

## Jeffery Martin - 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. If this is new to you, go to [www.batgap.com](http://www.batgap.com) and look under the 'Past Interviews' menu and you'll see all the previous ones - there have been about 380 of them – organized and categorized in different ways. Also, we have a new menu up there ... what's it called Irene? I think it's called 'At a Glance', which summarizes everything that you'll find at the site.

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So my guest today is Jeffery Martin. BATGAP junkies may remember Jeffery from the group discussion we did at Sophia University about 2 years ago. Jeffery is at Sophia University and this is the first time I've interviewed him one on one. And Jeffery sent me a rather long introduction, but he also has a mercifully brief introduction, so I'm going to read you the merciful one and then maybe Jeffery can get a little merciless and elaborate on that.

So Jeffery is known as the leading academic expert on ongoing, persistent – not temporary – forms of non-symbolic experience, and he'll explain in a minute what that means. He is the creator and coordinator of the world's largest scientific study on persistent forms of non-symbolic experience, and he is a tireless advocator at major academic conferences, universities, and public venues, for the benefits of ongoing non-symbolic experience, and the fact that his research suggests that anyone can get there quickly, safely, and easily.

So we will discuss that but Jeffery, before we do that, what would you like to say by way of elaboration on your bio or who you are, just so people get a sense of who they're talking to here?

Jeffery: Well it's nice to be with you. As you know, I'm a huge fan of you, we see each other every now and then when I visit Fairfield to do research. You were instrumental, really, in helping me understand the landscape of Fairfield, Iowa. I don't know if your viewers realize quite the political, crazy landscape it is ... in Fairfield, with the big TM University there and all sorts of different spiritual factions and stuff like that.

So I've been *super* grateful to you over the years, for really helping me to sort of understand who out of the zillions of people there I should really focus on, and all of that. And of course I think you have the best archive. I sent out an email yesterday to all of our listeners and said that

this is really an unprecedented archive that you've put together and that you're continuing to put together, you and Irene both. I know you both work very hard on it, so it's really an honor to be part of it.

Rick: Well thanks. It's an honor to have you on. So Jeffery, thank you for those appreciative words. So tell us what you've been doing...

Jeffery: You mean you want me to answer your question now? ☺

Rick: Yeah! Tell us a little bit about you.

Jeffery: Yeah, I just really wanted to say "Thank you" first. So I have a very broad background, it goes all the way back to me media, computers, technology, I built quite a number of different businesses, you name it. And around 2006 I had really done everything I thought I should do to be very happy ...

Rick: You have your PhD in something from Harvard, right? And you also have a degree in something from the California Institute of Integral Studies, right?

Jeffery: Yeah, well I'll slide forward to this ... not long after 2006 ...

Rick: Well don't let me rush you; I thought you might have already skipped over that but go ahead, continue.

Jeffery: I went back to school because I had really done everything I felt like I should do in order to be super happy. And I wasn't unhappy but it just seemed like there was an awful lot of people that were more happy than I was, and I felt like I worked really, really hard at it, so I just decided to make a life change at that point.

And I basically got out of – and in some cases it took me a couple of years to wind out of it – but I basically got out of the businesses and everything else that I was doing in technology and whatever else, and went in the direction of studying PMSE.

Rick: I get the sense that you actually managed to make some pretty decent money during your business phase, because you now seem to be able to just fly all over the world and do whatever you want to do and not worry about cost.

Jeffery: Yeah, I've been very, very blessed to really be able to fund everything myself. You know, most academics are kind of in a rough spot - they depend on grants that often aren't what they want to research. I remember I went back to school at Harvard for psychology and neuroscience and CIS, as you mentioned, for transformative studies, really to learn qualitative research and transdisciplinary research, which is kind of the leading form of scholarship in the academy - it is the only place that I knew of that taught this in America; it is more common in Europe.

And my very first ... they have this sort of 'wash out' class at Harvard, in the graduate program, which is like your introduction to research class, and I kind of got the sense that the professor's

job was to get rid of as many people as they could. Because there weren't that many of us! There weren't that many of us to start with ... there were like 12 of us or something, to start with, and there weren't that many of us that were there at the end.

And I'll never forget how he like opened the class by basically saying, "If you're planning on having a career where you're going to research what you want to research or whatever else, let me just dissuade you from that right now. You're going to be at the mercy of grant sources and funding sources, even if you're *me*, even if you're at a famous institution. I'll ensure you will almost never get to work on what it is that you're most interested in."

And I was sitting there thinking, "Okay, I'm going to be spending my own money at this point to research what I want to!" So yeah, I've been so *incredibly* fortunate. And then in recent years we have been able to crowdfund our largest experiment, and so that's been really great; it's like a citizen-supported science project.

So anyway, like you say, I went to CIS and Harvard, and then during that process I was basically trying to figure out who were the happiest people on Earth, who were the people who have the highest well-being? Eventually I learned to separate happiness from well-being and some nuance stuff like that. And I wound up narrowing it down to the population of people who come on your show!

Rick: Those *types* of people, obviously, you mean?

Jeffery: Yeah, there's plenty of people on your show that have been researched.

Rick: Yeah, I mean you were saying blah blah and one of the things I thought was 'Gary Weber.'

Jeffery: Yeah, and Gary has talked about it so i can talk about it. It's an anonymous thing if you participate in our research but some people have broken their anonymity, so Gary Weber has, Kenneth Folk has, Dan Ingram has and some others have. And so there are quite a few people actually that have been on your show that have participated in our research, especially the early phase of the research which involved about 1,200 people.

Rick: Yeah, so let me ask you two questions. One is, at what point did you yourself - if you did and I'm sure you have - think, "Okay, I've talked to enough of these people, I'm going to do some kind of practice myself, on a regular basis, to try to experience what they're experiencing? – that's question number one. And secondly, you haven't actually said very clearly – well, you sort of have – what this research is, what you're trying to discover. I think you're basically trying to discover the fountain of happiness, so to speak.

Jeffery: Yeah, totally. I was really, exactly, just trying to say, "Okay, I'm not as happy as I think I should be or could be, so who is and how do I become them?" That was the original quest and then it just sort of got off in this crazy direction that I would have never imagined, with this population of people and whatever you want to call it in the popular nomenclature – who claim to be 'enlightened' or 'nondual' or 'transcendental consciousness, 'God consciousness,' 'unity

consciousness, 'persistent mystical experience,' 'persistent shamanic ecstasy' – we have hundreds of terms catalogued for people, as I know you do as well.

I mean, you've heard *endless* descriptions of this from so many different perspectives just like I have. It is one of the things that makes me so excited to talk to you today. And every time, I think you know, that every time I come to Fairfield I try to hook up with you because it's such an interesting conversation.

Rick: Yeah, and we've hooked up at the SAND Conference a couple of times too. Now in my case I was fortunate enough to learn to meditate when I was a teenager, almost 50 years ago, and it worked for me and I stuck with it, and been doing a form of meditation over many years. In your case you have gotten interested in this stuff a little bit later in life and you immediately plunged in with interviewing a whole lot of different people ... I mean I if I were interviewing people at the point where I was just decide ding what to do, I think it might have confused me because there would have been so many choices.

So in your case, did you get a little overwhelmed by all the possibilities out there, or did it become clear to you fairly soon that you know ... you personally should do x,y,z because that would be the most effective thing for you?

Jeffery: It's a good question. I guess I would say that I was very cautious when I first started to want to research this from an academic perspective, and so I went to CIS first and it wasn't until I was at CIS for a while that I realized I needed the psychology and neuroscience piece as well. So I think around 2008 I started going to the program at Harvard.

But I knew right from the start, I didn't have to wait for Harvard. I knew right from the start that a lot of people had tried to research this in the academic world and they had their research quite invalidated.

Rick: By...?

Jeffery: Academic, psychology and neuroscience, because of the antimaterialist claims that are so common in this population, it was kind of disregarded as maybe like a psycho-pathology or whatever else. And in fact, initially I wasn't entirely convinced that it *wasn't* a psycho-pathology, that people weren't self-deceptive. And a lot of the early part of the research, if you would have encountered me in those days you would have found a very skeptical researcher who was really trying to figure out: is this psycho-pathological or is what being claimed here really legit and positive for someone's life? I didn't take anything on face value.

But one of the great things about coming at it from an academic standpoint is that I had to wade into it in the most credible ways possible. So I went around and I talked to a lot of the leading lights in the consciousness space and the psychology academy, and some others that were in the developmental side of it and basically other major leading lights in psychology, and I said, "How can I research this in a way that 3 or 4 years from now" - I was little outwardly optimistic

in how long it would take, but you know ... - “where 3 or 4 years from now when I’m starting to write this stuff up it isn’t just immediately shot down? I can’t get it presented anywhere, at any leading conferences or where nobody will want a book chapter on it or other publications.”

And so *that* led to some really good advice from them that narrowed it down right away. And they basically said, “Well you need to find people, if you were trying to convince me” - if you were trying to speak about the society that I run or the journal I publish or am the editor of, or whatever their thing was – “what you’d have to convince *me* of is that you have built your population very carefully. And so I would want to see things like ... do they have a community that validates them, is there a very well-documented set of knowledge on what it is that they’re claiming to personally experience, and then do they have a community that validates that experience and that basically agrees, yes, this person may actually experience this thing that’s been carefully documented.”

So that of course led to the world’s major religions and spiritual systems and stuff like that ... people that have written that stuff up over hundreds or thousands of years, and people and teachers who claim to experience it in some form, and so our research really began there. And so I didn’t view this *broad* smorgasbord; I actually had a very, very narrow scope at the beginning, which I was kind of charged with by these folks who kind of saved my butt politically, later on.

And so to answer your question about when I came to it myself, or what practices I started, or when I decided that maybe this wasn’t psycho-pathological, I would say that by about 2009, 2010, we had our – and I’m sure we’ll talk about it – we had our continuum model of the different classifications of this experience. And one of the things that we did in the early days was that I just gave them *tons* of gold standard psychological measures – these are like the online tests or the pencil and paper tests that people sometimes get when they’re getting employment or if they took an ‘Intro to Psychology’ class, they probably had to get credit and sucker through some of these things.

