

Adyashanti & Susanne Marie - BATGAP Interview

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{BATGAP theme music plays}

Rick: Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer. Buddha at the Gas Pump is an ongoing series of interviews with spiritually awakening people. There have been over 365 of them now, and if this is new to you, go to [www.BATGAP.com](http://www.BATGAP.com) and look under the 'Past Interviews' menu and you will see them all, organized and categorized in various ways.

It is my pleasure today to be conducting a discussion between Adyashanti and Susanne Marie. Adya is a very well-known and beloved spiritual teacher who lives in the Bay Area, and Susanne is a "lesser" well-known but nevertheless beloved spiritual teacher who lives in the North Bay Area.

Susanne had some interesting shifts take place in her interesting life, which has been a series of shifts and spiritual awakenings for many years. But something happened to her about a year-and-a-half ago which she hadn't foreseen or anticipated, and it was a falling away of the sense of 'self'. And I would like her to elaborate on that to get us started, but that's what we're going to talk about today.

She had had some conversations with Adya about it and the idea came up to do a BATGAP interview on that theme, and Adya very graciously agreed. All the more graciously because he's had a rather nasty flu in recent days, and this whole interview was sort of touch and go. And if I lived in this area, I would have gladly have postponed this a week or two, but Adya has been a real trooper and has agreed to continue and do this today, so we really appreciate it. We are up at Adya's house conducting the interview.

So Susanne, maybe we could start by you explaining what happened in terms of this 'falling away of the sense of personal self,' and then we'll take it from there.

Susanne: Okay, well, I had been living in the state of what I call 'Unity consciousness' for probably about 8 years or so, growing more used to the experience of being unity, and even having the sense of unity kind of thin out.

Rick: I'd like you to define unity because we can't take for granted that everybody knows what you mean by that.

Susanne: Yeah, well how do I define unity? It's just the sense that the inner division has fallen away and there's this sense of feeling unified inside, and when I look outside of myself, that there's a sense of unification; that there isn't a feeling of separation between myself and what I'm seeing, a sense of separation between myself and what I'm feeling, what I'm experiencing, and so on.

And also, I think that everyone is going to have a different experience, you now, we're all wired differently. But for me, when I was in that time period, which I have to say it wasn't always exactly the same kind of experience, that it changed over time. And not only did I become accustomed to it but it also expanded, and it was a time of inclusion, like including more and more as myself.

Rick: Like the circumference of unity kept expanding and taking more in.

Susanne: Right, the sense of my 'being whatever I looked at', for instance, I was part of the experience [when I was] like looking at a plant or looking at person. And that expanded to include more and more, not just my body but also the chair, and then the room, and then others, and then the feeling of *everything!*

Rick: Let me just probe you for a second on that. So when the experience initially dawned, were you the primary focus of perception, in terms of unity, but secondary and tertiary and so on were not, but then that continued to expand to the secondary and tertiary and so on, and it just kept expanding out until nothing could be found outside the circumference of unity?

Susanne: It was just that I didn't have the sense of something *not* being unity, that it was all just one, and it was really, really obvious. Even though there still felt to be a differentiation between me and other things, but that didn't conflict with the sense of it being one. And this increasing capacity to be able to *become*, in a way, *feeling* like that whatever I was putting my attention on, that I became that – sensing into the bird and sensing into that kind of thing.

And over time I became more and more used to it. At first it was just this kind of WOW, you know? And that came on the heels of an emptying out experience, like the experience of emptiness and the absence of content, of like being really emptied out. That was a period of time and then the unity came in like a wave, it just kind of took over and filled me back up with myself, with the sense of my 'self', as all things.

First it was this emptying out and then this big filling in. And then I would sit during the next eight years or so, it was like an embodiment process, which I love that word, where everything that didn't feel like it *was* that, knew that it was that. All the aspects of self that felt like they were separate and didn't have that knowledge, that wisdom, that they were included in it, came back home.

So whatever traumas or things like that, even including things from the outside – people, things that are happening in the world – including that also as an aspect of myself, that was kind of like this long period of adjustment.

Rick: Was this all just happening automatically, or were you doing something to shepherd it along?

Susanne: I think there was just the wisdom, the wisdom of life was at the helm, and there was this love affair for having everything to be included. And when I would discover something that didn't feel included, then energy would go towards that, out of love, total love. And so over

time, this sense of unity just became normalized as everything does; all spiritual experiences become normalized and we get adjusted to a new of operating, right? New operating system.

And the sense of it started to ebb, not the sense of being at-one-with, but the sense of it being different from whatever it was before. And I would say that this felt-sense of self was thinning out over time, it felt like it was this bubble that was expanding and expanding, and it became thinner and thinner. And if you said, "So can you find yourself?" I couldn't really say I could.

And so this is when I start getting into the next place of what occurred with the falling away of *this* kind of expanding out of awareness to include more and more. And then one day, another total shift of perception occurred that I didn't know, actually, was really coming.

I had heard a bit that there was something beyond oneness and something about it resonated, I could tell that there was truth to that, but it didn't really matter to me because I was quite content. Whatever sense of self was left was totally included in the oneness, there was no problem, there was nothing more that was needed. And so what happened for me is that a lot of my shifts over time have come from crisis, so it is kind of like life puts me in these crazies, puts me in a corner, backs my up into a corner, and then it's like, *whoosh*... another letting go happens.

And so I was in this crisis a year-and-a-half ago, a health crisis and a home crisis. I was getting ill and I didn't have a place to live that felt good to me, and I felt cornered once again. And there was this moment, this kind of koan moment, this tightening of the grip, and I thought, "There is nothing I can do to make this go away." I think over time we come to those places, so it was another one of those moments that felt like I was pushed up against a wall, there was nothing I could do to make this go away.

Rick: By "this" you mean your external situation?

Susanne: My situation, which was really difficult for me because I couldn't be with my daughter, and I wanted to still be a mom and take care of her. Life was *really* challenging, so I was like, "Yeah, there's nothing I can do." And so another release happened, this thing, and what I feel is that there was this 'separate-self' sense – and I think it might be different for different people, as to where it is held in the body, kind of like a "last grip," you know? Where it hangs out, where it is holding on. And for me I think it was in the body, I think that the 'separate-self' sense was still being held in personal will, in the body, because I was 'mom.' I was this single mom for years and I needed to hold it together, even though I was going through so many different openings and letting go's. There was this one part I did not know, where I was holding it together, and I couldn't hold it together.

And I called Adya like three weeks later and I said, "I just need to talk to someone about this!" I feel that when these shifts happen what supports it is this trust, this major trust and that it is okay what is going on, and these shifts in perceptions ... that you are okay, you know, some aspect of that. Because the change in consciousness was so radical, I had not realized that there

was still this medium that was lying between myself and reality, and that that state of unity consciousness was part of the medium, it was still a landing place inside. And then so many things changed and I would like shift over to one of you, because we can go further.

Rick: Well let's shift to Adya. Let's get your perspective on what she just said, or any kind of feedback.

Adya: No, yeah, I remember our conversation that you just referred to and as you said, we all have our own unique journeys, all of us. And yet, even though we all have our own unique journeys, it does seem that there are real similarities, it is just how we each individually experience those almost universal transition points, I think.

And you know, it is very common that it is from there that the real no-self experience comes out of. It doesn't always work that way, I've seen people get it just the opposite; they get the 'no self' first and they don't get the 'unity' till later. But usually it comes out of a more mature unity experience that's not all flowery and you get swept away with it, so when I hear you give your description of it, which is very eloquent in the sense that you just seem so grounded in your experience, it just has the feel to me like the sort of quintessential journey from unity consciousness to no-self.

It really sounds very, very familiar, feels familiar, and yet part of the interesting thing is the way each person goes through it, because it is *so* unique. In the same way that it is very unique how people experience unity.

Susanne: Yeah, exactly. What happened for you with the shift in consciousness?

Adya: For me it was actually very simple, the no-self part of it. I think in retrospect you can look back and see that there are aspects of that sort of 'no-self' experience long before it bloomed, sort of very little pieces of the puzzle, you might say. But for me it wasn't heralded in by anything dramatic; it was literally as simple as sitting on the couch, reading a book and then getting up off the couch, and when I got up off the couch I just had a visceral sense that *something* got left behind, I had no idea what it was, I didn't go, "Ooh, this is a mystical thing;" it was just like, "Hmm," just odd, you know? It just felt like, "Something didn't get up off the couch! I wonder what that was?"

