Rick: And yet we zoom in and out, don't we? There's sort of a flexibility – it's like as if there's a spectrum between pure oneness and pinpoint individuality, and we can kind of swing back and forth on that spectrum according to the needs of the situation. I mean, if you're driving in heavy traffic and you have to be very careful and attentive and all, you don't just want to be wallowing in the oneness, nor do you want your commercial airline pilot or your brain surgeon to be doing that. *But*, maybe we'll say here, it would be nice if your airline pilot or your brain surgeon could have that broad, settled awareness while focusing sharply, that it doesn't have to be, and ideally should not be, an either-or situation.

Richard: Well put, yes. You see, it is basically a neutral experience, so if you associate this experience with a trance-like, oceanic feeling of oneness ...

Rick: Which it can be, I mean in a meditative state, withdrawn from the world – it can be like that.

Richard: Yes and that's very healthy in its own time and place, but it's not dependent on that. And so you can do your job in this neutral calmness in the nothingness, and not be thinking that you've lost who you are.

Rick: Which I think for the most part people tend to do, you know, they get zeroed in on the point value, the focusing of attention to the exclusion who they are, to the exclusion of the oneness. You know the famous movie screen analogy where the movie is playing on the screen and it overshadows the screen, so you forget all about the screen because you're so caught up in the movie?

Richard: Yes, oh yes, yes. I'm thinking that perhaps I could take the viewer through one of the experiments at this point.

Rick: Yeah, let's do it, absolutely.

Richard: Alright, so this one is a little bit of a guided meditation. So I will guide you through – and this will take us three or four minutes, is that alright?

Rick: Sure, whatever, any amount of time.

Richard: Alright, so if the viewer can just start by doing this with their hands (Richard is moving his hands in and out of his view) and noticing their hands disappear and then reappear. And this is a nonverbal experience but I'm going to call it 'putting their hands in nothing and bringing them out,' you can choose what words you like. And it is neutral; it's not necessarily feeling good; it's just observation.

So we also call this nothingness, this emptiness, the single eye. And in order to bring your attention to this, make your hands like this (Richard touches his forefinger and thumb on each hand, making circles, and brings them together to make the shape of eyeglasses), put your fingers together. You see two holes with an image in each hole.

Now slowly put them on and notice what happens to the dividing line. Well it disappears, so the two become one. So this is noticing that whether it is in a photograph or in the mirror, I can see two eyes there, but here I've got what I call one eye, it's not even an eye, and I can put my hands into it, all the way around, so the viewer can try this.

So I'd like you to notice what I find fascinating aspects to this. This is the pointing gesture (Richard puts back of hands against each other and points one index finger towards his face and one away from his face), which is quite useful because it's two-way, and this is into the nothing and out of the something, but there's no dividing line between the two. So I'm going to use that idea of 'two-way' as what I mean, it's a provisional thing.

So I'm looking from the nothingness and I'm looking out. There's always something, whether it's visual or sound or something, and I'm looking out now. And if you look at any object in front of you, you will notice that you can compare it for size to another thing – so it's either bigger, smaller, or roughly the same size. So my hand is bigger than the glass or smaller than the glass, or something like that.

So size is relative, it's comparable – bigger, smaller, or roughly the same. Now, look at the whole view and ask yourself, how big is this view? How big is this whole eye, the field? Well you say, "I don't mind a second one to be on the right to compare it with, right? So I can't say mine is bigger than yours because I only experience mine, and this is what I would say some traditions call the incomparable one, because there's nothing to compare it with.

So we've done that for size – I can't say how big I am or how big the view is because there's nothing to compare it with.

Rick: People do things to change the size of their own view. They go to the Grand Canyon, or they go up to the top of the Empire State Building and so on, because they get a thrill out of a bigger view.

Richard: Oh yes, or very close, yes, but that's all the changing view within the whole field. Whether you're looking at the Grand Canyon or an ant, the field doesn't get bigger or smaller. The other thing to notice is, as you look at any object, you can see things all the way around. And I'm looking at a computer screen now and it's got an edge, and there's something all the way around. My hand has got an edge and then there's a background.

Anything that we look at is inside a bigger environment. Now you look at the whole field, is it inside anything? I don't see anything around it, it's not contained. And if you look at any object, just pick an object, that object you're looking at is right in the middle of your field of view and the most in focus, and then as you keep looking at objects but just notice towards the periphery, it gets vaguer and vaguer.

Now you look at another object, now that is in the middle, and as you look towards the edge, you can't see anything. Now I can imagine the ceiling above and the floor below and the walls, but my direct experience is the seeing now, the visual seeing, is hanging in nothingness.

Okay, so now I'm going to just to move a little more forward into eyes closed for a moment, if that's okay, and look at thoughts and feelings and things like that.

Rick: Sure.

Richard: Okay, so the viewer can try this with us. So now close your eyes. On personal evidence, Rick has disappeared and been replaced by a darkness. Now open your eyes and the seeing reappears. In my own experience the world is kind of disappearing – in the room anyway - and reappearing in the nothingness. And I take this seriously, in fact it's one of the powers of a person, to make things disappear and reappear.

Anyway, keep your eyes closed and the room has been replaced by a darkness, in my experience. And there are flecks of light in it so I can distinguish between things within the field of darkness. The power of being is the whole field of darkness. Well I don't find a second one to compare it with, can you?

Rick: No, so it doesn't have a size.