And so again, taking the advice of the people when I was first starting out down the academic road, I used pretty much the stuff that was validated for decades, so that’s what I mean when I say ‘gold standard.’ And I would just give people endless amounts of these, so if you were one of my research subjects, I would send you a batch of them – of 3 or 4, and then if you sent those back I would send you another batch of 3 or 4. And I would just keep doing that until you were like, “Pleeease don’t ever send me anything ever again!”

And so, I built up all of this data and some of those were psycho-pathological measures, they were developmental measures, they were obviously well-being, emotion measures, depression measures, depersonalization, personality measures, just all kinds of stuff. And so from that I became pretty convinced pretty early on that it was probably something not psycho-pathological because the people were showing up as really healthy on all of the different

measures. And a lot of those measures are pretty good at fooling you so that you don't really know how you're supposed to answer them, especially the psycho-pathological ones.

And so by 2009, 2010, I basically felt like there were enough other people involved in the research around the world, I'd spoken out at all the major conferences by that point, and I felt like I could probably get hit by a bus and the whole thing would just keep on going, that it wasn't just resting on me and my efforts anymore. And so I also thought that that was a good time to try to transition to this, and so I started to relax the barriers, the psychological barriers that I had put up a bit.

There was a day when I was first sitting down with people, and sometimes I would be sitting down with a research subject and there would be some strange effect on my own consciousness, and I really learned to block those because you can't ask questions if your mind has gone blank. So I had gotten kind of masterful at blocking everybody's influence and so after a while you couldn't influence me.

And so I had built up these walls by the 2009, 2010 timeframe and I thought to myself, "I'm going to have to start figuring out ways now to dissolve those walls if I want those barriers I put up ... if I want to transition to this," and so that's the first thing that I had to do. I think a lot of people have those barriers in an unconscious way, fortunately I had consciously built them up so I had at least some sort of clue as to how to consciously deconstruct them.

And then it was really a question of how to get there, and by 2010, one of the things that had become pretty obvious in the data is that a lot of these people had tried the same stuff. Now some of them were in a tradition where there was only one method or a couple of methods, and those people had sort of just stuck with those methods their whole life, but that was the minority of people. I would say that even people who were in longstanding single methods, lots of times they tried several different methods.

And people had pretty much tried all the same methods and yet when they were asked, "Hey, which one ... what is it that you think really crossed you over?" they didn't all say the same thing even though they had used a lot of the same stuff. And so it seemed anecdotally to me at that point like there was a matching process that was important at an individual psychological level, and so I just tried to keep that in mind for *myself* and began a process essentially of experimenting with the techniques that had risen to the top of the research.

And so eventually I would myself through a few that had a good impact and that whole thing, that whole stream of observation and what not became the experiments that we do with people all around the world. They basically use the same method that I hacked together for myself, though a much more refined version of it ... you're not the first guinea pig trying to figure it out.

Rick: Just to respond to some of that. Firstly, your comment about having the research shot down because it doesn't fit into the materialistic paradigm ... I forget who said that science progresses by a series of funerals, and there are certain people who are never going to accept that this isn't

psycho-pathological because it doesn't fit into their paradigm, and the notion that consciousness might be more fundamental than matter and so on and so forth is just totally alien to them. So you don't always have to please everybody, you know?

And there's been research going on since at least 1970 and perhaps earlier, which *has* been getting published in peer-reviewed journals and so on, and I'm sure there are many scientists who wouldn't even read those journals but nonetheless, in a certain niche, a certain segment of the scientific world, this stuff is taken very seriously and it is has grown a lot since then. I'm sure you are aware of all that so I just wanted to comment.

And also of course in saying that I'm implying that you, by no means, are the only person doing this kind of research; there have been all sorts of people ...here in Fairfield and in all kinds of other institutions, studying all kinds of different types of meditators and awakened people and so on.

Jeffery: Yeah, and I would say [that] exactly. And I encountered all of that in the background, the initial background literature research and traveled around and talked to most of those people – everybody that would talk to me – to really get their opinion on what they would do differently if it was 20, 30 years ago, in their career. And they were really the reason that I then went next and talked to so many of the leading lights in the mainstream, because most of those people were like, “Stay away from us” - you know? sort of “Don't get painted into the corner like we've been painted into the corner,” in many cases.

And they gave me all of the political background around everybody who had been for them, everybody who had been against them, they just gave me this whole big landscape which was what really allowed me to know who was safe to approach among the people who were well-known in the mainstream academies. So I 100% stood on those peoples' shoulders, not just their research in terms of the clues they had laid and the directions and all the important work that they had done, but also, frankly, a lot of their personal advice. A lot of very candid conversations over dinners about what directions to go in and what directions to avoid, and who to talk to and who not to talk to, and what conferences to speak at and what conferences *not* to try to speak at, and what phase to do different things at and all of that.

So just as the research in many ways stands on the shoulders of endless people who have hacked their way to these states of consciousness or structures of consciousness, or whatever term you want to use – so there's that, but the research also stands on a lot of amazing help from the people like you're talking about that came before, and they are still out there and would like to have a wider impact and would like to see their work have a wider impact, but are a little bit limited.

So I took from that almost a mission, almost a charge from them to try to take the opportunity to mainstream it as much as could be done from an academic standpoint, and I really tried to do that ever since then. That was one of the decisions where I could have gotten psychology and neuroscience training at other places but that was one of the reasons that I chose to go to

Harvard, for instance, which was ridiculously hard and maybe more than I had to put myself through. So yeah, I can't say enough good about all those folks.

Rick: Yeah, so let's take a step back for a second. There are a lot of people who watch this show and others who don't who are spiritual practitioners and they might have the attitude that, "I don't care what scientists think, they're a bunch of idiots anyway, look what they've done to the world. I just want to have this spiritual experience and realization and awakening, and if science thinks it's crazy then I think they're crazy and I don't even need to know what they think."

But my attitude is that science has done a lot over the last several 100 years to eliminate a lot of idiocy in the name of gaining knowledge. I mean, during the inquisition 800 thousand women or so were burned at the stake for being witches, and some people were burned at the stake for daring to suggest that the Earth was not the center of the universe and that the stars in the sky might be other suns, and that they might have planets around them that they might even have people on them of some sort – some life!

And so science has kind of chipped away in small and large chunks at the territory that religion once held to be its own, and I think that has been tremendously beneficial for us. And personally, I've given whole talks and I think a lot about the fact that science and spirituality are actually buddies, you know, they can actually help each other. They each have something to offer that the other all by itself doesn't have, and so I see what you're doing as a really valuable thing.

And I'm also really interested in the idea of maps, that the whole territory of possibility of what can be experienced – and we're really not just talking about subjective experiences that one can wallow in that have no bearing on reality; the whole purpose of spirituality as I understand it is to actually come to know what's real, not only in an absolute sense where you come to know consciousness as fundamentally your own essential nature, but all sorts of relative considerations that a more refined and cultured nervous system based in unbounded consciousness can begin to explore.

And in that sense, the human nervous system can be regarded as a profoundly sophisticated scientific instrument and can be used in a scientific way, posing working hypotheses and then investigating them in order to arrive at more and more clear and detailed knowledge. I'll be done with this riff in just a second and then you can respond!

And I think that maybe a few hundred years from now we won't see this schism between science and spirituality; both of those methodologies will have converged into you know ... we're just gaining understanding about reality, about the universe, and these tools over here, these more objective tools are helpful for enabling us to probe these areas, and these more subjective methodologies are useful for helping us to understand *those* areas, and we're just putting together a clearer picture of the whole territory.

So I see you as a major contributor to that effort, that you're attempting to objectively chart out the various stages or levels of subjective development. Many other traditions have offered road maps, have suggested that there are all these stages of consciousness or levels of consciousness, and if you study it deeply you find that there seem to be some similarity between these different traditions. But I think it could in time, and maybe not even in our lifetimes, it could all be kind of nailed down and we could end up with a general agreement as to what the whole range of reality is, from gross to subtle to transcendent, and how we can best explore it.

And it wouldn't necessarily be a monolithic thing where we're just going to use this method to explore it; as you note, different methods might be better for different people. So I could probably say more but why don't you just riff off of that a bit?

Jeffery: Yeah, I completely agree with you. You touched on that also in a podcast I watched for you recently, from Berkley, which was great ... I thought it was really great. Anytime I can see a podcast with you sharing just a little bit of your experience and what you've learned, I always watch them.

So I was reading in the thing where people had to talk you into putting that up. I'm one of those people who is *super* grateful that you put stuff like that up, you know, just FYI.

Rick: Thank you .... Yeah, well I get flak from people saying I talk too much. Almost every day I get some YouTube comment saying, "The interviewer, would he just shut up and let the person talk?" and "How dare he question Rupert Spira about what he knows?! Just let Rupert teach him," and so on. So I try to not to ... you know?

Jeffery: Yeah, I get that, I mean I went through some kind of a similar phase. And it's funny, I reached a point where I was talking to people – I guess this is maybe 2 or 3 years in - and I'd had such in depth conversations across so many different traditions than from the scientific perspective, in fact, that's a good way for me to answer and talk a little bit about what you just said.

So one of the things that made our research different is that I assumed that we were going to help people get there with technology, right? If you think about my background I'm basically a technologist – I'm in business, technology, media ... that kind of stuff, but I also have a really technological bent - and so I just assumed there would be brain zapping involved or some form of neurofeedback ...

Rick: Yeah, I interviewed Shinzen about a month ago and he is searching ways to shut down parts of the brain and using magnets to trigger these experiences.

Jeffery: Yeah, exactly, and I've surrounded myself with some of those devices, just in case you want to talk about them later and see them. And so yeah, I thought we're really going to nail this with technology. So okay, working back from "we're going to nail it with technology," what's the path to nailing it with technology?

So a little bit back from there is ... you probably need to have EEG work done because that's a cheap technology that could reach everybody. A little bit back from there ... before you do the EEG work you probably need to do fMRI work and stuff like that, because that's just a little bit better for other reasons, to start there and get a nice picture of what's going on in the brain.