And it wasn't till later when I was going to bed actually, and I sat on the bed, on the edge of the bed to go to bed, and then somehow the little pieces, more of the cognitive understanding of what happened came and I went, "Oh! I lost my self. Oh, okay." And so for me it was this very sort of simple [thing], and it was also gentle, which again, some people can experience this no-self thing as *immensely* destabilizing.

So it is unique for all, but I experienced that no-self experience as that it was just the way that I've always been hooked up with all the spiritual experiences I'd had, I don't know why. Even looking back, I don't know why my mind never made much out of them, actually; it was just like,

“Oh, there’s an odd thing I see now,” and that was it. So that just my ammo, the way I related to the unfolding.

But I think the interesting thing that other people may also find fascinating, because one of the things I also think about this Rick that with the no-self, you can have the insight of the no-self or an understanding or a taste of it, or you can even have a very logical argument for the absence of a self, I mean, you can go at it in almost any way that you want, but I think that one of the fundamental confusions that I often hear is, because someone either has this figured out in their mind and it makes good sense to them, or they’ve had a moment of somehow in the middle of some shift, they equate that ... because we do that, right?

When we hear someone’s experience of *anything*, we automatically go searching through the memory banks, and we don’t even know that it’s happening necessarily, but it is, and we’re looking for something that corresponds to what we hear, and I think this leads to a lot of mistranslation, actually. So when we’re talking about the experience of ‘no-self,’ which I think is different than a lived-reality, in the same way that someone can have a really beautiful experience of unity next week; it may have been almost like nothing ever happened. It may be that it is still there very obviously, it may be still there but is just sort of this undercurrent, almost like a perfume, and in some cases it can be completely gone.

So the no-self experience is sort of like that, a lot of times when people talk about I often get the sense that, “Oh, they *visited* that, for a split second or for an hour,” or for whatever it is, which is significant, it’s not to say that that’s not authentic or that it’s not transformative. But I think the hard thing about this whole conversation that’s important, is that there’s the lived experience, which is day to day to day, and then there’s a ‘revelatory moment.’ And revelatory moments can come and go like flashbulbs, and the actual living of all this stuff is not different than the insight, but at the same time it seems to me that something is fundamentally different.

And I think you said ‘normalized’, which is a good way that you put it – even the most odd and strange changes of our consciousness given time, they become normalized, don’t they? And it doesn’t mean that they’re not still extraordinary.

Susanne:       And thank goodness!

Adya:    Yeah, thank goodness.

Rick:    Yeah, I always regarded that as a sign of God’s compassion that we would acclimate to anything. Because a lot of people who would be living in circumstances that we would find so horrific, but somehow they’re able to acclimate to make it at least bearable, you know? And it works on the positive side too, in terms of acclimating to things, because you wouldn’t want to walk around all the time having some spiritual experience; it might seem flashy and you besides, you really have to function in the world and so it wouldn’t be useful, unless we could acclimate.

Adya: Yeah, yeah, and spiritual experiences are no different than any other experience – we acclimate to *every* experience that becomes normalized. You know, they say there’s only one first time with anything, and that’s because we *immediately* start to become acclimatized.

Susanne: I remember when this first occurred and I was different from you in that it took me a while to acclimate. So I think it’s good to talk about because people will be having different experiences, so many different types, the range.

Adya: And just the desire itself, as you mentioned, that relatively soon after that, that part of our once humanity that often that [you touch in and it says,] “Oh, is there another being here that understands where I’m at,” and I think that’s a very human-connectedness thing.

Susanne: Exactly. One of the hopefully maybe values of speaking about it together with Rick, maybe it will be useful for somebody to see that this is something that can be trusted and that it’s safe, and that it can be let go into the undifferentiation of our being, which is not fixed and not localized and doesn’t have a self-referencing component to it; it’s just pure experiencing.

And I think at times we all drop into that in the day, we drop in without even knowing; we’re just experiencing directly. But the habit of the self-referencing, of an ‘I’, of a landing place – it is at first when there’s more of a landing structure, the egoic place of the being, and then in unity, it’s the self-referencing of the Divine center that gets referred.

And you think that it’s actually done and over with on some level, but really there’s still a landing place. And when that landing place ebbs and is finally taken away actually, because it’s not the intermediary that life has in this vehicle that we are and this being that we are, it doesn’t need to exist to function; functionality is occurring quite well. It knows how to do everything already, it doesn’t need to keep having this kind of inner prop of an intermediary in order to make things happen, to move to talk, to do.

And so when that finally goes away, for some people it is a kind of easeful thing, but with other people, and I don’t know why because I was getting so used to unity consciousness and different kind of states, I don’t know why it would be such a big thing, but I’m a bit of those “fireworks” kind of girl ... mystic.

Adya: A big experienter.

Susanne: A big experienter! And to be honest it’s kind of enjoyable, almost.

Adya: It’s what most people want, right!

Susanne: Yeah, you know, four months of being on a Disneyland ride. But luckily, over time, one of the benefits of having someone to speak with, to be able to hear about this, to have gone through a lot of paces of change, experiential change, is that when something on this magnitude - that *can* be of magnitude – happens, one doesn’t feel like you’re going crazy. Because honestly, if this had happened in the very beginning?! I mean life is so gracious and it

weaned me over time, and I didn't even have that much of a sense of self; I mean I had a sense of self but it wasn't so thick, it wasn't fixed ... I mean, growing up I never really trusted it.

But anyway, regardless, it is a little tenacious thing and there is nothing wrong with it, it is totally innocent and fine. And it's not like this is even a goal but the thing is that – and I don't know if it's a fact or if it's just the way things are – we're just really, truthfully forces of nature. We're not really separate persons with a fixed center; we're just forces of nature with a sense that there's a person there, until it's not! And this has an ebbing away journey that we call a spiritual journey.

Adya: You use that term 'force of nature' and that's the exact same term that I had in my mind for a while, after that dropping away happened. And the only way I could think about myself at all was a 'force of nature.' And I don't necessarily mean a small force or a big force, just a force, in the same way a wind through the trees is a force of nature. I understand absolutely that terminology.

Rick: So Adya, you made a course on *The Falling Away of the Self*, which is an online course that people can still take if they want to, and I listened to the whole thing. And one point you made in the course, which is commonly understood, I think, is that you can't really understand something till you experience it.

You could spend hours and years describing the color red to a blind person and words wouldn't do it, and yet such a simple thing ... to experience 'red' if you're not colorblind. Or we could say the same with any experience – taste, or anything we experience. And you make the point in the course that one can't really understand this falling away of the sense of self unless one actually goes through it or experiences it, which I suppose is true of all spiritual experiences. It is good to try and *get* an understanding, I think, because it smooths and safeguards the path, you have a sense of what's coming so that when it does come ... you follow?

Adya: Yes, that's the primary reason, *to* have that sort of map. Because we still have minds and our minds are in their own domain, and they want to know what's going on, they want to know what's happened. And so I agree with you, and that's why I did the course actually, so that there is at least enough of a map or a structure that someone can go, "Ah, okay!"

Rick: And I think that's really valuable. You and I were talking before we started the interview about the value of knowledge, both individually and as a spiritual culture, and how the knowledge of the whole possible range of spirituality might be somewhat comparable to the knowledge of the topography of North America in the days of Lewis and Clark. And maybe a few hundred years from now or for some other civilization that's much more advanced than ours, our understanding and everything that's been provided so far by all the wisdom traditions, might seem relatively primitive, you know, it could be a lot more detailed and clear and universally agreed upon. We were also talking about that, the agreement and verification of truth claims.

I don't want to get too long winded here but, you know, I'm kind of the guinea pig in this conversation because I can't honestly say that I've experienced a falling away of the sense of self. But there was one thing that jumped out at me in lesson 3 of your course, in which you said, "We are multidimensional beings and we have the capacity to simultaneously experience paradoxically different realities and incorporate the paradox, and live very comfortably that way." And so for me, there *is* in my experience a paradoxical thing where very clearly there is no person, there is no self and yet there is. And if you ask me where I am or who I am or what I am, I would say, "Well, there's nobody here, and there's somebody everywhere, and yet there's somebody right here, and I'm all that."

And you also say here, "There remains a sense of self, it's like a perfume. If there were no sense of self whatsoever, someone could call your name and you wouldn't turn around." So that was also a resolution point for me, because I keep ... even bringing up that example - if I come in room and I say, "Hey Adya," and you turn around. And you were sick in the past week or so, and I wasn't sick; it was being experienced here (pointing to Adya) somehow, by somebody, by something. It wasn't being experienced by this (Rick pointing to himself) something.