Richard: No! And I don't find it inside anything, it's uncontained. Alright, so open your eyes again. So whether you've got your eyes open or closed, if you feel into your field of experience, you can't say how big it is, I can't, and it is not inside anything.

So now we close our eyes again and be aware of sounds. And you can hear my voice, and if you say something Rick we can hear your voice, yes?

Rick: Yes, here's my voice.

Richard: There it is. So you can distinguish between different things within the field of sound, but as you listen you probably, maybe, hear distant traffic. Some sounds are loud and some are soft, and some you like and some you don't recognize, but then there's a point where you can't hear anything else. So on personal evidence, in your own experience, how big is this field of sound? Well I don't find a second one to compare it with.

Rick: No.

Richard: I can't say. Your voice is in it, my voice is in it, and there's a point where I can't hear anything else. In words I say, "Okay, so the sound is arising in this moment." So now if you open your eyes again, now we've got the visual field which appears as a boundary, and I can't say how big it is. And at the same time the sounds are in this field as well, and all the sounds are within

this awareness – because I don't find the colors of things I'm looking at and the sounds happening in a different space.

So here we go, close your eyes again and be aware of body sensations, and some you like and some you don't like, I suppose. Some are strong and some are weak, and some are to the left and some are to the right, perhaps. So different sensations going on and changing in the field, but how big is the whole field of sensation? Well again, I don't find a second one to compare it with, I can't say.

And there's a point where I can't sense or feel anything, so positively I say that all the sensations are arising in the great void. Now I identify very easily with my body sensations, so if I say I can't say how big the field of sensation is and I don't find it inside of anything, I could just as easily say I don't know, can't say how big I am. I'm not contained, I'm free.

So now if you open your eyes, you're still got the body sensations but they're not happening, in my experience, in a different or awareness from what I'm seeing and hearing. And so I have this very physical, it's not just visual, but a *very* physical sense of being uncontained, at large, it's as if my body sensations blend with the walls.

So just a couple of other things, if you go back into closing your eyes again ...

Rick: You're going to make me sleepy with all this eye closing.

Richard: I know! It's worth doing.

Rick: Yeah, yeah, I know.

Richard: Because people often ask about thoughts and feelings, so you're aware of thoughts and feelings - what you're thinking about. If you want to create thoughts, you can count to five slowly and just be aware of those thoughts, or imagine a blue circle – we call these 'mental objects' – or remember the face of a friend and the affection you feel to the friend.

And so what we call mind, the thoughts and feelings and reactions and images and so on, all going on and changing. Now the same question: how big is this field of mind? Well again, I don't find a second one to compare it with, and I don't find it happening *inside* any container, or happening in a separate space of awareness from the sounds and the darkness and sensations.

So now if you open your eyes again, my experience is my thoughts are at large, innumerable from my point of view, and my sensations are at large, and there's only one field, only one. And so this is just a little indication that this headless way isn't just visual; it embraces all the senses, so that's what is guiding our attention back to the One.

Rick: Yeah, as a matter of fact I think I read in an interview that you did with a blind person. So for him all the pointing and all that is not quite so meaningful, but that this can be done even if you can't see.

Richard: Yes, yes, in that article, that was by Allen – his old website - he *had* seen when he was young and then lost his sight. So when he did the workshop with Douglas and he came to the point where he could *imagine* pointing.

Rick: I see.

Richard: And then he asked himself, "Well how would I show this to somebody who has never seen, who can't imagine?" So he said, "Well a blind person still has a sense of direction?" So the sound is there, and then what you normally do is you think that you're something hearing the sound. So the experiment is to turn the arrow of attention around and listen to what is here, because you don't hear anything.

So yeah, it was a good article. And I gave a workshop in the Boston area a few weeks ago, and there was a blind person there and his marvelous sharing, marvelous.

Rick: So when you put us through those exercises just now, I'm a little unclear as to what the significance in each case of the question "How big?" you know, "How big is your visual scene is?" What are you trying to get at exactly by that particular description?

Richard: Well, because we normally grow up to think that we're small. The baby has no sense of how big it is, but by the time you are an adult you have a very clear sense of being small and separate. And what you learn to do is think of your sensations as localized, and think of your mind as localized. This is well understood; it's called Theory of Mind.

When you're very young, you don't have a sense that your mind is private. So in other words - there's a test they do for this where you have a young child, an infant or a child, and you show them a box. You open the box and you put some pencils in the box and you close the box. And then someone comes in the room and you ask the child, "Does that person know what is in the box?" And the child says, "Of course, everyone knows what's in the box!" because it does not have a sense of it having a separate mind yet.

And this is why a very young child won't keep secrets; he hasn't a *clue* what a secret is. Now you do the same test with the same child six months later, and show them what's in the box and then close it, and the adult comes in and ... "Does that person know what's in the box?"

"No."

Now that shows that it has realized that what it thinks and sees and feels is private. And that someone else has a different experience, that's a learned thing. We learn it so well that we don't realize it. But in that process, in a sense, you see, I never experience anyone's thoughts but my own, but what I learned to do is to *think* that these thoughts are in this separate box here, literally, two or three feet separate from the screen, and that you've got thoughts over there in your head, which I can't see, inside your head. And so my mind is small and yours is small. Alright, that's really a valuable thing; you can see how valuable that is in the sense of self and others.

So we've got that going, and then when you take a fresh look you see, I see, that my mind is not in a box; it's at large, it has no boundary, it's not contained, it's coming out of nothing. My body sensations are not a private thing and that you've got yours over there; there's only one in town and they're at large.