And then back from there ... you can't just ... I mean people watch like Jed (Judson) Brewer or something with John Kabat Zinn on *60 Minutes*, or they watch TV and see people that do fMRI work and they're always scrolling through the brain and it looks like you're just magically scanning the whole brain, but you have to really design these experiments super, super carefully. You have to have a pretty good idea of what you're looking for in order to design those experiments.

And of course we had *no* idea what we were looking for when we started down the road of this population, so usually with those types of studies, first you do a lot of groundwork. It is not uncommon for an fMRI study to have 3 or 5 years of prep work going into it before they know how they look at what they look at and all that. It's why a lot of the groundbreaking stuff comes out of PhDs, because people have the 3 to 5 year ramp to do all that work without tons of pressure to produce on this grant or that grant, and publish on it right away and all that.

So that was actually a unique thing for us because I went in asking these people after the survey stuff, after the gold standard measure stuff, the next thing we did was just start sitting down with them. And I would sit down with somebody until basically they kicked me out of their living room, and I'm really not kidding about that ... it'd kind of a joke among our research subjects! Like when they're all together at SAND and I'm in a conversation, they're like, "Hey, did you have to kick him out of your living room too?"

And it's true, they did, because I was in it to suck every last bit of information out of their head, but I was asking all of the questions in a very specific way. And it was a very unusual way for them because it was all along the lines of cognitive science, it was basically asking about cognition, which is like thoughts and thinking – the nature and qualities of their thoughts, and thinking affect - which is roughly translated as emotion - perception, memory, and then after a little bit of time, once I started to get a little bit of a clue, sense of self.

And so my questions were all around that. And what I would do was I would allow someone to talk – I would be sitting in their living room or we would be sitting at a café or wherever they wanted to meet ... I would go to them. I would spend a long time just traveling around with a new person every day, basically, and I would just sit in front of them and start by saying something like, "Well, what can you tell me about this...?" It was just a loose, casual question.

And they would launch into their standard story with their standard language and all of that, and I would make a note of their language so that I could incorporate it as much as possible while talking back to them. Mostly that was just like 30 minutes or an hour of rapport-building so that they felt like they could open up to me, because I had that same problem with research subjects that you were talking about – it was really hard to get research subjects in the early

years because the research participants were like, "Science can never study it," and they just weren't interested in wasting their time with some scientist. And so I had to ... the term 'persistent non-symbolic experience' – it didn't come *after* the research; it came while we were searching for any phrase that would not get the phone hung up on us, and that was the one that basically got us our first research participants.

Rick: So define that phrase. Persistent means it lasts, it doesn't just come and go, non-symbolic - why do you use that phrase?

Jeffery: You know, I was looking for anything that people might latch onto. We were testing all kinds of language and there was a sentence and a Suzanne Cook-Greuter paper - who did an educational doctorate at Harvard under Keegan in the developmental side, and basically broke out one of the developmental measures to include some of the stuff that we're talking about here today – and in a 2000 paper she basically had a sentence that said, "Non-symbolically mediated consciousness," and I thought, "That's pretty good, let's put that on the list to try and not get people to hang up on us."

We're trying to get people to say, "Sure, come by, send us your surveys..."

Rick: Okay, so 'non-symbolic' simply means that it's not just mental fabrication or a conceptual representation, but the person is directly apprehending something, some deeper reality. Is that what you mean to say by that phrase?

Jeffery: Well now we've defined it more precisely from an academic standpoint, but frankly, back in those early days, the great thing about that phrase was that if you were in these types of experiences, it just seemed to land okay with you. You would put whatever your idea of what this was on it and it didn't offend it in any way.

Rick: Yeah, so you're not going to say 'enlightened people' or something, because that has so much baggage with it and people will either claim it erroneously or feel uncomfortable using it because it has such a static, superlative connotation to it ... things like that.

Jeffery: Yeah, and even things like consciousness and experience ... I would try to look a little bit at peoples' materials before we contacted them to try to get them to participate in the research, but it seemed like I was just always offending how they wanted to talk about it. It was just crazy.

No matter how much I studied even their own language patterns, they would still get back to me and be like, "You know, just from the way you're talking I can tell you're never going to understand this. It's a waste of time to sit down with you." But that non-symbolically mediated thing that Suzanne came up with - I love Suzanne, I love her work, she's awesome, she's one of those people who is really helpful with advice over the years - that was just gold! Like everybody didn't even blink! They were like, "Yeah, okay, that sounds like an "academic-ee" term around what I experience. Sure, come to the house."

Rick: So what you're alluding to here then is what we might also call higher states of consciousness, and you told me once that you think there might be as many as 24 gradations that could be defined but that you're dealing primarily with four of them – levels or locations 1 through 4.

And as you define them in your book, level 4 is pretty spiffy, and it may also have some drawbacks that somebody trying to live a practical life might not want to be experiencing. But basically you're saying that there are higher levels of consciousness – to use a more common phrase – and you're trying to define them and chart them out in a way which cuts across all traditions, and you're trying to devise the most effective methodologies for experiencing them quickly, easily, and safely. Right? Good Summary?

Jeffery: I guess, yeah, and I would say a lot of that ... actually pretty much all of that just *emerged*. You know when I was initially asking people questions about cognition, affect, perception, memory, sense of self, they had never gotten those questions before, even if they had tens of thousands of students or more, even if they were some super famous person who did nothing but answer their students' questions about this all the time.

And I would be around them when their chief disciples were around them or their main lieutenants or whatever, and those people asked very sophisticated questions to them, and I would be around them oftentimes when ordinary people were asking them questions at an event or something like that. And they always had their answers like immediately back to the people, you know, they'd just been asked this stuff a million times; people just ask the same stuff again and again.

And I would sit down with them and I would ask them our questions, and they would just kind of sit silently looking at me for a minute. And I learned over time that they basically had never been asked these types of things before and that it forced them to really search their own experience before they answered. And that, over the years, taught us a lot of research subjects because they started referring me ... that turned out to be extremely helpful to them, as a process, as you know.

With PNSE you're self-referential thought and all of that sort of quiets down ...

Rick: PNSE is 'persistent non-symbolic experience.'

Jeffery: Yeah, you become a lot less self-reflective and there's a huge benefit. I noticed that a lot of major figures would have a couple of different people around them in their inner circle. They would initially have 1 or 2 people who had had significant attainments and had a lot of potential like they did, and then they would have people around them that really seemed like they were never going to get out of their mind, like they were never going to get out of their traditional thing.

And it took me a long time to realize that both of those people really served that teacher in very powerful ways. The people who are just constantly stuck in their mind - have endless questions

from the level of normal thinking and not really having an experience of it - really help you, and if you're in a more advanced version or a later sort of deeper version of this, or however you want to say it, they really help you to reflect on what's going on in your consciousness because you're not that self-reflective!

And so when someone's asking you a question and you have to answer it, then your brain kicks in, or whatever kicks in, and you reflect on that question and you answer that question, and in the process of doing that your own knowledge about your own states of consciousness expand. And so they kind of keep these – it seems like a lot of them, not every one of them - but it seems many of them have developed this pattern where they keep people around them that are peppering them with really good, advanced questions on the consciousness from the experience side.

And then they also keep these people around them ... and I think a lot of people wonder because these [other people they keep around them] are often highly political, stuck in their mind, sometimes they can create a lot of organizational problems, stuff like that – but they provide this value of this additional level of self-reflexivity, from that direction, for these people.

And so I started basically being that same person. I had talked across all these different traditions to all these different people about this perspective that wasn't 'awareness' or 'God' or any of the terms ... 'emptiness' or any of the terms that are normally asked or used, and people started to heavily refer me to each other because they're like, "You've got to sit down with this guy, you'll realize a lot more about yourself by the time he's done ... by the time you kick him out of your living room 12 hours later!"

Rick: Yeah, well you know the best way to learn is to teach. And to be a good teacher you really have to be able to speak to the level of consciousnesses of the listeners, so to speak. It's like the saying in India, when the mangoes are ripe, the branches bend down so the people can pick them easily. So you know, if you're speaking at this level and people are sort of at this level, never the twain shall meet, especially if you don't have techniques or methods for people to get to the level of experience you're describing.

So a good teacher as I observed it, can swing across a wide spectrum of levels of experience and address ... and can on a dime shift from one level to the other in order to address any questioner at their level of relevancy, at their level of experience. And in doing so it cultures *them*, as you were just saying, it enlivens all these different facets in their own experience, in their own personality, and makes them a much more comprehensive person, not only in terms of being able to teach, but also in terms of their own actual *experience* – it integrates their experience into all strata of creation, all strata of experience.

Jeffery: Exactly, and one of the things that it accidentally did for us is it led to that taxonomy of different categories of experience. I was trying to sort people for fMRI and EEG work and stuff, and so I was asking them these cognitive science questions that nobody had really asked them before.

And I think most of the researchers if not all of the researchers that came before me, they would sit down with these people and they would do interviews with them and they would sort of let these folks get away with talking about this the way they wanted to talk about it, and I would only do that for the first half hour or so, maybe the first hour.

Rick: Just to warm them up.

Jeffery: And then I would be peppering them with these cognitive science-based questions and it had the somewhat unintended – not somewhat - but the unintended consequence of leveling the playing field across these different experiences, because now I didn't have to have a precise definition of 'spaciousness,' or have a precise definition of the certain aspects of the Divine because basically, our model doesn't deal with *any* of that!

Our model deals with change in cognition, affect, perception, and memory, and it seems to have gotten to a sort of core across these different traditions, and one that usually isn't written up or understood. I stopped a lot of that descriptive research at the point where I was sitting down with people and there wasn't new information coming out, and I wasn't running up against other traditions' maps.

I wasn't like sitting down with some Theravada Buddhist teacher and having the Theravada Buddhist teacher, for instance, say, "What you're talking about with your levels and locations, that makes no sense to me at all ..." – no, they were like, "Yeah, we have this level and it's like what you're talking about there." But all the traditions talk about it from their own spiritual language and I'm talking about the sort of stuff that they never even thought to care about - with the cognition, and emotional stuff, and perception stuff, and memory changes and things like that. So that was *really* interesting, I mean just really interesting.