So even though there seems to be a universal quality which is impersonal, I don't know how we can live as human beings without some semblance, at least, of a localization, of identity. And maybe we can?

Adya: And I think we do; when it is necessary it happens. I mean you can get into a really deep state, a Samadhi state where you have no idea where to put the food. I've been there and I've seen people that are there, at retreats – they've got the food in front of them and their mind is trying to decide, "Where the hell do I put it? Over there, or over here?" Now that's not necessary, it definitely has a 'no self' quality to it, but that's a temporary state of absorption you could enter into, but obviously it's not particularly functional.

Rick: Yeah, like when Ramana Maharishi [sat there] being chewed up by insects.

Adya: Yeah, yeah. So if we took that as *that* is the pinnacle of enlightenment, which people sometimes do, then yeah. But what are we involved in here? Do we just become so whacked out somewhere that someone eats our legs off and we don't even know?

Rick: Not much of a selling point.

Adya: No, right! Now don't misunderstand me, I'm not being critical of Ramana by any stretch of the imagination; he, just like everybody else, went through his own process. And there was obviously a reason that he started to speak, when he usually wouldn't speak, there's a reason he came out of his cave and engaged with people, when he really didn't do that or wouldn't do that ten years before that.



So we all undergo our own process. He may have sort of been absorbed in the self from the time he was 16 up until the rest of his life, but that doesn't mean that our experience of that does not evolve. And I think that's another good case [example].

I want to go back to something just to give voice [to it] because I've met so many people that disregard what they have as some experience of no-self, or even they even sense it as something coming. People can be thrown into, and have been thrown into *real* terror with this stuff. Me and Susanne were kind of lucky, and in a certain sense there was some disorientation around it ... I mean everybody will have some kind of disorientation, I did, but it didn't register problematic. But nonetheless, it can go anywhere from mild disorientation to absolute, catastrophic, 4-alarm psychological fire.

Rick: Yeah, Susan Segal's book, *Collision with the Infinite*.

Adya: Yeah, Susan Segal's book was a great [example of that]. Now she is a really good example of somebody who experienced no-self for at *least* a decade, if not more, before she ever ran into unity consciousness. So she had thing just the opposite way that we are describing it.

Rick: Yeah, and in the meanwhile she raised a daughter and got a master's degree, but she was in abject terror the whole time she said, that she was constantly looking for a self and not finding one.

Adya: Yeah, and part of that I think is that it would have been helpful if she just had a useful map. And also, most of the time it comes from our own personal psychology and you know, everybody has their own unmet demons, and certain spiritual experiences will invoke those demons. And if there's not much there then you're not going to experience much, but if there is some unresolved stuff, and as with most people there is, a no-self experience can be really, really frightening, because there's no place to land, there's no place to hide, there's nothing to buffer you.

And in one sense that can be absolutely lovely, but if you've grown up and you've had successive experiences of being in a totally unbuffered, very vulnerable place, and then had some very difficult things happen, then your relationship with losing the buffer is one of fear. It doesn't mean people can't go through that, they can. They can move through that, but I just wanted to give voice to that because I've seen a lot of it over the years.

People even get close to no-self and sometimes it generates a lot of fear. And again, I think the maps, although they are not the answer to it, a good map that's simple enough to understand can be useful, it's like, "Hey, you're not going crazy here." I think that's part of what spiritual teachers are for.

When you're experimenting with consciousness, you can experience a *really* wild things. It's so wild that you don't *know*, you don't know sometimes, "Have I gone off the deep end or not?" and I think part of the function of the spiritual teacher or mentor is to be able to mirror back

like, “No, everything is okay, don’t worry,” or “Well, you know, you kind of got one foot out of the boat there and the other one is in the ocean. You might want to just check what you’re doing.”

Susanne: I also wanted to say that one can have premonition that something is coming. And when I said earlier that I didn’t know something was coming, that wasn’t quite true. I had forgot that the year before I had had a kind of a vision that I was possibly going to die when I was 51. And that was ten months from the time of the vision, I was kind of preparing myself on a certain level with the idea of, “Maybe I’m actually going,” making sure my kids and everything is in order.

I wasn’t scared and I didn’t have anything to give me indication – although I did have that health crisis, which made me wonder. In other words, a part of me was okay with it. It wasn’t a crisis in terms of fear; it didn’t evoke fear, but there was the sense that something is coming to an end and whatever it is, it’s going to be the end of me.

Adya: I had the same thing by the way, the same thing.

Susanne: You did? It was just that the being knew that this timeline of selfness, the birth of self ... it almost feels a little bit like soul, you know? it just has this feeling that it has evolution involved in it, it has an inner development aspect to it. It’s a beautiful, beautiful thing, and a beautiful journey, and I didn’t have the feeling like, “This should end.”

And I think that it’s a wonderful time when it actually does, it’s kind of like when a child grows up and they are a teenager and they’re really doing quite fine, and they “launch *themselves*” from a place of doing quite fine. So it was kind of like that.

So when this occurred, I recognize now that it was a premonition of the end of Susanne. So whatever was left of Susanne-ness, actually kind of had a sweet sense to it, a sweet-felt sense, even though it was so thinned out; just a little trace. But I could find it and it was something like that that self-sense is included in the whole, within unity, and it is something that was with me when I was little and it is something that was with me up to this moment that this occurred. And when this occurred, it was no longer.

So that is why I actually feel that as much as one can say, “Oh, there’s still some individual left, there’s still human,” you know, all that stuff, I can’t say that I can find it. And I’m not saying that it’s not there, it might be so thinned out and diffused that maybe there’s more, and that’s totally fine. Intelligence knows what it’s doing, that’s basically it.

But I just can’t find it, and when someone at times, like my good friend Rick, will say, “So who is it that’s feeling confused?” and I, I can’t find it. I can’t find it.

Rick: Can anybody ever find it?

Susanne: Well that's the thing, is that this no-self is already everyone's experience, truthfully, without a medium, and that's part of the exploration.

Adya: Yeah, I think it's also the words and the way we talk about it. I think it's important that we're getting underneath the words. So for instance, when I say there is 'a sense of self' - and I've thought about it since I started teaching that course, and if I taught it again I would say something along the lines of 'a sense of being.'

But no matter how we talk about this, the fact is that when you're hungry, you *do* know where to put the food, when someone calls your name, *you, you* turn around, and you don't turn around when fifty other names are called. Whatever we want to call that recognition, there's a recognition that there is a kind of differentiation occurring. Whether the differentiation is real or unreal or whatever it is, but there is obviously a kind of recognition that's being utilized all the time, moment to moment to moment to moment to moment.

But on the experiential level, that recognition can occur without a separate-self sense, because a separate-self sense lives experientially as a sense of a sort of definite locatability. But I don't mean locatability just in a pragmatic sense, but the self-sense is a sense of locatability in a concrete sense.

So for me personally, things I'm always listening for is what's underneath the words we speak.

Rick: What they really signify.

Adya: For the person who is speaking them, rather than the way I might understand those words and those phrases from my background. [So I'm often thinking] what do *you* mean when *you* speak, when you talk? I think that's what makes conversation fascinating, is that we do use very common terms often in very different ways, and to mean very different things.

Rick: Yeah, if we're really trying to communicate and not just make noises, then we really have to understand what people mean by these words.

Adya: Right, now of course in the tradition I came from, when they talk about the 'selfless absolute nature of reality,' they go to great pains to remind you that that is not enlightenment; that's a step, but that's not ultimately it because [it is] only when all the fixation is done with, whether it's self or no-self. In reality, we invented the terms, we made these things up, and I think when we come back to actual experience, it's harder to make, at least for me, definitive statements.

Like for me, no-self is not a philosophical definitive statement about the nature of anything, necessarily; that's not how I personally use it. I use it as that there is this perception, and this perception is for me best described as 'no-self', and so it is based in experience rather than anything else. So then I'm not talking about whether there is or isn't self, to me it's like ... "What does that mean? What are we talking about?"

But when we come back to actual experience, what's *your* experience of self? What's *my* experience of self? What's your experience of *not* having that there any longer? Which is what we are talking about – what's my experience of not having that there any longer. What's left, and how does one function, and where do you function from? Because we obviously still function, like you said, when you call my name I have no problem knowing exactly who you're referring to.

It's like in a state of undifferentiated consciousness, we can experience our self as everything while we still recognize a certain ... well like I said, somebody calls your name in unity consciousness, you're not looking at the tree for it to answer, we just instinctually know, somehow.

Susanne: That's something I would like to talk about, is just the experience.

Rick: Go for it.

Susanne: Yeah, let's talk about it.