So now I have the direct experience that I have no boundary, that I feel big and it's not just a visual thing. My body, my sensations are as big as the world. My mind is as big as the world, this

is just simply true. But I now am different from the infinite because I understand from you that I am not everywhere. And so I have this dual awareness that for others I'm 'just Richard,' but for me, I'm 'the one.' And this is very therapeutic because the deep conviction that your mind is a tiny, local, small thing in this tiny box, potentially drives everyone mad. I mean it's like trying to fit a thousand bees in a tiny box, you know, there's no way.

Now when you see there's no box, the bees fly out into the world. That is one of the most therapeutic things you can do, is seeing your mind is at large. It doesn't mean you don't then attend to things, of course you do, but seeing that you are living from no-mind is basic freedom, it is very healthy, it's normal, it's natural, it's 'the other' that is kind of arrested development, when you haven't moved on to see that you are at large.

And this sense of being big and at large is so healthy - *physically* healthy, mentally healthy, spiritually healthy, of course.

Rick: I remember Maharishi Mahesh Yogi giving a talk about maya one time, and he was talking about the whole ocean gets squeezed into a drop. And he said, "Imagine the strength of grip that could squeeze an ocean into a drop. You are that ocean and yet you think of yourself as a drop."

Richard: Yes, I know, and then imagine the power and energy that comes from the expansion.

Rick: I'll bet there's also some significance to your whole thing with the way babies love to play peek-a-boo. And they think that they disappear, or that a person disappears when they go like that (Rick holds up his hands to eyes), and they reappear.

Richard: Yes, there is. I think we see this as such a familiar thing, I mean it's the most familiar! Who you really are is the *most* familiar thing, or no thing. It's what you've always been, it's what you always will be, it is basic reality.

But this dual awareness, the awareness of yourself as a thing and as no thing containing things, to only be what you look like is to be scared.

Rick: Yeah, yeah.

Richard: Yes, but to awaken to your central nothingness is to sort of be invisible. And now, gosh, you're free to express, you are free-er at least, to express and to be yourself.

Rick: I think it's the Mandukya Upanishad where it says, "Certainly all fear is born of duality."

Richard: Yes. I'm reminded that Douglas wrote a book in the 60s called *Religions of the World*, and he attempted to show there how each religion expresses this nonverbal truth in a different way, and so he went beneath the differences of style to the essential. And your quoting the scriptures there, I think that indicates that this basic experience has been appreciated in *all* different cultures and expressed in different ways.

And I was talking with a friend a couple of days ago, and the idea that you've got the only way, and the guy next door is saying, "Well we've got the only way," you have to think about it and at least one of you is wrong, if not both. And the discovery of who you really are is going beneath the different expressions and traditions to the central core, from which you can appreciate *every* way. And gosh, doesn't the world need this? Now as much, if not more than ever.

Rick: Yeah, and I think these days NASA is saying that there may well be a hundred million inhabitable planets in our galaxy alone, and of course there are hundreds of billions of galaxies. So if Jesus is the only way, is He on tour? And if so, does He spend 33 years on each planet? And if so, how could the world only be 6,000 years old? I mean it definitely brings up some problems if you think you've got the only way.

Richard: Yes, and I think Jesus was one of those beautiful, extraordinary people who woke up to who He was, and spoke and stood up for it and died for it. He had a clear, I would say, He awoke and became mindful, and then He told people about it. Of course if you then hear someone speaking about it, if you don't get it yourself, the you project on them either the best or the worst, and this is again the difference between the inside and the outside. Jesus was not the One; Jesus was an appearance of the One.

Rick: Yeah, well that brings up an interesting point, and you've said a number of times that there's no hierarchy in this, no one's got it better than anybody else, but on the other hand, you talked about mindfulness and we've alluded to the degree to which this is sustained.

We might also discuss the degree to which this is manifested or expressed. I mean some people seem to radiate like lighthouses, like blast furnaces, and others are more of the dim light, so even though it's the same essence, it seems that there's a wide range of possibilities in terms of how fully this essence can be expressed or reflected in various reflectors, don't you think?

Richard: Yes, I would distinguish between the experience and the meaning, or the experience and the expression. The experience is the same for everyone and the expression is different for everyone. And of course some people radiate and some people don't, but it's a very superficial thing to me, in a way; the essence is the thing. So yes, beautiful beings, but I think when you see this, you see that everyone is the One and everyone is beautiful in their own way. And I don't ... someone's radiating doesn't really impress me.

Rick: Yeah, I know what you mean.

Richard: I tell you that and the very funny thing is that Sam, who does our website, I've known him about 8 or 9 years, I went and did a workshop in Western Australia about 8 or 9 years ago, whatever it was - in fact Peter Pearl who was practically blind, and Peter got in touch with me, emailed me and had read my book. And I looked him up and I was trying to work out whether he really got it, but sight varies and Pearl's sight was even worse.

But he could see a bit and he said that he was walking along the beach with their dog, and the light comes across the water from the sun just to him. So that's one of the indicators that it worked, you see, because Pearl's wife then says, "No id doesn't Pete, it comes to me."

So anyway, they invited me and their good friend is Sam, and Sam came to the workshop and got the point. He had been a sanyasi with Osho and he left in the end and he was blown away by this. But anyway, the radiation thing, he said, "Well one of the things that impressed me when I walked in the room was I saw this guy sitting on the chair and I thought, 'who is sitting in the teacher's chair then?' you know, someone's gone and sat." In other words, he was impressed by my unimpressiveness.