Rick: In a way though, it sounds like you're talking about symptomatic stuff that can be observed or measured from the outside – cognition and memory and the several things you mentioned -and you kind of brushed off the Divine or the kind of things that are not outwardly observable but that could be very profound and meaningful for the person experiencing them. And if we're really going to talk about even many levels beyond the 4 that you primarily focus on, which we haven't yet defined, but if we're really going to talk about that then there can be all *kinds* of things that modern scientific methodologies would be incapable of measuring, but that would be the real meat of the person's life, of their experience, you know, the really meaningful stuff.

Jeffery: I think that's very well put. And as you said earlier when you basically correctly defined our current focus, initially it was 'who are the happiest people,' and then, 'okay, are those people crazy?' and then it was, 'how can you get there? What's going on with their brains?' and what not, and now I believe that this is a very positive thing.

I don't think that everybody should be forced to experience this, but I do think that people who *want* to experience it shouldn't have it be a total crapshoot, that maybe they'll spend their

whole lives doing something and never get there. And so now, for us, it's a question of 'how do you make this safely and reliably, and sort of as quickly as you can, available?'

Rick: Yeah, and without all the hoopla. That's another point I want to throw in here, and that is that I think if people had a better understanding of what it is we're actually talking about, what it is you actually might experience in the name of enlightenment, and a better understanding of what techniques are effective, it could circumvent all kinds of crazy cult-like wierdo stuff that people spend their entire life and fortunes on, you know? And we don't have to name names; they make the news fairly regularly. So I think it's important in that respect.

Jeffery: Yeah, absolutely, and so I think that you're right, in terms of what is most meaningful to people in their experience, that's of course what they ask about, what they write their books about, what they come on BATGAP and talk about, and we cut out all that. But one of the benefits of cutting out all of that is that you get to stuff that's measurable from a scientific perspective.

And I don't know that I would call something a 'symptom' and something else 'not a symptom;' it's tough to know what is and isn't a symptom

Rick: By 'symptom' I meant objectively measurable, with some sort of instrument.

Jeffery: Yeah, so what we learned is that those things that we can measure are helpful as both classification systems to help people understand where they're at, and how to deal with life in a practical sense from where they're at, which is very useful as you know from endless interviews and hearing lots of peoples' adjustment stories and all of that.

That's *really* important knowledge for people because once you're there, you're kind of just at the beginning of an endless process. And so how that process unfolds in the first couple of years versus the first 7 or so years, there are these cycles ... and it's kind of helpful to have an understanding of that landscape. And that I think is where a lot of the stuff that we work on provides a lot of insight. It doesn't have a dog in the fight, so to speak, about the Divine or about whatever, but it is practical; we think it's very, very practical.

And so it is practical in terms of helping people get there – at least it seems like at this point, from our experiments. And we know also from other experiments that it's practical in helping people adjust to it once they do get there, and to sort of optimize their modern life and make the right decisions.

And one of the things I see a lot in spiritual teachers is – and not just spiritual teachers but nondual psychotherapists and anybody who is into this, even spiritual atheists like Sam Harris or whoever – is this notion of push the pedal to the metal. And I find that most people have an understanding of only some of the classifications that shook out in our research, and so maybe they'll have 2 or 3 of the classifications that they consider valid, maybe they have only one of the classifications that they consider "valid enlightenment" or "valid Nonduality" or whatever else, but they almost always have this sense where they're trying to be like, "Push the pedal to

the metal, go as far as you can... like, that's what this is about!" And we have a *completely* different view of that.

You've talked to so many people that you maybe have the same view like, I don't have this 'push the pedal to the metal' thing. Like if you've got a house and a mortgage and a complicated job and young children and whatever else, maybe there are more appropriate forms of this for you and your life at this particular moment, than other ones that may be pushing the pedal to the metal for you. And these may not be really optimal for your own life and for the people who are depending on you to raise them in the best way possible, if they are your children.

Rick: Yeah. I think some of the more mature spiritual traditions recognize that and advocate performing your dharma and doing what is possible and practical for you without leaving your dependents in the lurch, you know? I mean rearrange your eggs, sure, but keep sitting on them at the same time.

Jeffery: Yeah, I wish more traditions were; I don't see that across a lot of traditions, in the Hindu tradition especially.

Rick: Well they're pretty good at it.

Jeffery: ... the stages of life and all that.

Rick: Yeah, and you have a long view of it too. It's not like enlightenment or bust in the next 10 years; it's more like, "You're going to be at this game for a while so take it a step at a time."

Jeffery: Exactly, yeah, exactly. But it seems that as more of that stuff gets translated into the West, that is lost, and people who are going to workshops here aren't necessarily attracted to a message of, "Well, after you retire ...," I mean, they want it now, right?

Rick: Yeah, and that can sell it short, I mean there's no need to wait until after you retire; you and I have been engaged in this sort of thing while living very active lives. And if you wait until after you retire to start considering spirituality, which some in India have taken that philosophy, then you basically are missing out on something. I didn't want to say 'wasting your life,' which sounds a little harsh, but it can be a lifelong endeavor in the midst of doing the other things that life involves.

Jeffery: Yeah, totally.

Rick: As we go along here we're going to narrow in on a couple of things, one is how you actually define these levels that you're defining, and also what the practical steps are for people to experience them.

I'll tell you one objection that I've already heard from people is that the *Finder's Course*, which is the course that you devised to help people move into these higher levels, gives the impression that something akin to enlightenment or profound realization can happen pretty quickly and

easily. And people are saying, “Really? You can just spend a few months and begin to experience what Buddhist monks or really dedicated practitioners might have spent decades trying to attain? Aren’t you kind of dumbing it down?” and so you know, that kind of objection.

So you don’t need to answer that bit right now but let’s as we move along the next few minutes, let’s talk about the stages of development as you define them, methods for experiencing them, and maybe also answering that doubt I just voiced.

Jeffery: Yeah, sure, I’ll start with that, absolutely. There are different populations that consume our research, and one of those populations are people that come from very specific religious and spiritual traditions who have absorbed certain beliefs around these types of ... what to me are basically psychological states in some sense, I mean I come at it from the psychology-neuroscience perspective.

We can debate that endlessly and you can’t get behind consciousness, right, I mean it’s just all showing up - I acknowledge all of that certainly, as well - but the tools that I use to research and understand this are pretty much psychological and neurological type tools, so that’s the framework that I usually talk from.

And I would say that we live in an amazing time. One of the interesting pieces of data in our data set is that starting somewhere around 1996, there seem to be a lot more people who are reporting transitions to this and experiencing this, than before that. If you woke up or transition to PNSE, or whatever phrase you want to use, in a persistent way not a temporary experience – I’m not an expert on temporary experience; it’s just not anything I’ve studied really.

Rick: ‘Ultra-spirituality,’ to use J.P. Sears’s term. You know J.P. with the red hair and the bandanna and the flip flops?

Jeffery: Yeah, I think I say him on ...

Rick: I just did him the other day. Yeah, so as we transition to ultra-spirituality ... yeah, go on.

Jeffery: Exactly! The interesting thing I think from our perspective is you have these *long* views, but you also have this interesting data point, where starting around 1996 it seems like a lot more people are having luck with this.

Rick: Let me just throw in a question there, which you’re probably going to answer anyway, and that is that it kind of coincides with the early emergence of the Internet and obviously it really picked up steam after that. So one question I’m often asked is, “Well, were these people out there anyway, we just didn’t know about them because they had no way of finding each other, or is there actually an epidemic that started to catch on around that time?”

Jeffery: Yeah, that’s a great question and I didn’t realize the Internet thing, in a way. That 1996 data point was just something that I would occasionally throw out there in a conversation or something, and even though I lived through the whole Internet thing, I remember when AOL

plugged into the Internet in 1993 – like I *totally* should have picked up on the Internet thing. Ultimately it was a conversation with somebody else that was like, “Wow, that’s about when the mainstream started to hit the Internet and you started to get the information explosion on the Internet,” and I was like, “Duh! Good point.”

And so I think that’s exactly right in terms of the Internet and it’s probably also correct that it allowed a lot more connectivity, a lot more people to share their experiences, so that’s also in the data and I agree with that. I agree with what you just said but there’s another *more* interesting data point in that data for me, and it’s that people who report transitions to PNSE after 1996 are much more likely to get there faster – much, much, much faster than people who reported transitions in 1976 or 1983 or whatever else; I mean, those people seemed like they were at it for *decades*.

Rick: Yeah, I’ll just throw in here that my sister is a fulltime TM teacher and I have other friends who are, and they often say that these days when they instruct people, the people start having experiences from day one that it took them decades to have, and in some cases *still* haven’t had. They’re feeling envious and sort of not let on that they haven’t experienced what their students are already experiencing.

And someone used the metaphor of a membrane, as if to get to the other side, so to speak, you have to go through the membrane. And the membrane used to be really thick and tough back in the days of the Buddha or whatever – you had to really be a superman to break through it – but these days it has become very thin and it is much more easily broken and a lot of people are breaking through.

Jeffery: It’s tough for me to know if it’s the Rupert Sheldrake 100<sup>th</sup> monkey, morphogenetic field sort of thing, or part that and part something else. Because there’s a flipside to this and that is that it also made available, for the first time *ever*, a lot more advice and a lot more methods. If you were stuck in the middle Ages in medieval Christianity, you pretty much just had a couple of methods.

And we know from our research, if you think back to earlier in the interview where I say, a lot of people have tried the same methods and they’re not all reporting that same thing worked for them; it seems there’s a matching up process. So if you’re stuck in middle ages Christianity with just a couple of methods and you’re not in the 8% or so of the population that those methods are going to work for, you’re kind of screwed.

And so I think another thing that happened after 1996 for us, or whenever - just speaking from a data standpoint about ‘after 1996’ – is that you start to have many, many more methods accessible. We forget this, but I lived most of my life limited by the information capacity of my local library! I mean that was it, that was the sum total of the knowledge in your world effectively, was what your library could get.