Rick: Let me throw one thing in here that I think pertains and won't throw us off track. Well firstly, the very structure of our language has all these personal pronouns in it – 'I' and 'we' and so on – and it makes it sound like there's somebody in there, someplace, that is referring to itself.

And the very structure of perception, as I have always understood it, has sort of a threefold nature – there's the object of perception, mechanics of perception, and some kind of perceiver, some kind of screen that the perception registers on or with. And we can say that it's consciousness, in a universal sense, but then perception is individual – there's your perception and my perception and so on ... the squirrel's perception.

So we have physical bodies obviously, at least on a relative sense we do, and the various esoteric traditions talk of subtle bodies and all, and anything, I suppose, in the relative, can ultimately be boiled down to nothingness, if you want to take it there and look closely enough. But if we're speaking about *anything*, if we're talking about perception and so on, that's a relative phenomenon, and it seems to me that relative faculties of some sort are needed to make that phenomenon possible.

And if we have physical bodies and subtler aspects of the senses, why not some kind of subtle knower, a jiva of some sort that is just part of the mechanism for experience? And just one more thing I'll say, it's a little esoteric but I know Susanne and many other people have had experiences of deceased masters coming to them, like Padmasambhava or Neem Karoli Baba, and people have had Ramana and so on, does that imply, perhaps, that there is some subtle essence, even to a fully enlightened person, that is the personhood of that person, the essence of that person that persists, even after enlightenment? And might that be the subtlest aspect of the sense of self, which doesn't in fact die when the body dies, and of course is there in us even now?

So I hope that will come together as one question! You want to take a shot at it? I've just been talking, talking, talking! So there's two parts to that, just to reiterate: the mechanics of perception and whether there has to be a perceiver if there is an object of perception and a process of perception, you know, senses and all. And then if there is a perceiver, does that perceiver ultimately just cease to exist, like a drop in the ocean, or does it retain some integrity? And does it have some integrity now, while we're still alive? Is there in fact a "self" of some sort even though it has maybe become so diaphanous that we don't have the sense of it we once did, when we were less enlightened?

Adya: It's interesting isn't it, just the language that we use ... like, if there's perception there must be a perceiver. Really? Where is the perceiver in any of us in this room right now? There's perception, obviously, right, I mean we're seeing each other. Where is the little guy behind that?

Rick: Well okay, so let's say we all are the one consciousness - you know, the wave and ocean analogy - but somehow through this body-mind, one perception is happening through this one, another through this one, another, is it just my brain and my eyes and so on, this brain and these eyes and so on, that are resulting in perception? Or is there a subtler mechanics that kind of intermediates between consciousness as an unbounded universal field and individual experience?

Adya: Great question!

Susanne: Ha! Is it?!

Rick: I promised Susanne I wasn't going to get too intellectual here but I think about these things!

Adya: I'm more than happy to take a swipe at it!

Susanne: It might be a great question [for Adya], I'm more experientially based, in terms of being able to connect and speak about something. It works better for me to speak about my experience versus some kind of intellectual avenue, which is totally valid as well. But I don't really think about those kinds of things! It's like to me, and I'm not saying it's not valid, but in the end it's just pure experiencing that's happening, and it's just so instantaneous.

And so now, without a filter of reflecting on experience, that filter is what disappears. And so then just feeling and sensing and thinking and speaking, it's all just happening now – now, now, now. I don't know if that in any way touches on what you just said.

Adya: I think it's actually a really good explanation, because I think a big part of what self is is that thing inside, or that imagined thing inside, which is not just experiencing but it's talking to itself *about* experiencing, it's always putting itself as the sort of *intermediary*. And it's the reason that adults look longingly at your children, because they're un-self-conscious, which is really what we're talking about in a certain sense. They're un-self-conscious, they're just completely being the moment. And adults look at little children and they go, "Wow! I remember that."

Susanne: And just that look, you know that clear look of like just being here. And then the kids in turn are looking at the adults and going, "What's wrong with them?" I remember it, I remember thinking there was something, not wrong, but just something off. There were times when my parents were there and there were times when they weren't, and it was just when that cloak of personality or selfness would come over [them], that personality, and then they would be hijacked. They would be hijacked by this virus that was slowly taking me over too! And that's where the beginning of the spiritual search happened for me.

And that's why I wanted to speak about the experiencing of this because to me, it just touches the heart, and I think that in many ways we can all relate to the experience of it; it's not necessarily something that is so elevated or so out of reach. Because I think we all, especially if we're interested in this stuff, for even wanting to watch this, there's something that hasn't completely forgotten; you wouldn't be interested in it. So there is something already that feels touched or close to home with this just ... "Oh, I can really feel myself, I can just be my natural self."

Adya: Instinct in that direction, almost everything we do for pleasure is a way to temporarily escape the sense of self. Whether we're watching TV or listening to music, or going to the movies or taking drugs or trying to meditate, if you look at what is the commonality of the things that we do for recreation? The commonality is not *what* we're doing, it's *what* it's helping us achieve, which is a kind of forgetfulness of self.

Susanne: So we can be here again, to feel ourselves rather than shying away from it. And we were beginning to enter into the conversation earlier about nature, and I really think that it's of *incredible* value, to me, the most direct teacher is nature. And I think we share that in common. It's just totally unfiltered, there's nothing lying between – it's not just nature, it's all things – but the natural world has such sentience to it, you can feel the life-force of it, and it's just being itself, so *completely*, without any medium.

And it is so healing for people, it is so healing to go - and I really highly recommend it - just to go and feel where it is, even as an experiment, where you yourself feel the veils, the separation between yourself and this beautiful, natural world that surrounds us. *That* is a great meditation, and I used to do that ongoingly, just go out into nature and spend time and feel the veil, the whatever was lying between myself and that, because it is such a great teacher. And you can feel when it starts to ebb and you can feel when you relax and go, "Ahh," you know, that kind of sense of unfilteredness. We don't even have to call it 'no-self,' right? It's just really natural, it's our natural state, like Nisargadatta says.

Adya: It's the thing that, like you said, we go into nature and the wonderful thing about nature is it's not 'self-ing' all over the place. Like one tree isn't comparing itself to another and going into an existential crisis because it's not the tallest or the brightest, and it's this lack - that's what people feel in nature. All that is not happening. The trees aren't self-consciously in an endless state of comparison and all the rest; they're just being the tree.

Susanne: And we can just be ourselves, we can just feel ourselves.

Rick: I know people who talk to trees and talk to plants ... you may have said that too, the last time you were here.

Susanne: Oh yeah, definite conversations, yep.

Rick: I interviewed a guy a week or so ago, who was one of the original directors of Findhorn in Scotland, and there's a whole story about that. But when he was a young boy, he was once running through a field with a stick and – David Spangler is his name – and he was running through the field whacking ferns. And all of a sudden he heard the ferns, they cried out and said, "Why are you doing this to us?"

Adya: Now I don't mean to imply that they're just totally unconscious lumps of matter that have no relationship to us.

Susanne: No, you're not implying that!

Rick: But what I'm saying is that there is some spirit, some essence, some jiva, some soul, some *self* in even things like that, maybe.

Adya: Well there's some consciousness there, sentience ... yeah, sure.

Susanne: Yeah, it's all back to unity. Unity is still the fact of things, that everything is one, that is God, creative intelligence. So even though there's a separate-self sense that can be felt by millions and billions of people, it's still all the same thing, and it has its purpose for whatever reason, and it has its timing, it has its own Divine timing of when that ebbs and goes.

Hopefully it's going to work, it's going to be in an intelligent enough way that the being has a chance to be able to adjust to it without feeling too disjointed. There are probably some people who are maybe even in asylums, and I don't want to scare people, but I also want to be able to say that for some, it is such a change of consciousness that it *can* be what Adya was saying earlier - frightening.

And I really do feel like if that is the case, if it is frightening, to find a good mentor, a good teacher that can assuage your fears by the modeling of the natural state, just like nature models to us that being one's self completely is pure joy. Human beings, what we are, we are forces of nature as well, and we can be the modeling – first be that, and then be the same for each other. Because we're meant to be in service to one another; we're all in service to each other, as you know.

Rick: One of the reasons we're doing this interview, one of the reasons you did that course, and I suppose that one of both of your primary functions as a spiritual teacher is to give people a sense of what they may encounter along the spiritual path. I think there's two values to the knowledge of the spiritual path, what it may entail: one is, inspiration, motivation – it's like, it's

really worth pursuing because there's something good to be had, as one compared to not having. And another is that it safeguards the path, it enables us to *not* be terrified if something develops, or to feel like, "Yeah, this is what they said was going to happen now; it's happening, great," whereas otherwise you might freak out.