Rick: Yeah, well I think sometimes radiation can be a matter of projection on the part of those who are perceiving. It's like when Mick Jagger gets up in front of a hundred-thousand people, he seems to radiate a lot but he's really kind of reflecting the enthusiasm of the crowd.

But, we were talking earlier about 'continue, this is a lifetime thing,' you know, continued growth, continued unfoldment in some sense. And so taking the electrical field as an example, we have the same electrical field for all light bulbs, but some light bulbs are not so bright, some are more bright. And maybe we are just wired to be a certain wattage of light bulb for our whole life, but maybe the metaphor falls short there and we're actually able to up our wattage as we go through, in terms of expressing that field more radiantly.

Richard: Oh yes. Well I think it was D.T. Suzuki who said, "Penetrate to the center and it turns the frightened little dog into the lion." It is a profoundly transformative process but you can't really second guess how it's going to transform you, I don't think.

Rick: No.

Richard: And also, I think that I certainly find, and many, many friends of mine find that after a while you don't bother so much about how much you're doing it. It's always there, it's always on tap whenever you want it, it comes through when you are least expecting it as well, you can access it at will. You're kind of taking your temperature spiritually and it becomes not interesting and you get on with *living* it.

Rick: Sure. There's even a bit in your book where you or Douglas quote Ramana Maharishi as saying pretty much the same thing, that you just, you know, it's not something that you're dwelling on all the time and most of the time you may even forget it, but if you want to check – there it is.

Richard: Yes, and that's why I think it's so delightful to hang out with friends, like you today, because you're sort of consciously bringing it on to the front burner, without any particular effort, and you're kind of infecting each other with it.

Rick: Yeah. Couple of bits in your book that I wrote down, thought they'd be interesting springboards for discussion. There was one section where – and you kind of put a lot of Douglas in your book so I'm not sure which of you came up with this, but you were talking about individual results, and there's a list of about 6 or 7 of them here. Maybe we could just go through them. One is: 'one's senses awaken.'

Richard: Yes, well I think it is as if a veil is drawn aside, when your seeing is clear, clear openness; it is a common experience for people to experience a world more vividly, clearly. That's a testing, you know, test it and see if it's true. But certainly it is as if the fog of your face disappears and there's the world, right here.

Rick: Nice. Next one is: 'one's heart goes out to the world.'

Richard: Yes, I think you lose your head and find your heart - there's no separation between you and others and you feel more deeply, as well as being completely free and detached; you're completely involved.

Rick: Next one is: 'one's mind awakens.'

Richard: Yes, well I think that when you think of your mind as this small, limited thing - really there is nothing new under the sun in it - and you then awaken to being the no-mind from which mind, which is the whole universe's pouring, you've opened Aladdin's cave. Things are pouring out and you, I think with experience, gain more confidence that it is *infinitely* creative; it's nothing to do with you personally - you put your bit in.

And the other thing is that this awakening to who you are, when I first read *On Having No Head*, or when I read it years and years ago, Douglas first talks – well there's two things here – talks about the experience and then he has two initial reflections, which I'll briefly say. First of all, because I'm face to no-face with others, confrontation is a lie, it's the end of confrontation. And the second thing is, now that I see that all the world is in me, I must grant the same condition to you, and this is a beautiful pardon. Therefore, I think the world of you.

Now there was a sentence a bit later where he said, "And this *profoundly* affects your way of thinking," and I thought, 'I don't really understand that that' – at the time. Well, read *The Hierarchy*, this opens up a profoundly new way of thinking of the world that flows on the back of relativity and lots of other things.

So that, you know – 'I'm in you, you are in me,' 'I see you here but I project you back, there' - all these very deep ideas, and so one mind is refreshed and opened and given a new lease, yes, for sure.

Rick: Hmm, seems that what you just said would be, you know, there's so many horrors in our world, things that people do to each other which would not really be possible if one had the perspective that you just described. I mean you wouldn't cut – and some people who are deranged do this kind of thing, they cut themselves in order to feel alive - but generally, if you are psychologically healthy and if your finger got into the ink or something, you wouldn't punish it by cutting it or saying, "Bad finger," you know, because it's part of you. And if one perceived the world that way, imagine how we would treat each other.

Richard: I know, this is the work we're involved with, is sharing this as widely and as freely as possible. The world needs it. But it's Namaste, isn't it? I have now discovered that the center of Richard is God, for one, and therefore now when I meet you I know that you are the one too. And so I honor the one in you, that is the same one in me, so yes, that leads to love, doesn't it?

Rick: Hmm, here's the next point on that list: 'One's day to day problems are sorted out and one's unconscious is taken care of.' And I was reminded of the idea of a cosmic computer that is working everything out with far greater perfection and intelligence than we are able to muster individually. It works things out for us, often in surprising ways.

Richard: Oh, everyday -, little things and big things, I mean, it's just an ongoing education. I don't think *it* knows how it does it, it's just incredible. I think the moment you run out of ideas is the moment God takes over and says, "Alright, okay, let me have a go now." That's again is for testing, all of this is for testing.

Rick: Here's the next point: 'one ceases playing games.'

Richard: Yes, Douglas wrote a paper for Eric Burn, the psychoanalyst, back in the 60s, called *Face Game*. And he had read Burn's book, *The Games People Play*, and he had the idea that all the different games are based on one master game. The game is: I have a face here, you see it here and I don't, but now I play the game that I've got one and therefore I am separate, and therefore all the other games come from this - what kind of person I am in relationship to you, I must be a thing in order to be no thing.