If you had access to a great library ... if you get Harvard's library and they could get you anything, you were awesomely information-rich. If you grew up in Peoria, Illinois, where I spent some time – was born – and you have a dinky little library, by comparison, you were *very* information-poor, and *now* it's a completely different story.

So I think it's also that people can get a much greater diversity of advice, they can get exposed to a lot more methods and have a much better chance of hacking their way around and finding the methods that work for them. So I don't know what part of it is sort of Sheldrake-morphogenetic field type idea, and what part of it is just this incredible access to information that probably didn't exist and started to exist by 1996.

Rick: Yeah, and it may be both things going on, that there are several different factors that are simultaneously moving forward.

Jeffery: We had a research associate go to Burma, I didn't go to Burma myself – I went to a lot of places myself, but I didn't go to Burma – and one of the things that she learned during her research in Burma was when she met these very, very old people – old monks and nuns and stuff like that. And she was very surprised the first time she had a conversation with them; with one of the old nuns. And the old nun was like, "You know, 50 years ago people used to come to the monastery and if they didn't" – this is a Theravada monastery – "and if they didn't have their stream entry event or first pass or whatever else in a week, we started to really pay attention to them because we thought, this is someone who needs more help. And if they hadn't done it by the end of a couple of weeks, we were starting to get a little suspect that they were hiding out from the law."

And there apparently have been times in these traditions ... and the same nun – although she did talk to other people besides this one nun; she wasn't the only data point, but she was surprised from this very first conversation that she had about this - and the same nun says, "You know, now people come and it's like they'll probably leave without having had *any* experience, or maybe they'll come and stay for months and maybe they'll have a little experience. There's been some sort of change."

And she thought it related to people being much more distracted, having their consciousness and their attention much more fragmented because TV came in. There's just been a change in how people process information that she attributed it to.

Rick: Well that serves to contradict what we were saying a minute ago, which is that people seem to be having breakthroughs more readily. So why is that?

Jeffery: Yeah, yeah. Because it suggests that even traditions or areas of the world, like Theravada Buddhism in x-country, that maybe some people thought in that, "Oh, it's going to take you forever," but then in these monasteries in Burma people were – and others have written about this ... Dan Ingram I know put this in his book ... which I can't think of the name right now but it's available from his website.

And so I think that there's this notion that in the West, somehow, we've absorbed the traditions, for whatever reason, and the aspects of the beliefs of these traditions that say that this stuff should take a really long time, but that's not necessarily the case when you're embedding yourself in research situations in some of these traditions, when in fact, they think it should move much faster. And I have other examples like this, I'm just picking this one example.

And then you have people like Dan Ingram, he's a pretty good example, and Kenneth Folk who started *Dharma Overground and Underground* – and I can't keep all that straight in terms of who did which one of them and when they split apart and all of that – but they've worked really hard to try to provide resources and advice to people, mostly from a Theravada standpoint but not exclusively, and their view is that you can wake up quick and you shouldn't be dilly dallying around with this. They say, "Come here to our forums and let us help you get there quick."

*Liberation Unleashed* I think is another good example. So we're starting to see this sort of sneak back in, and I only come to it through data and it's not stories from monks and nuns like the one I told a minute ago in Burma, it's that I would really puzzle over why is it that when you're doing interviews in Fairfield, for instance, why is it that you can sit down with one person and literally, while the orange was being placed on the altar or whatever during the TM initiation ceremony, they transitioned right *there*, and then you talk to somebody else and 50 years later, of diligent daily practice with the Siddha Method and whatever else, something led to their transition, and then everything in-between?

Rick: Yeah, I think it's really important to define what you mean by 'transition' though. I mean, when I learned to meditate, I dropped like a rock – very deep and profound experience from day one. But I would consider myself to be still transitioning, because in my experience so far there is no end to the unfoldment and refinement. And I'm a little suspicious of a lot of people who say that, "Oh, I awakened, or "I'm liberation unleashed – they told me I'm liberated now."

Jeffery: You get the certificate!

Rick: Yeah, there's this sort of tendency to on the one hand mistake intellectual understanding for realization, and also to just be a little unclear about ... I mean, I interviewed a guy one time and he said, "There's not an inch of difference or daylight between me and Ramana Maharishi" – in other words, I've realized the essential unity of life ... he realized that he was having the same experience he (Ramana) had. But I suspect that if he were to magically step into Ramana Maharishi's sandals and see the world through his eyes, he would be flabbergasted by the contrast between what he was experiencing and what Ramana was experiencing.

And I'm not saying that to make it sound like true enlightenment is something forever beyond our reach and we're just going to spend the rest of our lives chasing the dangling carrot and all; I think there's a balance between appreciating how utterly profound it can be and not selling ourselves short in terms of what we actually *are* experiencing - giving ourselves credit for the degree to which we have realized it.

Jeffery: I think another place where you see that is with like John Wheeler, for instance.

Rick: Oh, what about him?

Jeffery: John Wheeler ... been in a neo-Advaita tradition, and he had his transition with Sailor Bob down in Australia, but he had a sense that like there must be more to this thing. Even though it was a profound transition, even though he was able to recognize that he was where people had said he should be ... from all of his previous studies, he was still like, "There must be more to this."

And it was interesting because he told me that basically spent his vacations for years, trying to track down the original devotees that were still alive in India, of Nisargadatta. And Nisargadatta's books were not written by Nisargadatta but by his disciples, so it is all a little bit translated through these different peoples' consciousness, and he could see that there were these occasional phrases that didn't make sense, that seemed to point to something different than what was being presented as Nisargadatta's ideas

And eventually, after 10 years or something crazy, he finally found one of these core Indian disciples. And he's sitting in this guy's living room in one of his vacations to India – he was a tech writer from Silicon Valley ... for a day job – and he asked, "What does Nisargadatta really mean?" And the guy was like, "Well what do *you* think Nisargadatta really meant?"

And so he felt like he had this transition by that time and that he pieced together enough of Nisargadatta's little fragments that were scattered throughout these texts - were kind of disembodied in the texts, in essence - and he said, "This is what I think is being pointed to but it is completely different than what everyone I know in America and in the West thinks he meant." And the guy was like, "Yeah, that's exactly it; that was completely his teachings."

And once he realized he was talking to somebody who understood, he opened the door to him talking to other people who were in India and were disciples of him (Nisargadatta). And so yeah, I think there is always that. It's fascinating how even in situations where there is consensus around somebody's body of work, you can still have that consensus be missing a whole deeper level associated with that. I think that's always a risk.

Rick: Yeah, and at the risk of sounding sacrilegious, I would venture to guess that Nisargadatta himself had a next arise, and a next arise, that there is really no end to it.

Jeffery: No, there doesn't seem to be, right? I put it in the psychology-neuroscience language because it's my thing, and to me it's just that your brain is a dynamical system and so it is always changing. Whatever happens in the context – and we can talk about some of that if you like, but I think your listeners are probably not *that* interested in the neuroscience side of it, given all the other stuff we can talk about – but when you think about the changes ... you go through these changes and rewiring in your brain, you're kind of pointing your brain in a different direction and it's going to keep unfolding, and it's going to keep changing, and it's going to keep deepening.

You're nudging a dynamical system in a new path and it's not like not become dynamical all of a sudden; it's going to stay dynamical and head on in *that* direction! Just like it was heading in the direction of your ego or whatever, and trying to make sure you had the best car in the neighborhood or whatever it was before that.

Rick: Now I'm really glad you said that because probably most people are familiar with the term 'neuroplasticity,' that the brain changes, undergoes changes. And probably most people are familiar with or could easily understand the notion that major states of consciousness are correlated with significant differences in the way the brain and nervous system functions. So when we're awake or sleep or dreaming, those 3 states are distinguishable from one another not only in terms of our subjective experience, but in terms of brain waves and other things that scientists can measure.

And you would probably agree that these higher states of consciousness that saints and sages and mystics have been experiencing are so significantly different *subjectively*, that they must be significantly different physiologically. And so that begs the question of how quick can a brain change? Can you actually shift to the subjective and physiological state that some great sage experienced 2,000 years ago in a matter of months without totally frying your circuitry? Is human physiology even capable of shifting that quickly? Or do you more just get tastes and flavors of it and it might take decades to really mature into the identical experience? And decades because, again, the brain isn't going to change on a dime; it's going to take a while.

Jeffery: There is this really popular class at Harvard called 'Positive Psychology,' which I think was the only class to ever have more students in it than economics, because so many people, even poetry majors at Harvard, want to become venture capitalists and get rich, so everybody takes economics!

Rick: Yeah, so they could just write poetry all the time and not have to worry about it.

Jeffery: Right, but pretty much everybody else takes economics. And so there's this *Positive Psychology* class that just came out of the blue and was this *hugely* popular class and just stunned everybody. I don't think everybody realized how miserable everybody else was, you know, except for the health sciences who would occasionally write something in *The Crimson*, which was the newspaper online, saying something like, "We have the highest antidepressant use imaginable, here."

And so it turns out it's an amazing class – I think I happened to catch the last one. The main professor, Tal, had left, and his graduate student who had just gotten his PhD – Tal Ben Shahar, who has since gone on to become a major figure in the happiness space – was teaching the course.

And I remember this was addressed really eloquently by Tal in that class. And what he basically said is ... he likened it to post traumatic stress disorder, and I can't remember the opposite phrase that he had for that. But at one point in his academic research he became interested in

this notion that when you're in a really super crazy stressful situation, like some people have PTSD. And as you know, PTSD is a huge, persistent, very deeply wired thing in the brain, I mean it destroys lives!

The V.A. and the government, they spend *enormous* amounts of research money trying to figure out anything that they can do - and they don't have anything that's effective - that can help people shake off their PTSD. In fact, it's a few of the places that if you want to do meditation research you can get a lot of money to do your meditation research. If you study PTSD or you study addiction, you can study meditation in a mainstream academy, but far beyond that it's hard to find money for it.