And the falling away of the sense of self doesn't sound like much of a selling point for most people, I think. One may wonder if, "After a while, am I going to want that? Am I going to lose interest in my children?" In fact a woman asked me that recently.

Adya: I get asked that *all* the time, and as I said during the course, 99% of the time it's women.

Rick: Yeah, or, "Am I going to lose interest in my business? Am I going to lack motivation and just kind of sit around contemplating my navel and the whole business is going to go bankrupt?"

Adya: That would be the type-A business man.

Rick: Right, so I gave you two examples. But I think that probably both of you would say that although there may be transitional periods and times when you need to integrate and reshuffle, and maybe you even take a little retreat for a while, but ultimately, if properly integrated one can be dynamically engaged in whatever course of action one is best suited for, and actually perhaps find that one is *more* successful at it when one has gotten out of the driver's seat and lets That which is actually driving the universe take over.

Adya: That's a great thought! Quite impressive! I think the thing is – at least that I've seen – with no-self, the reason I think why people often have a sort of preemptive fear about it is because like Susanne was suggesting, in lots of different ways we often *do* know, and we often know more than we're letting ourselves know. And I think that one of the things we intuitively sense with this whole no-self thing, is that you very well may not have the same options you had when you had a self.

In other words, we haven't even gotten into the areas of the experiential part of no-self sense. We got into some of it but the whole other part of it is like the dropping away of personal will, and that's the motivating energy that moves self, or ego. And when that goes, your options of moving through the world in *that* way, and sometimes that's really painful, but some people got it going pretty good; it's working out relatively well for them, but when that energy goes, it goes, and then something else can come instead of it ...

Rick: Not necessarily overnight.

Adya: Oh no, no, no!

Rick: It can be a see-sawing between ...

Adya: And sometimes it never goes. Some folks you know, it never goes all the way. But I think it's just part of the ... well, speaking of this in an honest way, yes – I always thought that the thing that's



“sellable” or “marketable”, not that we’re marketing this at all, but peoples’ traditional ideas of enlightenment ... with unity, and then whatever they’ve got baked up around that, it leads to this idea that it’s want-able – “Hey, I’ll be happier, I’ll be freer, I’ll feel more connected, I’ll feel more intimate” – it’s the goodies. But no-self, it’s not the goodies!

It’s not bad, but it’s hard to say that even falls on the spectrum of positive-negative; it doesn’t fit into the sales pitch, that’s for sure. It’s something so other than that.

Susanne: Oh no, there’s not a ‘you’ anymore that is expanding and growing and developing and improving. It’s over.

Adya: Yes, yes. Well for the *idea* of yourself, that happening, it’s over.

Susanne: Right, for the idea - the idea of yourself, right.

Adya: Right, and that doesn’t mean that evolution doesn’t continue, doesn’t happen, and we don’t suddenly stop learning from what happens to us in life and all that kind of stuff.

Susanne: No, absolutely not, but I just want to get back to the personal will part. So that’s a big piece, it is the hallmark, because the ego-driven self is run by personal will. And so when that initially drops, that’s the primary awakening, that’s what we call ‘awakening.’ But then there is the Self itself, like the Divine will, that’s my experience, is that Divine will kicks in.

And the Divine will’s motivation is ... Bernadette Roberts, she says, “The will to God,” the will towards God – I love that. It’s like the will for God’s will, and it’s the will for ever deeper allowance of whatever that is, it’s like a big learning curve, *diving* into what is God’s will, and no longer my will.

And this transference seems to happen organically: from the personal will falling away, on that level, to Divine will, which feels really different. It’s a totally different kind of experience, you don’t really feel like “it’s my will” anymore, but there’s will-force there. And it’s a wonderful thing and it’s working towards the whole in a kind of selfless way, an altruistic kind of way, for itself! But it’s still got this motivational energy in it which is wonderful, it’s not even something that I think should go away necessarily.

But when this other falling away occurred for me, the will-force of what drove this body just fell, just fell away. It’s almost like ... what made it walk? You know? Like what happened at 2 years old or whatever the age is we start walking? One? Two? I don’t think I was two; I would be really late, but it’s possible. I think I was around one. But there is this kind of excitement when we’re one of like, “Me! This is me walking! And me speaking, and me learning,” and it’s a wonderful thing.

The sense of ‘me’ *fuses* into the body, fuses into the form! And so my experience - and this is just my experience, I don’t know what happens with whom, when – but when this last kind of thing “kicked over,” it was that the will-force left the body. And it still walked but there was this

disorientation process this time that was kind of like, “Well, I’ve been walking this whole time just fine, and *that’s* what’s doing it. This will-force that I thought was me, is never what really made it walk. That was a layer that was superimposing itself over the walking!”

And so I’d love to hear more from you about the will – personal will and Divine will and the falling away of will.

Adya: Well I think, gosh, you put it so well, you certainly mapped my experience for sure. Divine will, like you said, is a wonderful thing. I think of it as almost like the atmosphere, the inner atmosphere of inspiration. In Divine will you just feel ... it’s not necessarily the same inspiration that somebody on a soapbox is feeling, but Divine will is very positive and very beautiful and has a power to it. And I think for a while, most of us, we just become accustomed to that and it’s like, “Okay, that’s it!” And it is very benevolent, which doesn’t mean that it always makes everybody happy, but it means that it is a benevolent energy. And I think that’s why it is often surprising when that sort of Divine feeling energy, when the bottom falls out.

One woman had this happen, I remember many years ago – I’m just remembering her – and she had this happen one evening when we were together. And she came back a week later and she had this little temper tantrum, which is about as much as she could bake up, which wasn’t much, but she said, “You stole my God from me!” And then she looked at me to see if I was going to join her in getting upset and I almost fell over laughing, which sparked *her* almost falling over and laughing.

But I got it, I got it, because she had had that Divine will thing for a long time and really been unified with it, it was really, really beautiful. And at least for a short little period of time the mind was reflecting enough to go, “Hey, I don’t that have that anymore! I actually really like that! That was really, really cool!” Ant that didn’t last long - that last reflective movement, but it was really interesting to see. And again, to see for somebody else, I like to see how all this operates in other people that have sort of had that temporary feeling.

Rick: We’ve been touching now God and Divine will and things like that, and I have a Meister Eckhart quote here that I’ve been wanting to throw in, this is probably a good time. He says, “You can only fully know God from God’s point of view; to know God you have to be God.” Some people would consider that blasphemous, but with a moment’s reflection, if God is supposed to be omnipresent, then is there anything that is *not* God? And if so, then God is not omnipresent; there’s a hole somewhere in God, where there is something else.

Adya: That’s right, right.

Rick: And so in light of that thought, everything is God – well I just said that – but if so, everything is Divine will? Because some things don’t seem so Divine. You know, you’ve raised children, and there’s a certain point at which they become teenagers and they start pulling away, and they get more independent and more rebellious and stuff like that. And that seems to be a necessary phase before becoming an autonomous result, I mean adult.

Susanne: 'Result,' yes!

Rick: So it almost seems like that our human evolution recapitulates that in a way, whereas animals maybe are *completely* one with God, they just function automatically, instinctually, there's no individual will or intention or anything like that.

Then human beings come along are in the 'teenage phase' in a way, where they have individual volition, motivation, things like that which may not be – at least in the short run - obviously in their best interest, could be very destructive or harmful, so on and so forth ... doesn't seem so Divine. And then the spiritual evolution process seems to lead to relinquishing that individual biasness and coming back into alignment with Divine intelligence, but kind of at a different level altogether than animals had it.

Adya: Well also, animals have it in almost like a ... certainly pre-childhood, but even like an infant is in a totally merged state. Not the same state as oneness, and it certainly isn't the same state where they don't have a self, but they don't have a conscious recognition of what's happening. They're in pure experience, yes, but if we equated that with deeper spiritual states, what we would basically be saying is that we would just be throwing everything into reverse, back up into a pre-natal state as fast as we can, and then imagine that somehow that's some leap forward.

Rick: Ken Wilber calls that the 'pre trans fallacy'.

Adya: Yeah, and it's a really important point because even though these things get talked about, but still, constantly I see this, this association – and whether they're using this wording or not – but sure, there are certain similarities. Like let's say, we've already talked about the lack of self-consciousness in young children, force of nature, there are lots of things that are similar, but I think of the no-self state as a state after self. You can bump into it anytime, but basically, from a map-making point of view, not pre-self; but no-self.