But when you see there's no face, you see through this basic game, and so essentially you stop playing games. Now we are complicated characters, you know, so I certainly wouldn't claim not to play games. But in the moment of seeing, you're not playing the basic game, and you can say that with confidence, that your seeing is free of that game. And so that will affect how you are in the world, it must to.

Rick: Nice, and here is the final one in that list: 'one finds peace of mind.'

Richard: Yes, I remember asking Douglas once, "Does this give you peace of mind?" And he said, "No," and he paused a dramatic pause and he said, "It shows you that you *are* peace; it doesn't give you it."

And this is like your movement thing. All the movement is there, there's no "rest" there; the stillness is here. You can call that peace, and so peace is with you even in the most tumultuous situations. What a resource - to be aware of that inner peace, if you like.

Rick: Yeah, I think the first or second verse in the Yoga Sutras is: "Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind," which obviously would lead to peace. But that's not to say that you won't have a mind afterwards that can think and do and so on, but if it is grounded in peace and that peace passeth understanding, as the Bible says, then it can really be quite rock-like. In fact, there's a word for that too - "The intellect is anchored to the rock-like."

Richard: Yes, I think that's just the way it is. And this is where the two-way pointing comes into play, I think. Just as it is 'face there to no-face here,' so it is 'thoughts and feelings and mind and stress,' to 'no thoughts and feelings and mind here - no stress here.'

So I'm not getting rid of my thoughts and thinking and feeling and stress and so on; I'm placing it. There's the zone out there where all that goes on, and here is the zone where it doesn't, and I enjoy both.

Rick: That's tricky though. There's a lot of very high-stress professions these days - they talk about teacher burn out, and policemen have a lot of difficulties with stress and often react by becoming abusive or violent. And then of course you have the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, where tens of thousands of soldiers coming back with post-traumatic stress disorder. If the army hired Richard Lang to prepare these guys to go over there, do you feel like that seeing would be an effective antidote or inoculation against the stress of war, or do you feel like they'd lose interest in going and they'd all go AWOL, or what?

Richard: Well seeing isn't a technique, you see, it's not something to kind of "slot in" with other techniques.

Rick: Yeah, but you have all these exercises to facilitate it.

Richard: Yes, yes, I have given up trying to give workshops to reduce stress or whatever it is, but I think the thing is, go for the center and see what happens. If someone, if a soldier is interested in this, I'd share it, but I wouldn't introduce it as part of a course for soldiers, it's not that kind of thing really.

Rick: So you actually *did* give workshops to reduce stress but then you gave up on it, because it didn't work out or something?

Richard: Well, I think that I have tried my hand at various times. You know, the whole thing of therapy, and I've practiced as a therapist and I'm profoundly aware of the therapeutic value of this. But if people come to you because they are mother-in-law is getting on their mind, or their boss is being difficult, you and try and slip in headlessness. It's like slipping in anything else, it's not what they came for and it's somewhat presumptuous, and so I wouldn't do it now, at all. I *be* it - it's the most powerful thing. You see even now, the words *now* between us are in a way superficial; the thing is *being* it nonverbally.

So my policy is: if someone invites me to do a workshop I'm 100% sharing seeing, but if someone has come for therapy or Tai Chi or dance – they are the various things I do – I've learned and I've taken the route not to talk about this. Now I don't suppress it, but they haven't come for that, so to respect what they've come for.

Rick: So do you yourself feel stressed out sometimes?

Richard: Yes.

Rick: Like you know, when you're under a lot of pressure or whatever, you know, travelling or something?

Richard: Yeah.

Rick: And so when *you're* feeling stressed out, is it just a matter of getting some relief by recognizing your inner nature, which is non-stress, and then taking refuge in that, or does that actually serve as a solvent to the stress, where you can kind of feel less stressed by taking recourse to it, and hopefully even get totally refreshed?

Richard: All of that, yes, all of that. Yes, I think that there's probably a point where you know, if I've got a bad headache, I'm not for a while really aware of who I am. And it's not like you don't take aspirin or something, but I think that my policy is to bring my attention back here and notice. And the thing is, it doesn't get rid of the headache straightaway, but ...

Rick: It takes the edge off it.

Richard: It does something. And then I have a friend who is in hospital and she is in great pain, and she's applying this. And it's a kind of profound 'yes,' isn't it, it's seeing who you are. The space says "Yes" to everything. Now Richard says "No" to a lot of things and "Yes" to some, so my learning curve is to identify with the One who says "Yes" to everything, while sometimes saying "No" to things, you know, you have to say "No" to some things.

So it's not a panacea, it doesn't get rid of stress but places it. I think this is actually a part of the whole process, is that when you awaken to who you are, as you were saying, I think, you go

through rhythms. You remember and forget, and you have a creative flare then it goes, and you have the deep acceptance of things, and then it goes, and then there is a deeper acceptance, and it comes and goes. And I think that's a long term deepening, maturing at the human level, that is the recognition of the wisdom and power and love of your true self, that the humankind only staggers around the edge.

Rick: Yeah I think that cyclical patterns are natural to the universe and to life and to development, and so on. There's an analogy they use in India where if they want to dye a cloth a certain color, dip it in the dye and then bleach it in the sun. And it loses most of the color, but a little bit remains. Then dip it again, bleach it again, dip it again, bleach it again, and as you continue that process, eventually it is fully colored. Whether it is in the sun or in the vat of dye – they don't need to put it in the dye anymore.

Richard: Very good image, yes.