And Tal had learned that people that were going through these types of situations also went through the exact opposite experience, where instead of it being this post "traumatic" experience, it was like a post "incredible well-being" type of experience that seemed *as* deeply wired. And again, I can't remember ... he had a phrase for it but I can't remember the phrase that he used; that was a long time ago and it was like one week in class.

But I never forgot that because I was seeing the same thing by that point in research interviews. Some people would spend 50 years meditating in some specific tradition to get to x, y, or z, and another person would have done nothing and it seemed to have just kind of come on them out of the blue, or they had tried and done a series of practices for 2 weeks, a year, or whatever else and it just *bam* – it just hit them.

Rick: Yeah, there's an esoteric explanation for that: past lives. It's like we didn't just start out in this life with a tabula rasa; we've been going at this for a long time and some people are born very close to enlightenment, other people have long shlog to go through before they're going to get to that point.

Jeffery: Right, and I mean, Peter Fenwick and Pim Van Lommel and all the people who do that kind of research – UVA guys and all of that – I think there's a lot of really interesting stuff on death and post-death stuff. But the thing that I think is neat about ... just to borrow the example from Tal, is that it really shows that there are these precedents out there for rapid, immediate, deep, persistent, hard-to-get-rid-of reorganization in your brain, that can be studied neurologically, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

And so I think that it shows that that capacity is absolutely there, and people that make those kind of ... and maybe we can talk about the locations, I know you want to get to that. So maybe you are in location 4 for instance, which is just one of our classifications which is kind of a far classification, maybe you're in location 4 and maybe you just *jumped* right into location 4. And I know there are people that you have interviewed on the show that have done that, you mentioned one of them earlier – Gary Webber talks about his jump straight into location 4 and he says that he has progressed beyond that.

And so there is a deepening. And there's a guy who ... I don't think it's possible to know more about Ramana Maharishi than Gary Weber, I mean he freakin' learned Sanskrit ... I mean he *really* .. he had a PhD in chemical engineering and something from Penn, he has a brilliant first class mind, and he *really* applied that mind on the spiritual path.

And so I think you have to say, if he says he got to x, he's really well-studied and learned and experienced, and has had a lot of awesome teachers, and has done everything he can over *decades*. It's hard to dissuade, it's hard to say, "No, you didn't get to x."

Rick: Oh, I'm not saying he didn't

Jeffery: Right, he is one of those people who is a good example of someone who is uber qualified on the self-diagnosis on the state of consciousness. We have an advantage, I have an advantage, when I sit down with someone like Gary Webber I have a question bank. I have a series of questions that we don't make public, that you don't know the right answer to and that aren't published anywhere; you don't find them in any tradition - they are cognition, affect, perception, and memory.

You either tell me the same thing that a lot of other people have told me to fit into one of these classifications or you don't. And you can't have learned it in a book because I've been very careful not to talk about most of that, not to write most of that up, because I don't want you to be able to fool me! And so that's how I get to data validity when I sit down with someone like Gary, but I also accept that he can get to that validity internally on his own, just from his decades of crazy obsessive learning about it.

Rick: Yeah, the one point I would throw in is that I think if a person is sincere, they don't want to fool themselves either. It's like I'd rather air on the side of considering myself less enlightened than I may possibly be rather than more, because if you're sincere about this you want the real McCoy, you're not going to settle for some concept or some mood or anything else; you want the genuine article. So there's no harm in being a little skeptical about even one's own experience, which is not to say wallow in doubt because doubt can be a sea-anchor on your progress, but to just be scientific and realistic about it.

Jeffery: And that's another change I think we're seeing in this whole landscape. There was ... let me think of a good example. Okay, so if you think about someone like Bernadette Roberts, who is maybe one of the greatest Christian contemplatives who is alive, she followed a very specific path to what is really the end of the Christian mystical tradition – as far as you can go in the Christian mystical tradition, which we would put in location 3 in our classification system, and I promise we'll get to these locations.

But then after a period of time, something happened and she fell off the end of location 3 into location 4. And location 4 as we'll talk about, is *completely* different than location 3. And she was *lost* for a period of ... I mean, there were no books, there were no writings, there was nobody who came before her - if they transitioned to location 4 - that she could find who had

any map to help her out. So she really thought, if you were to talk to her at end of location 3, just before the transition to location 4, she would have sworn up and down and sideways and backwards that she had hit it, that this was as far as you could go, that this was maximum union with the Divine, the whole bit.

And then she just has this massive, and you could even say traumatic, event of a transition to location 4, and she then has to spend decades, in essence, contextualizing it. Rather than saying, "Okay, let's forget about Jesus, and let's forget about Mary, and let's forget about the Catholic tradition and all of that," she keeps her intense Catholic dogmatism – she is an *extremely* dogmatic conservative Catholic – and she somehow shoehorns the location 4 experience *into* the symbol set and the dogma of Catholicism, of conservative Catholicism.

And so if you would have talked to her when she was in location 3 she would have said, "God's love is always there," and that type of thing, but if you say to her in location 4, "What about God's love," she would say, "God's love is still always there."

"Okay, but you don't experience and emotion in location 4, right?"

"No, no, I don't experience any emotions."

"Okay, but you just said God's *love* is still there, that's an emotion isn't it? So what do you mean by God's love?"

And she would gesture down to her lower abdomen and say, "Well there's this force that I feel that is constantly coming from here," and she pushes out with her hands. And that is how she has redefined God's love, to her it is this persistent energetic feeling that is coming from her lower abdomen, because it is always there I guess, like God's love was always there through the previous location she experienced.

And so you would ask, "Well how would you have defined it before? Is that how you would have described it?" And she would say, "Oh no, it was the Divine, Love ..."

Rick: Yeah, what you just said reminds me of a useful metaphor which is, if you're going up a building to higher and higher floors, at each floor you get up to if you look out the window you see what you saw at the lower floors, but you also see more. And so you could say, "Yeah, I see what I saw. I can understand from the 4<sup>th</sup> floor perspective and now I'm at the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and have a wider perspective, and the 4<sup>th</sup> floor is contained within that."

Before you respond to that, someone has sent in a question which enables us to segue into what we want to talk about. Ann-Marie Fitzgerald from Corral de Tierra, California asks: "As per Jeffery's research and book, for those of us who hadn't read the book, could you please define the 4 states he talks about and the techniques/practices to achieve each state?" But let's not take the entire rest of the interview to do that because there are a lot of other things we can do also, but let's give us an overview of that.

Jeffery: Totally, yeah, and just to finish that last point real quick – it seems like, I think, that Bernadette would have been burnt at the stake a couple of hundred years ago for suggesting location 4.

Rick: Oh yeah. You and I would have had mobs of flaming torches at the door by this point of the interview!

Jeffery: Right, totally, I would have been at a religious college because there were only religious colleges, the German research model hadn't come in yet, and I would have been like, "Yes, *of course* the Earth is the center of the universe. Please don't hurt me."

But now we live in this time where there's the ability to have the smear. And so some people still have a very dogmatic viewpoint and they could have been the Bernadette that never went beyond location 3. And they will doggedly say to you, "No, location 3 is where it's at" – however they call it, whatever they call it – "location 3 is where it's at, it's the only correct one, none of the other ones are correct ones."

Ordinarily those people have only experienced one location - they landed right in location 3, they've stayed and they've deepened in location 3. They felt a sense of deepening, they felt a sense of unfolding, but it's been within the context of location 3. You come to them with location 4 and they're like, "That sounds like you're messed up."

But with so much shared experience now, it's harder to hold those dogmatic viewpoints over time. And you're seeing people have these odd transitions, like Bernadette who thought she was done cooking, and she falls off the end of her tradition into this whole landscape that's really, no kidding, traumatic for her ... you could just read her books and see the trauma of sorting through.

Rick: It's an occupational benefit of what you and I are doing; it tends to ferret out any pockets of dogmatism we may have in us, talking to this vast array of people.

Jeffery: Yeah, it's great, I love that. Okay, so let me just quickly go over some stuff around locations. So we basically had data clusters – it's all emergent data.

Rick: Try to do this without sounding too geeky!

Jeffery: I don't know if I can't be geeky, I'll try.

Rick: You are drinking "Geek be gone," right? That's what's in that bottle?

Jeffery: Right, I better take another swig of it. I'm not sure I can drink enough it though. Okay, so if you think about sitting down with someone and doing an interview with them for instance, and collecting data from them off the gold standard measures and stuff like that, and you're sitting there asking them about – and most people had a distinct transition, in our earlier research, which was very rough, but not *that* rough, but it's not down to the decimal point.

So 70% of people, roughly, had some sort of instantaneous shift onto what we would call the PNSE Continuum. Maybe they landed in location 1, maybe 2, maybe 3, maybe 4 ... I never met anyone who went beyond 4 and so that's why we focus a lot on the first 4.

Rick: And since there's a 'P' in that phrase – persistent – you're saying that 70% of the people shifted into something which they didn't lose?

Jeffery: Didn't go away, right. And then 30% of people had a slower transition, a kind of fading into it, which could have been a couple of days or a day, or it could have been *months* even, where clearly there were some changes going on in them and then eventually at some point in that process they realize, "Oh hey, wait a minute, I've had a transition."

If you think about in your own interviews Tom Traynor, for instance, he was standing in the middle of the street in Fairfield, Iowa or something, and having a conversation about PNSE and it dawned on him that he was experiencing what he was talking about. But it wasn't like he'd had some epiphany moment a week before where he was like, "Wow, I've made it! There's this transition that I've experience!" No, it was like having this conversation we're having and saying, "Wait a minute, I'm describing my own experience, even though I'm using this 3<sup>rd</sup>-person story."

And so that's what I mean by transition; at some point, it just *dawns* on people that they got there and it seems as though they just *phased* into it, they don't have some moment that they can tell you about, that is the before and after where everything changed.

Rick: Yeah, sneaks up like a thief in the night.

Jeffery: Yeah, so it's like 30-70. So we have a lot of people ...

Rick: But just before we lose that point, I mean sure, when I learned to meditate I underwent a big shift, and if at any time I chose to look at my experience, it was definitely better than it had been before I learned. And at any point I could look within myself and say to myself, "Yeah, I feel a lot better than I used to – profoundly so." But I wouldn't ascribe any ultimate significance to it or wouldn't identify it as any sort of ultimate attainment; it's just a degree of improvement, that *is* persistent, but better. So go on from there.