Susanne: Yeah, may I add something.

Rick: Yes, please, go ahead.

Susanne: The sensing being really wakes up as unity consciousness, in my experience. I mean, you have mentioned that some people drop into no-self prior to unity, but I think that it's almost like how some babies go straight to walking without crawling, but most crawl. And I think that unity consciousness is kind of phase that's really important, because a lot occurs during the unity phase – there's embodiment, there's welcoming, there's getting adjusted to differentiation; being not a localized focal point. There's a lot that happens during the unity phase.

And what I noticed when I was reaching towards the end of the unity phase is that the sensing being was waking up, the sensing organism of the Divine – as you love to say ... you use those words - it was just like the intelligence of *that* was waking up areas that it didn't even really know that it had.

The sensing being, when we're not hijacked by the sense of self or self-sense, when that eases, then what is really paying attention, what is really going on has a chance to wake up and get on board. So it's kind of like it turns out, you know, kind of like a plant towards the sun. And it's like this aspect of the human being, the potentiality of the human being, really starts to get on board. And it's this continuous development, and my God, just because it's not a reversal; we're not going back to being pure sensing without the capacity for intelligence.

Rick: For recognition.

Susanne: For recognition. The period of self-reflection that we go through within the ego state and within the unity conscious state, that actually solidifies a lot of intelligence – the ability to self-reflect. What has been gained intelligently doesn't go away; it's just the medium itself is what falls away.

Adya: In the same way that you go through ... you were talking about adolescence, you go through adolescence and you retain, hopefully, experiences you acquired and maybe a few things you've learned, but you don't stay an adolescent for the rest of your life; you just move on.

Rick: So if "to know God you have to be God," as Meister Eckhart said, and if – as I've heard you say at times – that it's God running the show once the self falls away, and correct me if you hadn't said that.

Susanne: It's just God.

Rick: Just God.

Susanne: Just God.

Rick: And so in light of that, there's a phrase in Sanskrit: Brahman is the charioteer. It's sort of like the Intelligence takes over and drives the chariot of your life. So in light of all that, I don't quite understand what you meant by that thing of "the bottom dropping out" and that woman saying "you took away God," or something.

Adya: Well, because you lose your personal self and you lose your experience of a personal God with it.

Rick: Oh, a personal God.

Adya: Right, they go together.

Rick: But that's not to say that the individual life is not still being motivated or driven or guided by an Intelligence?

Adya: No, of course it's being guided by a Divine intelligence, like everything else is. And I think that sometimes – and I'm a spiritual teacher, I have all these spiritually sounding words, these

religious words – but I think sometimes they actually make this whole thing a little more obscure than it needs to be.

‘Divine will’ is just another way of saying ‘what is.’ Otherwise we got some version of a God somewhere that’s imposing will. Now if we don’t have that at all, then what is is God’s will. But we could also say that what is is the will of nature, what is is the will of existence, what is is the will of ...

Rick: Well when I say ‘God’ I mean ‘Divine Intelligence;’ I don’t mean just some guy in the clouds. I mean ‘all-pervading intelligence which has no gap whatsoever, anywhere, wherever you look.’ If you look closely enough, there it is, hiding in plain sight.

Adya: Yes, I think it is totally fine to utilize that – but at least for me, personally, it’s one of the things that fell away. And I’m not saying that it *needs* to fall away or will fall away, because after all, it’s just a terminology.

Rick: What falls away?

Adya: The terminology. Like I don’t even don’t think of this stuff, I don’t even think of it in spiritual terms anymore. So even that seems like well ... look at it through this pair of glasses, whereas, what I’m really trying to get at is the most simple ...

Rick: It’s just life.

Adya: It’s just life, yeah.

Rick: “Spiritual” puts this special aura over it.

Adya: Yes! And if we want to use that terminology, like I said, I can do that too, I do it all the time. But for this thing in particular, one of the things that makes it challenging is the terminology we come to, the wording that we decide to utilize around it. And I think it’s totally fine to express it as “God is;” that is, “God’s will is” – period, as a form of expression.

But of course we’re not just sitting here – well, we are just sitting here, the three of us, but we’re going to have a few people invited to the party here, when they actually come around to looking at this thing, and at least in my experience, part of what I lost was *all* the overlays.

Rick: Here’s a quote from a pretty well-known spiritual teacher named Adyashanti, he says, “Your sense of your own being is no longer the ego, which fell away, but this empty center – aware empty space. Eventually it reveals itself to be Divine, the Source of all life. When this becomes mature, you look “out” upon the world, you see or intuit that same Divinity in everything. You experience, in a very concrete, obvious way, that everyone and everything is that Divinity. This takes on a kind of normalcy.”

Adya: Yes. Yeah, so it’s obvious, at least in terminology, it’s a total contradiction to what I’m saying terminology wise! Experiential wise – that’s what I was trying to make the point of – it’s

perfectly fine the way anybody wants to talk about this – as Divine or God or any other way. My point is - and this would go true with the ways I have talked about this, and I may talk about it in the next sentence or the next year, or at any other time – I’ve certainly in the last while, I don’t know what that means ... a year or two years or whatever, and becoming more sensitive to the terminology that I do use and the *implications* that that terminology can leave people with, even when I have *no* intention to leave somebody with a certain implication.

And like I said, one of my things that I look at now is just the way that we talk about this, the terminology we talk about this with, and what actually serves us and what actually may be *not* serves us. I don’t have the answer to this inquiry. I don’t know that there’s this pat answer, but I think that even as we’re using whatever words we’re using, and words, anything, that we have a connection, that it is beyond. That in the same way that ... well, it is no longer a cup of coffee anymore, but it’s going to be what it is, whatever the hell I call it.

Rick: Yeah - and I want to give you a chance to talk a minute (talking to Susanne), because we’ve been talking a little bit too much over here - but that kind of relates back to our map metaphor. Terminology is important, and if one person is measuring the map in kilometers and the other is using miles and you say, “Take forty units and go to such and such,” they’re going to end up in different places.

So I think it’s the evolution of the spiritual culture; it needs to include or involve more and more precision and agreement upon what words mean when we refer to these various things, otherwise it’s a ‘Tower of Babel’ kind of thing, where we’re all making noises and nobody is hearing what the other is actually saying.

Adya: Yeah, I might just say one last thing and I’d love to hear what you have to say about this. I understand - and it is why I’ve used ‘Divine’ and those things - because you’re perceiving it in a way that has a correspondence to something quite extraordinary, even though it becomes more ordinary over time, there’s something that seems ....

Rick: But they have a lot of baggage and connotations in peoples’ minds, so maybe we need whole new words.

Adya: Yeah, maybe they do, but I imagine that almost anything ... I mean, if it’s language, then it has its baggage, right? Because we learned it from somewhere.

Susanne: And that’s part of it, is that we pick up the – and thank you for caring what I say, here; I’m happy to be listening by the way, too –but it’s just that’s part of the evolution, is learning concepts and taking on some baggage with the hope that that is serving the unbagging. And so that is part of the spiritual journey. We call it a spiritual journey when really, actually, it is becoming a naturalized self, a being; a naturalized being, or whatever you want to call it. See, there again, that’s just another word, [but] free of belief that we are separate in any kind of way, free of, you know?

So we have these words, and we have this seeming journey that we go on, and we have spiritual teachers, and we have some hopefully good books and maps, and things that help, and I think that they are very useful; language itself is made up! And can we unconceptualize ourselves over time and take off what's not necessary anymore, leave it behind and keep letting go, and keep dropping what's not needed anymore?

Seeing what is, telling ourselves the truth of what's in the way of just being simple, being simply ourselves. Because as you know, spirituality can easily have its own stink, its own ego identity; it takes on identity. It's another type of identity and I took it on as well - I'll just be honest – in different ways. And then just to see and tell ourselves the truth, and be honest with ourselves. Like what is it that we've taken on? Including whatever perception is being taken from this conversation here!

And what I think that Adya, what I heard you say is that it is just so simple and natural, but since we're talking about it, we have to use what we can to try to describe and explain based on concepts that are *already* being used, in the hopes that it helps loosen the grip a little bit more, even of that. And that's why I think nature is so helpful as a teacher and as a feedback loop, of being able to see what is in the way between what we are, what one's self is, and what the natural world is. And whatever is seemingly in the way, that is a belief, that is a construct.

And nature is not saying that it is anything, it's not reflecting on itself and coming up with ideas of what it is; it just simply is itself. And I think that's the invitation, is that it doesn't have to be this long protracted journey. Part of the reason sometimes that it is - in a good way – long, is so that we can get adjusted to change. But also, what can make it along are the concepts along the way! But truthfully, it is just about unburdening ourselves of what we've taken on that is unnatural.