Rick: Another section I wrote down when I was reading your book – you were talking about "Preferences and resistance versus no preferences and yielding. True self accepts things as they are, individual self sometimes resists trusting the one." And then I added: Everything God does is for the best. Want to riff on that for a bit?

Richard: Yes, I think again it is the two-way thing, where you place things. Things are peripheral and nothingness is central, is one way of putting it. And if I look at my hand, my hand is there and I am space for my hand. And then I am aware of the sensations and sensations are there and no sensations here; I am capacity for the sensations in my hand.

Now if I make my hand into a fist, the hand gets tense but the space doesn't. And now I relax and the hand gets relaxed but the space doesn't do anything. So if I put my hands together and push, they resist each other, and then you stop and they stop. Things resist or give way, but the nothingness is just capacity for the whole process.

And so in my feelings and reactions, in my body and life, say "yes" and "no," I resist and I surrender, there's a rhythm, but this One *here* says "yes" to everything. And this is who I *really* am, so it's not just a kind of intellectual thought, but I think you have to *live* this; just to have it as a nice idea doesn't do anyone any good really.

So as we go on you kind of go into deeper and deeper levels with this kind of rhythm, with everyone being different, you say "yes" at deeper and deeper to the One who always says "yes," but you know, with many backslidings.

Rick: Yeah, it's an interesting theme really. You are probably familiar with Byron Katie and her book, *Loving What Is*. And I heard on some of your recordings, maybe it was even Douglas I was listening to, about arguing with reality, or kind of resisting, not accepting reality as it is. And so that's kind of a popular spiritual meme. A lot of people try to make that into a practice.

But you know, sometimes things need to be resisted or you need to say "no," and so on. And so if you take this to heart superficially, you may end up just becoming a kind of push-over. And so I think you do a nice distinction, which is that resistance is natural and maybe totally appropriate

in the relative world, but that which is the space for the relative world, which contains it is ... well you said it says “yes,” but “yes” is also a kind of polarity isn’t it?

Richard: Yes, yes and no. Because I think that is all true, and this placing of things is the kind of basic freedom. It’s not in learning to be surrendered all the time, that doesn’t work, it’s not true. You’re misplacing where the surrender is. But the basic place that’s in who I really am leads me to the awareness of who I really am.

And this miracle that I am - I’m not sure what I am but it is just incontrovertible in my own experience - I am! And the alternative is not being and it is unimaginable, but I have obviously chosen to be. Here I am.

Douglas used to call it, “This is the joy without a shadow,” because this basic being is outside time. It is impossible, it is miraculous, it is wonderful, there’s no downside to it. It’s not got a shadow, but everything within it has a shadow. Now the basic fact, experience of being or nothing for something, is not *not* got a shadow.

Now when you kind of get that as it were, you have woken to this joy that has no shadow. It’s not like you are on a high; it’s a neutral kind of thing, a background. And you might feel very sad some days about things, you know, I do, but gosh!

It’s like one thing connected to another thing. When you wake up to who you are, you find basic confidence. It is not personal; it is the confidence of the One, and that just doesn’t have a downside to it, really; you’ve achieved being. It’s for testing it. It’s like all the realizations in the world, if they’re not backed by the fact that you weren’t born and won’t die, are kind of temporary. But this discovery that you were never born and you will never die, that’s the one, you know, that’s the one, keep the rest.

But gosh, I mean it’s outrageous that this is your eternal home. That this, what’s arising in it now, this conversation, which is coming and going, is arising within this unchanging brilliance, really. And we’re celebrating it, and it’s brought it together to celebrate it, today!

Rick: That’s actually huge, I mean, when you consider how one’s perspective must be if you think that this is all you are, and as soon as this dies, I’m out of here - I’m snuffed out like a candle and I shall no longer exist in any way, shape, or form. There must be a tremendous amount of fear attending that perspective.

Richard: Yes.

Rick: And there’s such a relaxation and a confidence, I think, is the word you just used, when you kind of realize *viscerally*, experientially, that you’re actually indestructible.

Richard: I know! And what a great thing to share, you know, we’re sharing the same but with a different tone of voice – we’re sharing the same fact. I mean, we’re celebrating what all the great [religions talk about] - the Kingdom of Heaven or whatever you want to call it, it’s astonishing.

Rick: Are there any other exercises you want to demonstrate while we’ve got you live? Or should they just look them up on your website?

Richard: Oh, there's lots on the website.

Rick: Hmm, and there's a bunch in the book.

Richard: Yes, yes, and I just show this model again (Richard holds up Douglas's model) because we've just reproduced it. Douglas did a version in the 70s which was black and white, and we've redone it recently.

Rick: Is it something one can actually purchase?

Richard: Yes, on the website, of course, oh yes, and there's an hour-long CD that comes with it that Douglas recorded in the 70s

Rick: Oh, nice, that can make a nice conversation piece on one's coffee table or something.

Richard: Ahh yes, I just wanted to point out one thing really. I mean I've pointed out that this shows the different layers of your body, which is the view in. But there are pictures on the inside, which is your view out, at different ranges.

Rick: Ahh.

Richard: And so at this range of a few feet, you see Richard and I see Rick. But the view out from the center is of other people, and of course your face in the mirror - at that range. Your view from thousands of miles – the view of you is the planet.

When you look out you don't see Earth's face; you see the other planets, and the same at the star level. You really are a star, at a certain range. I mean probably, if you think about it, from the other point, of stars, you're probably being observed in the night sky and you might have a name.