Jeffery: Yeah, you're not going to get any opinion from me about an ultimate state, because this seems to me to be a continuum that deepens ad infinitum.

Rick: Yeah, and another thing is that you can cruise along like that and everything is going well, and then you get cancer, or you get in a car accident, or your child dies, or something really serious happens and boom – it's gone ... or the Russians capture you and start injecting you with weird drugs or whatever. So the question is: how stable is it and under what circumstances could it actually be lost?

Maharishi used to talk about ... well, not even bringing *him* into it, but there have been plenty of enlightened “gurus” who have come from the East and kind of fell flat on their faces in the West when surrounded by all the temptations that they never encountered before.

Jeffery: Right, totally. And we can talk a little bit if you want, at some point, about how people do lose it. Because I think there is a sense, oftentimes when people have a transition and it stays for a week, a month, 3 months, even years, people have this sense that there’s nothing that’s going to happen to cause them to lose this.

And I think one of the things that people who are interested in this should keep in mind is that this is something very precious, or I wouldn’t have spent 11 years of my life on it so far if I didn’t think this was very precious; we could all do a lot of other stuff with our time and our lives. And so this is what I think is a very significant way to help people.

And so when I encounter that attitude - which is another one of those pervasive, dogmatic attitudes in some corners of this - that once you have this transition, assuming it’s been around for a while, it’s just going to stay and you don’t really have to support it and whatever else. And we saw that that was *absolutely not* the case. You *better* cherish it! The smart people were the people who make lifestyle changes around it and especially who reduce stress around it.

And I think there are even some controversial things, like we noticed a propensity towards *divorce*, for instance, and towards marital separation in this population. And when we would ask about that it was almost always the same story, except for location 4. For location 4 it was sometimes that the person’s spouse, you know, if you don’t have emotion you can’t love somebody and sometimes it is really important for the other person to feel loved, if they stop feeling loved maybe they leave you kind of thing.

So that’s a location 4 type thing, but *down* from location 4 – 3 to 1 – lots of times what would happen, especially in location 1 - to a lesser extent some of the other locations, also a little in location 2 – is you know, nobody knows how to push your buttons like your parents and your spouse.

Rick: You know what Ram Dass said, don’t you?

Jeffery: Right, exactly.

Rick: “If you think you’re enlightened, go spend a week with your parents.”

Jeffery: Exactly, *the* most famous phrase, which I think that people don’t take as seriously as they maybe could. And so one of the things that people notice is they have this persistent transition and there is clearly a significant change, but there’s still a lot of psychological conditioning in the body – what Eckhart Tolle might call the ‘pain body’ – to be worked out; it hasn’t been extinguished yet.

Behaviorism is a class of psychology, it is basically a form of psychology, it is the second wave or so of psychology, an early wave of psychology that is still *completely* relevant today. Pavlov's dog and the bell and all of that – you and I and everybody else are *bundles* of a *huge* amount of conditioning we've picked up over the course of our lives.

And so a lot of conditioning *does* burn off when we transition into some of those things, but certainly not all of it, and a lot of deep stuff stays there and works its way out over what we think is about a 7-year cycle, in our data.

Rick: And a lot of it starts to really decondition or unstress, if you will, once there has *been* an awakening. It's like the awakening serves as a solvent or something for a lot of this entrenched conditioning.

Jeffery: Totally, but if you're in a tough relationship and you go home every night and you're spouse is just living to push your buttons, those types of people ... it's not very long, even when there are young children involved and whatever else, it's not very long before they're like, "Wait a minute, he or she goes to the mall, I'm in this amazing state. He or she comes home from the mall and starts pushing my buttons endlessly, and it suppresses that a little bit. I don't *want* that to be suppressed!"

And so some people stick with it and they allow that deconditioning process and then they're happy that they stuck with it; they're often glad that they stuck with it. Eventually that deconditioning goes away, it extinguishes just like anything does with behaviorism principles within psychology, other people are like, "I'm getting my own place, see ya." And they're happy with their decision as well.

The funny thing is that both of the research groups that you talk to, whichever of the categories they fall into, are both fine with the decision that they made, but that's a good example of that type of thing.

Rick: I just want to throw something in here because a few times you have alluded to level 4 as being characterized by no emotions. And if that is true, by however you define level 4, I would not consider that to be the end of a person's development, because I can think of people whom I consider to be *way* beyond level 4 who very much have emotions.

Take somebody like Amma and you see joy and sadness and anger, and all sorts of emotions that she experiences very vividly. And yet you get the sense while you're watching her that her predominant reality is *way* beyond that, that those are like waves on the ocean and there is this vast rock-solid reality that is not emotional in its nature. So in that sense you can say that *she* doesn't experience emotions but emotions are still happening.

Jeffery: Let me address that just a little bit, from 2 different perspectives, from our data anyway, for whatever it's worth. The first is that in location 4, people can *seem* very emotional - I've had people storm out of restaurants on me.

Rick: Without having paid the bill, right? You're stuck with it!

Jeffery: I don't remember. I try to always pay the bill anyway – I'm just super grateful that they were even giving me any of their time, I still am - but good question. In one case they drove and I was a little worried that they were just going to drive away and leave me.

And so there can be outbursts of anger, there can be all the expressions that you're talking about can *look* like they're there from the outside, but then when you ask them, "It looks like you experience this, or you were experiencing that, or whatever else," they basically say, "Yeah, I wasn't experiencing that. I could see that expressing in the body, I could see that expressing in the environment, I was watching that expression, but I wasn't experiencing it."

And so there is that answer that you get relatively commonly in location 4, and then after location 4 there is a series of locations, 5 through roughly 9. And I am pretty confident that in levels 5 through 9 – and I caveat that a little by saying "roughly," but in my own mind I think 5 through 9 when I think of that category, if you will, of locations – there is something interesting that happens after location 4.

Location 4 is a very special place in a lot of ways. Some people get to location 4 and it sounds a lot like what Ramana Maharishi or somebody would talk about, and so they would be like, "Okay, this is it, I'm at the end, I'm staying here," and some people get there and it's just so alien. For example, if you were Bernadette Roberts and you're in location 3 and you're maximally merged with the Divine, then you're in location 4 and there's no Divine, you're like, "Whoa!"

And so it can feel very alien and people can choose to go back. And there's a way that they've all developed that I've heard again and again and again, to claw your way out of location 4 and back to location 3, basically.

Rick: I just want to interject that Maharishi talked about this, he said that you can be in God-consciousness enjoying the Divine, then you start shifting into the next state of consciousness and you feel like you're losing that Divine experience. And it's like, "Oh my God, what is this?" you know, there's this discomfort. And he said that at that point a good teacher is critical, because a teacher can reassure you that something good is happening and give you the confidence and dispel that doubt.

Jeffery: I think *absolutely*, and of course it's so hard to find that; it's so hard to find location 4 people, especially if you don't have a classification system and you're just sort of feeling around in the dark and you're not sure what comes next. So yeah, a great system like that with an incredible teacher ... it's just such a huge impact, it's *hugely* important to people.

And I have this tremendous respect for what was done inside of the whole TM movement. It's incredible all the research that's been done – I mean Fred Travis and so many people that came before him there ... just *outstanding*, I just love their research - and the structures of helping

people to understand and contextualize where they're at ... that's just one of those great systems that's out there.

Rick: Let's pull a few threads together here because I have sidetracked you a few times. So we were talking about the first 4 locations and you were just about to say something about locations 5 through 9. And we don't need to go into detail, nitty gritty criteria of each location – and they can get more of that in your book – but we're just trying to give a general overview of this territory. So continue on with that in mind.

Jeffery: So what's interesting is that I think of 4 primarily as a staging ground for what's beyond it; it's just so different from what comes before it and it's much more like what can come after it. And so what I've noticed is that there are two paths. I was talking to John Yates not long ago, maybe a month ago, Culadasa? I don't think you've interviewed him ...

Rick: No, I don't think I know him.

Jeffery: But he's got a new very influential book out, which the name of which I can't think of at the moment, but if you just look up Culadasa it will just pop up.

Rick: How do you spell that?

Jeffery: C-u-l-a-d-a-s-a. But he's a former neuroscientist – I'll probably call him 'John,' because I think of him as the neuroscientist John Yates who has also attained, for sure; he really gets a lot of the continuum. And what people really love about his book is that he is able to clearly classify these different locations, not that different from what we did – he slices them a little thinner to help people make more incremental progress. And he is direct and says, "Oh, if you're experiencing this then you need to do *this* method right now," so people really appreciate the precision of what to do specifically at each stage.

Anyway, so as you can tell I'm just a general advocate for this space and for people's work ... there's so much amazing stuff out there. So beyond location 4, one of the things that we were talking about is for John, beyond location 4 for *him* has brought a return to emotion, and a return to the experience of emotion, and a very human service-oriented perspective, very much like a service to humanity perspective, and that's one of the tracks that people seem to go down in later locations in terms of how they experience locations.

Rick: Yeah, kind of like the ox-herding guy in the Zen pictures, riding back into town to help the people, with a big smile on his face.

Jeffery: Yeah, so it is sort of that type of idea, though that could also be a location 3 guy. Then on the flipside there's a continuation of that same sort of emotionless direction, and it seems like the people that take that – well I'll describe location 4 a little bit later or next ... I'll describe locations really quickly next. So when I do that, if people think about location 4 and they think about just cranking that up even more, *that* path into locations beyond seems to be that path that goes further, like beyond location 9.

And it seems like in locations 5 through 9 there are two different ways that you can experience them. I've often wondered if that relates to the Bodhisattva idea of the you know, "I'm going to take the Bodhisattva path," "I'm going to take the John Yates path," "I'm going to take the service to ...," or "I'm *not* going to take that path, I'm not going to pledge to stick around and help everybody achieve PNSE. I'm going to go as far as I possibly can until I'm turning into a ball of light and there's rainbows in the sky above my Tibetan monastery," or whatever the thing is.