Rick: Here's a couple of ... (Adya and Susanne laughing in the background). Do you want to add to that [Adya]?

Adya: No, I don't want to add to anything to that.

Rick: These couple of related quotes – one from you, one from Nisargadatta – that'll bring in a slightly different theme than we've talked about so far ... from you: "When the unseen subject is no longer there, the outside world disappears as well. You become like any other force in nature, not an extraordinary person. If you want to be extraordinary, stay in the highest dimension of Self; that's where all the saints are."

And from Nisargadatta, he many times cautioned that, "Most so called adepts, yogis, siddhas, alleged avatars and even jnanis, have settled for merely an identification with or addiction to the universal consciousness or 'I Am,' still involved with manifestation or beingness - the Saguna Brahman, and they have not utterly surrendered or merged back into their prior-to-consciousness absolute nature – the Para Brahman, that is intrinsically nirguna, meaning 'without qualities,' and incidentally, or secondarily, I would say, Saguna."

So, without even adding a question to that, would you like to elaborate.

Adya: Well just a quick clarification on that, because I think it could be misconstrued. When I say that “the outside world disappears,” there’s two ways to understand that. One way, and it is what I really intend, is even to say that the way we see the world, structures – the way we see whatever this is – soon as we call it “the world” ... and of course we do call it what we’re going to call it ... we’re going to call it something, otherwise we can’t talk. But as soon as we do call it something, then it structures the way we see it. And when I’m saying that the world disappears, [it is] the way we’ve structured to see it, even thinking of it as “the world,” that *structure* can completely disappear – that’s one way.

The other way is it serves you in a deeply absorbed state – that your whole experience of the physical world *does* disappear for a while – that’s another way. And both of those understandings are completely valid, in the sense that they can actually be experienced.

Rick: And how about this part: “If you want to be extraordinary, stay in the highest dimension of Self; that’s where all the saints are.” I mean, what saints are you alluding to here? Saint Teresa of Avila or Jesus Christ, for that matter?

Adya: I don’t know about Jesus Christ.

Rick: Do you feel that they were somehow in a stuck state of a very high dimension of Self, that ideally they might have moved beyond?

Adya: I don’t really want to comment on some particular saint that existed hundreds of years ago because quite honestly, unless I can sit down and say, “Hi, how are you doing? What did you mean by what you were saying?” –then we can have a conversation! I’m talking more about the sort of saintly state as people have it in their minds, like, “When I’m enlightened I’ll be holy and wonderful and radiant,” and all that stuff. And not that that’s the same as the experience of unity, but it’s definitely closer to it than no-self is.

And so this isn’t that I’m making comparisons between saints and not-saints, or whatever it is, but our *idea* of what – like I said earlier – all the good stuff that people pursue is in the state of unified consciousness. That’s what is wantable, and that is what I think a vast majority of spiritual people are pursuing, and rightly so.

It is like I said, I wouldn’t want to go, “Well, don’t do that!” – of course if that’s what you’re interested in, then that’s how you got to dance your dance out, and Susanna has eloquently talked about her experience of unity consciousness blossoming into no-self, but I think that sometimes I’ll make those sort of distinctions because they are often thrown in as if they’re the same thing ...this wonderful, exalted state of unity is the same as no-self, and it ain’t, you know? It’s actually quite different.



Does that mean I'm saying that one is sort of better than the other, or that we need to compare and do whatever we do? No! We don't need to do that anymore than we have to compare any other two experiences, but I think it can be, or at least I *hope* it can be helpful to have some sense of that they are two different states.

Susanne: Well, what I would like to say is that I – and since we are using the word 'no-self' – until this came on, and I don't even know how to put it ... it's all like, awww! Just, how about this, when whatever medium was still lying in-between itself, it fell away. That feels more ... I don't know, it just feels more like my experience.

I wasn't aware that unity had a landing place inherent in it. I wasn't aware. Because I think that a lot of the nondual languaging that is being used, and a lot of it is actually true in that there is a 'ground of being,' that there is a 'peace that surpasses understanding,' that there is a 'Divine center that feels one with the whole, and 'there's a place that no matter what's happening, there's something that's always free of that' – you know, all that stuff?

Adya: Never moving ...

Susanne: Never moving, yeah. And I was able to just kind of land it became an aspect of every experience, it was always inherent within every experience; it was inherent in every experience, this peace which was free of experience. So that which was free of experience was also correspondingly arising, co-arising with experience at any given moment.

So that is what was being lived out, even though it started to become normalized. So I think that with this new transition, what I got to see in retrospect actually, pretty much right away, is that there had been still this veil that was lying in-between experience and you know ... life experiencing itself directly.

And that was that whole landing place that quite a few of us feel like that place, when you're in it, [that] that's it! And there's nothing wrong with that, it's just that it's nice to be able to include that in the map and to be able to just speak honestly, that actually that is a phase that does fade, or it can.

Rick: Is there any "end" phase? I mean, do you feel like there is any end to spiritual evolution?

Adya: I don't think there's any more end to it than there is a beginning to it.

Rick: So there's neither - neither end nor beginning?

Adya: No, no, no. I think that any of us that would feel inclined – I don't feel inclined to say, "This is the ultimate thing!" – but what that person is really saying is, "This is as far as I've realized, and I haven't realized anything beyond. And I might be in such a state that I can't even *imagine* anything beyond." But none of that is actually an indication that there isn't or that anything stops.

I just think it is life, where is the end of life? No-self could just be a step on a *long* series of ladders or steps, or something.

Susanne: And then later on you could be looking back and saying, "Oh my God! There was still whatever," you know what I mean?

Rick: And stop me if I said this in this interview, because I did say it in the talk I gave today. But I was talking to a spiritual teacher the other night at the SAND Conference, out on the patio, and I like this fellow, he is a friend. And we were talking about this point of, is there an end to spiritual evolution? And he said, "Well, I feel like I've reached the end."

I said, "Really? So like if we could contrast where you are now, what your experience is now with what it was ten years ago, can you tell me that there has been no refinement or clarification or enhancement, or something, in some dimension of your experience?"

He said, "Oh, well you're talking about the manifest aspect of my life and my experience?"

And I said, "Yeah, I'm not talking about the absolute because to my understanding, that doesn't change, and you'd be in trouble if it did, but the relative expression, perhaps, continues to be refined and evolve, and so on, ad infinitum." Would you concur with that?

Adya: Sure, sure. I mean I don't know if I would language exactly the same way, but I think the way you language it gets to the point of. Um ... it's tough, because I can't even think in the terms of how all this stuff gets talked in anymore. You know, like 'absolute and relative' ...

Rick: Yeah, what does *that* mean?

Adya: Yeah, we've just divided ... we just like took a big knife and divided it ... like, "Okay, on this side we've got absolute, because we can't see it and touch it and grasp it and eat it for dinner, and then on the other side we've got the relative," da da da da da da da ...

Susanne: And even to say that absolute is fixed, I mean, that's a point of view, it's a conceptual reality.

Rick: I think these different descriptions to terminologies go in and out of relevance as one moves along. There's a certain stage where that makes a lot of sense, relative to one's experience, and then after a while it becomes obsolete.

Susanne: Well it's part of the ... and I'm not exactly saying that this is in fact true, that absolute is *not* fixed; I don't even know! I just know what I'm experiencing and that the whole worlds of absolute – as you say - and relative just collapses, and there's just this and there's just one thing, and it appears to me that evolution is happening, there's constant growth and movement.

And to say that there's something that is fixed and stationary, as if everything is coming out of it all the time, I don't know, maybe that's something else that we've all invented, and it's not something that I necessarily believe in. I don't know if I believe in anything, actually!

Rick: Okay, well that may be a good point to end on. Do either of you feel like there is some stone we haven't unturned.

Susanne: There's probably a lot of stuff, but we're probably thirsty and all that stuff .... And it's a long day. But there's all kinds of stuff that we could touch on and this is just like scratching the surface, because there are other things that Adya and I have spoken about, in terms of power of attention, creative potential, {and] pure potentiality birthing itself.

And you know, things open up when the medium falls away. There are different aspects of what's possible within creative intelligence, of where attention goes once it is not hung up on any more on any aspect of being a self. It frees up a lot of creativity and creative potential, and that is something that we could leave for another time, or not, but it's just to put it out there.