Rick: Yeah.

Richard: Now when you look out you don't see your star face; you trade your star face for all the other star faces. And so this is, I mean the world hasn't woken up to this beautiful vision. This is, every layer is a subject at school, this shows how they all come together. This shows how the whole thing is one living system.

And one way of thinking about it is that the view in is your body at different ranges, and the view out is your mind. Now this integrates your mind and your body with the central core, so I just wanted to flag that up because it is a breakthrough really, in terms of integrating everything.

Rick: Yeah, it's really cool and the Gita talks about "Seeing the Self in all beings and seeing all beings in the Self," and that's really very literal! And when you get right down to it, you and I are the same thing, you know, we're just different manifestations of it, different expressions of it.

Richard: I know, and we're enjoying it! We're conscious of it now! I don't think it gets any wilder really, and what a joy!

Rick: So by the same token, that which I am is the Self of the sun, it's the Self of the galaxy, it's the central core foundation of the universe, wherever you want to take it. It's the intelligence governing the functioning of one of my brain cells or one of my blood cells, and so on.

Richard: That's right, that's right, it's a living universe.

Rick: It's a beautiful perspective.

Richard: Yes, we haven't yet realized what Douglas has given us in his rediscovery of the living universe. It just is such an incredible place and we're all kind of missing it most of the time, but it's coming, it's coming.

Rick: Well it's really great that you've kind of made it your life's work, in a sense, to propagate Douglas's teaching. And I'm sure it's just a labor of love and you don't consider yourself some kind of hero for doing it or anything, but it's great that you are doing it.

Richard: Yes, and I'll just say briefly one thing about that. I think as you do these things you have to work out some point why you're doing it and what you're doing, and for example, at one point I realized, "Oh, what on Earth am I trying to do here? What am I trying to share?" And then I, for myself, worked out, "Well I can't show anyone else my no-head," right? – everyone sees my head, so give up that one, stop trying to prove it.

If I'm the only one that can see my no-head, what am I trying to share with you? Well I can't prove it to you, but I profoundly accept you can't see *your* head, so this is now turned from being me trying to tell you what's what, to us having an equal conversation about a basic experience. And so then, going around doing workshops changes from trying to get people to think the same way as you, to enjoying making friends. So in terms of going around – I enjoy making friends who have helped me be mindful.

Rick: Of course we're talking about an *experience* here, and not just a belief or an understanding or a philosophical concept or something. None of which does anybody a huge amount of good. They're nice, but they're just icing on the cake; we're talking about an experience.

It's like anything else, I mean, if you're enjoying a mango, you could spend hours describing to me how enjoyable it is, but that's not going to be much of anything for me as compared to actually eating it myself – eating one myself. And so you're just kind of going around showing people how to eat mangos.

Richard: Yes, and it is very beautiful because the hallmark of a workshop is basically, everyone gets it! Everyone gets it. Now what they make of it is different, but it is the experiment's approach - 100% efficiency. It is staggering, I mean it's astonishing.

It's not saying you guarantee any people will carry on with it, but the experiences - you just can't argue with it, you know, your hands just disappear - whatever you make of it. And so it really is not a talk-shop or workshop.

Rick: So a laboratory kind of thing?

Richard: Yes, in the first minute you share it, and then you explore it

Rick: Yeah, I think you do mention that just reading the book doesn't usually do it for people. There is a value in having friends to do it with and to work with, so people might want to keep that in mind.

Richard: Yes, and drop in on the free Skype meetings and do the experiments on the website, watch the videos. There is an awful lot. If you want to make friends who value this, they're there.

Rick: Yeah, so let's go through some of that. So you have Skype [e meetings what, weekly or something?

Richard: We have four a week.

Rick: *Four* a week? Wow.

Richard: Yeah, hosted by different people.

Rick: And how does that work? Because you have Skype set up so that fifty people can come on at once or something?

Richard: Oh no, currently they are small, some of them like 5, 6, 8, 4 people. And we have a different – well I think I host two of them at the moment. But you just make contact with the person hosting and let them know you want to join, and they'll invite you in that day. There's no commitment, free, details on the website under the 'Workshop' menu.

Rick: Okay, and the website is...?

Richard: www.Headless.org

Rick: www.Headless.org, and I'll be linking to that, as usual. And then what else is there? There are all kinds of exercises on the website, right?

Richard: Yes, lots of videos, we have a yearly summer gathering in Salisbury, where people come for four or five days – beautiful place. And again, it's very democratic, non-hierarchical. We do the experiments, hang out, make friends.

I set up the Shollond trust about 20 years ago, which is nonprofit, which is what posts the website. We publish a lot of books by Douglas, and e-books and things. And so people, through the website, if these days they want to find out about the Headless Way, they get in touch with me, which I love. And everyday people are emailing me and so I'm very happy to be in touch with people genuinely interested in this.

But the thing is that immediately you can be in touch with others and have a circle of headless friends.

Rick: Henry the 8th would have loved this.

Richard: I know, of course. Every so often we have Spri-casts, which are advertised in the workshops as well.

Rick: What's a Spri-cast?

Richard: It's a bit like Skype except that it's usually me and someone else on the screen, and then the rest are watching, and there's a free chat, and then type in questions and comments.

Rick: Yeah, so I get the impression there's not a whole lot of money involved in this. I mean there are a lot of things that are for free, but obviously if you go give a workshop someplace, I'm sure there's a cost.

Richard: Yeah, there's a cost.

Rick: Gotta pay for your travel and renting a room and all that. But it definitely doesn't seem to be some kind of get-rich-quick scheme for Richard Lang.

Richard: No, you know I came across this when I was 17 and I used to visit Douglas a lot. And whenever I was there, there'd be 10, 12 other people. So in effect, I grew up in a headless community – a loose-knit group of friends who valued this. A – it would be *absolutely* ridiculous to claim you've got something they didn't have, right? And B – Douglas didn't make money out of it.

The thing is, we genuinely want to get this out in the world. Now of course we have got to charge for things, but we want to make it as available as possible. So we give a lot out of hearts because we want to share it, but then you see, Douglas's first book, *The Hierarchy*, is huge – weighs 5 kilos.

Rick: How many pages is it?

Richard: 700, *huge* pages - drawings down every single one of them. You can download the PDF, it's a wonderful book. But anyway, we needed - years ago now, few years ago - we wanted to change it from the hard back version, you know, the original, into a PDF. So I put out a request for help and within a week I had 150 volunteers.

Rick: Wow!

Richard: And I think that's because we give so much away, as much as we can, you give the goods, so some people say, "Oh, I'd like to help." And that book has now, we've just reached an amazing point, where it will be ready in French. Now that has taken 2 or 3 years to translate into French, and also in Spanish. People do this for free, we couldn't afford to pay anyone anyway. But because I think there's such a gratitude, really, that they found in the actual goods.

Rick: That's great. Yeah, I try to do that too with this show. Some people have told me I should charge for being able to watch them and all, but I really like to make it freely available. And people donate and that supports it, and I also have like a translation team of people who transcribe, and one of them is in England, and who translate into various languages. So if anyone listening to this would like to help with that, there's a page on my website for volunteer opportunities, and you can see about that.

And you too, I mean if people want to help you with translation and things like that, they can get in touch with you through www.headless.org.

Richard: Yes.

Rick: And you're coming to the States for the SAND conference I take it?

Richard: Yes, again, yes!

Rick: I'll be there; I'll see you there.

Richard: Oh lovely, lovely, I'll look forward to it.

Rick: Are you doing any workshops in the States while you're here?

Richard: Just I think on the way back, I've been doing them in the Philadelphia area in Levittown, with a good friend there, and so I'll probably do them again in that area, in October. So that will be on the website.

Rick: And if people watching this want you to come someplace?

Richard: Yeah, just get in touch and say, "We'd like you to come," and I'll come.

Rick: Great, fantastic. Okay, is there anything else that we should let people know before we conclude?

Richard: Well I just wanted to thank you again, Rick, been a delight to hang out with you.

Rick: Oh yeah, it's been great fun.

Richard: Yeah, really. It's deep and it's light and it's touching and it's amusing, and I hope we, you know, I'm sure we will, reach more people through this.

Rick: Yeah. Some people say they get thousands of inquiries when they do one of these interviews, so we'll see how it goes. Let's see if we can beat the record, okay everybody? Everybody email Richard.

Richard: Well back in the 70s Douglas - have you heard of Werner Earhart and EST?

Rick: Oh yeah, of course.

Richard: Right, so Werner Earhart came to visit Douglas and really appreciated the Headless Way. I put a film of the meeting that Douglas did with Werner Earhart trainers - this is in mid-70s. And anyway, Douglas was invited by Warner Earhart to do one of these big tours, I think several other people had done it - six cities in the States and London.

And in Denver there were 2,000 people, so Douglas decided to get the Hierarchy printed, the little version, you know, was out of print. He was sure he was going to be *flooded* with inquiries so he went around and he had made a particular kind of toolkit with a tube, where you notice you are 'face to no-face,' and this card [cutout] that you put on and it guides your attention to the nothingness.

So he did this 6-week tour or whatever it was, shared it with thousands and was preparing when he got home for being deluged, and I think he got one letter.

Rick: Oh brother!

Richard: But you know, it's not necessarily about him; you don't need to contact him.

Rick: Well, the BATGAP crowd tends to be a little more responsive, so let's see what happens. But in any case, thanks. I really appreciated being able to meet with you, doing these interviews is the highlight of *my* week and it is always enjoyable to spend time with someone like you.

Richard: Well I look forward to seeing you in California Rick.

Rick: Yeah, we'll see you out there in October.

Richard: Thank you.

Rick: Sure. So before you disconnect, let me just make a few concluding remarks. For those watching, you've been watching, or perhaps if you've been listening on a podcast, you've been listening to an interview with Richard Lang.

I do one of these interviews just about every week. There are, I think Richard is number 236 or something (it is actually number 237), so there is a whole archive of them that you can access on www.BATGAP.com. And you will find them indexed there, alphabetically, chronologically, and even by topic or by category.

And if you go there and poke around you will also find a few other things. You'll find a list of upcoming interviews, a place to suggest people to be interviewed, a 'Donate' button - as I mentioned earlier, which I rely on people clicking in order to do this, a place to sign up to be notified by email each time a new interview is posted, a link to the audio podcast so you can subscribe on iTunes, a forum or a discussion group where people chat about each particular interview - each one has its own section, and a bunch of other things, if you poke around, I mentioned there's a 'Volunteer' page, so go there, www.BATGAP.com

Richard will have his own page there with a link to his website, a bio, links to his books, and links also to Douglas Harding's books, like the one we've been mentioning - *The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth*.

So thank you for listening or watching, and thank you again Richard, and we'll see you all next week.

Richard: Thank you.

{BATGAP theme music plays}