Adya: Yeah, I think it is an important ... a really, really important point, on top of the points. And I think there is also a whole physical transformational thing that comes along with it too. I mean, I am absolutely convinced that the brain gets wired differently, even the way of my experience of thought is much more precise than it used to be. It can obviously get muddled, especially when I get tired or sick!

But you know, I think that there are all these ways, that even on a physical level it has an effect. But the thing that I am really so happy about to have you here, Susanne, and also you, Rick, [is that] I think it's useful to talk about this stuff, even if we do so stumblingly, but in a way that's really authentic. Because a lot of the ways that it is sometimes talked about, even people that come to me, not only does it not feel authentic to me, it also doesn't feel authentic to a lot of folks.

Because even the idea of no-self, boy is it a *great* ego defense thing, you know, when "there is nobody here to do anything," it's like, if that's real, then that's fine. And if it was real, then you probably wouldn't be using it.

Rick: Well, it has sometimes been used as an alibi for really egregious behavior.

Adya: Yeah, so I think that's one of the things that I'm really happy about our conversation; I hope that it is a bit more real and based in actual experience. Because one of the nice things I think is, that the whole self-referencing mechanism isn't operating in the old way, and that's one of the nice things. You don't have to defend yourself, you don't have to assert yourself onto every moment; there's just this really nice.

Susanne: Oh, one thing that I feel might be important to touch on, real quick, and I know that we're reaching the end, is that, you know how within unity there is still development? And within this no-self, that there is [also] still development. And if you wouldn't mind just touching on that, so that people don't get confused necessarily, imagining that it is the end of – I'm not talking just about evolution – but just a certain type of development that could *still* be going on without the self-referencing mechanism being in place.

Adya: Sure. Well I think if we just imagine that whatever Susanne said, that without the self-referencing mechanism being in place, if we just even conceptually remove that, and then realize that that's all we've removed! It's the only thing that's been removed; it's not like life comes to a halt or that we stop learning or we stop growing, even on a personal human level.

It doesn't confer perfection, I mean, absolute jerks can realize this and fairly saintly people can realize this, and that's just the way it is. But I think something in our humanity just has that sense of ... sure, you know, both saints and jerks can realize no-self, and it has happened. And it doesn't mean that when a jerk realizes it that it's any less real than when a saintly person realizes it, but that also means that probably the person who realized it through their personality development ... that stunted - "jerk" is a very heavy-handed way of saying it – just a stunted or more narcissistic sort of personality. Sure, they would do well to continue to evolve as a human being and get beyond whatever ...

Susanne: And I would just like to make a point here, and if it corresponds with you, just because I can feel a question coming up – whether it's you or the audience that may be listening, I don't know! But that is that it doesn't mean that there is a person who is going to be working on themselves; it's life itself that is wanting to clarify and clean out the vehicle – that's just what it does! It's out of love, it's out of purification ...

Adya: Interest, it's like "Wow! Look at that, look at that thought I just hung myself up with there, for a moment."

Susanne: But that doesn't mean that there is a center of consciousness where it is landing on; that's the difference.

Adya: And that's a big difference.

Rick: I want to comment on the jerk point.

Susanne: Oh no! Here we go!

Rick: You set yourself up for that one! You were talking a few minutes ago about how living this seems to have an effect on the brain and the thought process, and so on and so forth. I think, and feel free to differ, but I feel that there are conditions which are more or less conducive to realization, and that's why all the spiritual traditions offer behavioral suggestions and purificatory things, and so on. And who was it? Some Zen guy said, "Enlightenment may be an accident but spiritual practice makes you accident prone."

So I think yeah, on a bell curve there are going to be people way out on the fringes who are not living very wholesome lives, who wake up somehow. But chances are, if you have cultured some purity, some integrity, some so on and so forth, it is going to be a more conducive internal environment for awakening to take place. But once it has taken place, that is not to say, as you said, that you are perfect or that all the cleaning up that can potentially take place has taken place.

Ken Wilber likes to say, "There are three things: waking up, cleaning up, and growing up."

Adya: Right, and they don't always necessarily come together, as a package deal. Sometimes they do and sometimes they seem very much segmented in some peoples' experience.

Rick: Yeah, there seems to be a correlation but it's more like, not a tight one, but more like a big stretchy rubber band.

Adya: Absolutely!

Rick: Like, eventually pulls the other ones along, but the stretchy can get quite stretched, at some point. And you have examples of people who seem to have achieved quite remarkable degrees of realization but are behaving quite ...

Adya: Sure, because for instance, you can be quite realized but given the family of origin you came from, and who knows whatever factors, and you may be really bad at knowing how to be in relationship. And just because you've awakened or your self dropped away, or something, doesn't immediately download into your system, 'here's how to relate to people really well,' any more than I wake up and I become a physicist, like I suddenly have all the information downloaded into me.

If I wanted to become a physicist I'd have to really work at it, and if I wanted to become – like you were saying, Susanne, about that sense of ... I think part of the nice thing about when self drops away, if you don't have the same barriers within yourself to seeing your own little moments of, "Oh, that could be a little truer," or "[I could] develop there," you just don't have a resistance to *seeing* that.

And there's a curiosity - at least for me, it's kind of a combination of curiosity and compassion, or something, mixed together – that would move towards those places. And I always find that [to be] an important part of all this.

Susanne: Yeah, I think that's a good place to leave it, that the growth continues, it's just never ending. And I know you love ending things like that, with your interviews – that growth is never ending.

Rick: P.T. Barnum said, "Always leave them wanting more."

Adya: Hopefully if we came together and talked about this two years from now it would be a little bit different, because we would have all grown a little bit and maybe seen something a little bit deeper.

Rick: Yeah, hopefully we will have that opportunity. So in wrapping it up, Susanne why don't you say a little bit about what you have to offer? As a teacher, what do you do, how do people connect with you and things like that?

Susanne: Okay, well, you can connect with me through my website – [www.susannemarie.org](http://www.susannemarie.org) . I offer teachings and mentoring and work with people one on one, in groups – in person and online.

Rick: And you are available for retreats?

Susanne: Yes, I would love to, I would love for life to open up in that way, yeah, yeah.

Rick: You did one up in Seattle not too long ago and people really enjoyed it. I heard good feedback.

Susanne: Thank you, yeah, it's enjoyable, I feel really in alignment with what I'm offering, what I'm doing. So it is just an extension of just this life.

Rick: I might add that something I know about you is that you are very humble about wanting to make this available to people, and not that you have the time to talk to everybody for hours for free all the time, but you charge reasonable amounts of money for what you do. And there are people who are having individual consultations for \$500 an hour and stuff like that, and it puts it out of reach for so many people, but you are definitely not one of those.

Susanne: Well I, in the past 15 years being a single mom, have gone through all kinds of things - not having enough money at times, so I have a special understanding, my own understanding of what it's like. And I think that's part of how life seasons us and it supports one in the work that we do, opening us up to being in understanding of other people, through our experiences. Like through health crisis, we have more capacity to understand other people in that way, or through loss, or through financial crisis that I've had. So there's more of an understanding for all kinds of ways – thank you though.

Rick: And so your website is [www.susannemarie.org](http://www.susannemarie.org)

Susanne: [www.susannemarie.org](http://www.susannemarie.org) s-u-s-s-a-n-e ...it's German, but it's Susanne. Thank you, and thanks for your support, and thanks for bringing us together and supporting it. And thank you, Adya.

Adya: Oh, it's fun to do this.

Susanne: Yeah, thank you so much, and to Mukti too.

Rick: Oh, you should have seen Mukti before this interview. She is like moving these great big patio umbrellas, she is just like cleaning the windows, she just flew into action! And Adya's site is [www.adyashanti.org](http://www.adyashanti.org) - people can go there and find out. And you have a mailing list ... and so do you ... that people can sign up for to be notified of events. And you do this great thing many Wednesday nights, where you have an online talk, live, and people can call in questions. And so listeners should just go to both sites – [www.susannemarie.org](http://www.susannemarie.org) and [www.adyashanti.org](http://www.adyashanti.org) and find out everything about what they do.

So thank you all for ... thank you both, first of all, for doing this, and thank you for listening and watching, those who are doing so. Really appreciate your attention and hope this has been

valuable for you. As I mentioned in the beginning, this is an ongoing series of interviews, and if you would like to see previous ones or sign up to be notified of future ones, or get the audio podcast to listen to while you commute, or whatever, go to [www.batgap.com](http://www.batgap.com) - b-a-t-g-a-p and just explore the menus. So thank you.

Adya: Wonderful to be here with you.

Susanne: Yeah, thank you. Yeah, likewise, thank you.

[BATGAP theme music plays]