And so I think that's a really interesting distinction and I don't get it a lot, so I want to put it in this interview because I haven't gotten a lot of chance to talk about that in other places. And sometimes people will communicate with me and they'll be like, "I don't feel like I'm just an extension of location 4 in the later locations. I remember location 4, I went beyond it, here's what happened, here's what happened after that, here's what happened after that," and this all fits our data. And they're confused because maybe they think that one of these two paths was the one that they should have hit and they hit the opposite one.

So I just wanted to interject that, especially since you were bringing up emotion, because there *is* a path in 5 through 9 that is a return, in many ways, to that emotion and in which you *can* experience emotion again. And then there's a path where you just don't, and you don't ever again, and that seems to be the one where you're gone to the far, far reaches that very, very few people ever reach.

Rick: But it's hard to say where those people are going to end up, ultimately. Your model doesn't precisely match the TM model, but for the sake of illustrating this point we're talking about, there is a phase in that model where one has realized the Self but there's not much heart and everything is kind of flat and emotionless, and then later on the heart begins to blossom. And I think that might also correspond with the chakras, in terms of there could be an awakening or enlivenment of one chakra but not the heart chakra, and so on.

It's interesting to consider these different models and maps and see how they match up. I don't know, just the whole ... the profound devotion that some of the great sages seem to have displayed, like Anandamayi Ma and Rama Krishna and others. And if we *presume* that they have gone quite far through all the possible levels, it really doesn't seem like emotionlessness is characteristic of those higher levels of attainment, at least not in terms of the overt appearance of the person. Maybe on some deep, deep level within them which is very, even, predominant, they're not experiencing a lot of emotion, but boy they sure seem to be on the surface.

Jeffery: Yeah, I hear you. I would say the people who really - in my experience - the people who really go even beyond location 9, just as an example, are not accessible.

Rick: To whom?

Jeffery: They are very, very hard to ... but the ones that we've researched have uniformly reached out to *us*. I'd never heard of them before, they're usually embedded in a tradition that has some sort of map that accommodates this in its more esoteric forms and gets you there, so they're usually

living in very supported situations, or they don't have to do anything except go on 20-year retreats and stuff like that.

And so it's interesting because often those traditions have pretty rigorous models like ... you're here, you have this many disciples or people that you teach, and there is almost like a business structure to it, and these guys are exempted from all of these structures. And it's almost like a problem in a sense for some of those traditions, because those people are so inaccessible that they're not even accessible to learn from, in most cases.

And it's been surprising to us because I don't even know *how* most of those people found us, especially early in the research. We would just get a ping out of the blue and we would find ourselves going to some completely remote place, in most cases ... I mean that whole part of this is sort of surreal.

Rick: Riff on that though ... hold that thought for just a second, because such people may be outliers and in a more enlightened society, which we may be heading toward, they may be much more common. It's just a matter of what's the norm and where the main bellwether bulge of the bell-curve is, you know?

Jeffery: For sure. It's hard to imagine society functioning in any way when we're all a bunch of people that were in that place, I mean they were just ...

Rick: Yeah, it's hardly functioning now, so we couldn't do worse.

Jeffery: That's true! But we can all still eat, we can all still enjoy our food, at least ... I'm not sure that would be entirely true.

Rick: Well that precipitates a point, and I don't want to sidetrack you but you seem to associate dysfunctionality with higher states of consciousness at a certain point, and there maybe something to that. I mentioned Anandamayi Ma - they had to basically spoon-feed her sometimes, or Neem Karoli Baba - if they didn't keep an eye on him, he'd drop his blanket and wander off into the forest.

But I don't know ... maybe that's true of the very highest levels of consciousness, but there seem to people in pretty high states who were pretty competent, you know - Christ, Shankara, others who really kept an eye on things, in some cases even contemporary examples - people like Amma, running big organizations. So maybe it depends upon one's personal makeup and proclivities, maybe it depends upon the degree to which one has integrated these higher states. And some never do, they just kind of marinate in some sublime state and never bother to integrate it with the world or just somehow aren't cosmically destined to?

Jeffery: Yeah, I do sense that ... when I was young I worked in sports broadcasting - in my teens really, almost most of my teens and a little bit into my early 20s - until I had done it all and was a little bored with it and moved on. So I remember the difference of back then - just to date me - the Chicago Bulls were the world champions again and again and again and again, in basketball. And

you would go and you would set up an arena with all the broadcast stuff and then you would just sit around and wait for the thing to start, and then you tear it down.

And lots of times while you were sitting around and waiting, you were just sitting in the stands – because you had to keep an eye on the gear; you didn't want \$150,000 camera and lenses walking off, or anything like that – and so I got to play sports with a lot of world-class athletes.

Rick: Michael Jordan, people like that?

Jeffery: Yeah, right, and it's like, until you try to play basketball against Michael Jordan, you just really cannot appreciate the degree to which you will never be Michael Jordan! Practice ... but there's *nothing* that I could have ever done to become Michael Jordan. I've played plenty of basketball, I'm 6'3" or 6'4" so I'm ... I've played plenty of basketball, I could *never* have *possibly*...

There was literally one time where we – we would usually clear off the court when they got on, but there was this one time when that wasn't the case – they took one half the court and let us stay on the other half. And at one point - he's a good example – he actually came down and he shot some baskets with us.

And we had little teams set up, so I was on a team with a few people and there was another team with a few people, and that team was a person short. So we said, "Why don't you play on their team?" Here he is, the world's greatest basketball player ... "Why don't you play on *that* team?" right; the gall of it in hindsight ... but we were all a little arrogant back then. And so he's like, "Why don't I just play against all of you?"

Rick: Yeah, that's what I thought you were going to say.

Jeffery: And he just scored at will, you know, we didn't get a single point! It was humiliating! The security people, and the cleaning people in the stands getting the place ready, they just stopped and were openly laughing at us, it was just crazy. And I kind of think of that with some these systems and some of these people that can go to these people that can go to these really far, or what *seem* like these really far locations.

It's like there are only a handful, probably, of Michael Jordans that are out there. Fortunately some of them are lucky enough to live in the right area of the world or something, that they can be embedded in a system that can nurture that and can become a world champion basketball player, or a world champion consciousness developer, or whatever else, but I don't think there are that many Michael Jordans.

You can get *really* good, I mean you can win NBA championships and you can be really, really accomplished, but you're not going to be Michael Jordan. So I kind of have that view of those people.

Rick: Yeah, and in the spiritual realm you can be pretty enlightened but you're not going to be Jesus Christ or whoever. There's a certain dharma you have to fulfill, a certain nervous system you were born into and so on, and we're not all going to be spiritual superstars.

I don't think we're really going to do justice to all these stages and levels and whatnot in the time that's remaining, and I don't know if it's really necessary to. We have given a flavor that there are all these higher stages and states ...

Jeffery: I can go quick [over them].

Rick: Alright, real quick so we can get onto some other stuff before we run out of time.

Jeffery: They all have in common a change in what it feels like to be you, to some degree that's just about the only thing they have in common.

Rick: Say that one more time because your audio was breaking up a little bit as you were saying that.

Jeffery: The one thing that they all have in common across the continuum, is that there is an experience of a change in what it feels like to be you, what I call 'sense of self,' but beyond that they can vary significantly from one to the next.

So location 1 is what you might consider the lowest location – I don't use 'levels' because I don't necessarily want to imply a value hierarchy. I don't want people to think, "Oh, location 2 is better than location 1," or "Location 3 is better than location 2," or any of that. It can very much depend on what you're doing with your life at any given time, like we talked about earlier. You know, it's really not appropriate for me to be like a guy sitting in a cave or a cell in a monastery or whatever else, for decades, not coming out, coming out once every 10 or 15 years, or something.

Rick: Yeah, and in one of the chapters in your book you speak about zooming in and zooming out, and I like that metaphor. It's like, according to the needs of the situation you might focus on this and reside in this level and function there, at other times you don't need to; you can zoom out. And I would also add – I was thinking this when I was reading your book – you can culture the ability to be zoomed in and zoomed out at the same time and there's no conflict. You can be landing a 747 in a snowstorm and yet be cosmically expanded and aware.

Jeffery: Yeah, totally. So in location 1, when someone transitions or lands in location 1, I think the most significant bellwether - just to be really quick with these things and not get in too much detail – the most significant bellwether is really that for most of humanity there is a sense that something is wrong, it's just you have this sense like something is wrong. And if anyone out there thinks that they are not in PNSE and that they don't think something is wrong, I would say, "Do you have goals?" Because if you have goals it is probably because you think something is wrong! And so what is it that you are trying to fix or mend with the goals?

So there is this sense – and we can talk about it evolutionarily, psychologically, and all of that - but there is basically just this *sense* that you have that there's something that's not right.

Rick: But just to pick on you there ... you have goals, I have goals. You might want to do a new study, you might want to write a book, it doesn't mean something is wrong, it just means there's something you'd like to accomplish.

Jeffery: But if you don't ... I don't want to take up too much time on that. We can have a really good conversation around that and how it shows up in the different locations, so let's just for the most part say that I'm talking about this in the normal person's view.

Rick: Yeah, like, "I'll be empty and unhappy until I accomplish this goal; I can't live until I get the new Ferrari," or marry this person ...

Jeffery: Right, there's the sense that, "If I could only get X then I'd be happy." And you can get all the "Xs" in the world but somehow you never get the fulfillment for more than a little bit of time. So there's a fundamental discontentment.

Rick: ... which is temporarily assuaged by some little accomplishment.

Jeffery: Yeah, exactly, or major accomplishment.

Rick: Yeah, major, like winning the presidency or something.

Jeffery: I'm sure he's already over it!

Rick: Apparently so.

Jeffery: Now the question is: how do I make the U.N. into my company? So the interesting thing is that if there is a definition of the human condition, people just think, "Oh, that's just the human condition," or probably a key chunk of it, and that changes in location 1 – that sense goes away. There's a sense that everything is fine, and not just that, but there's a sense that everything is fine as it is, essentially.

You may still have a goal to buy a certain car because you had the goal a minute ago, before you transitioned into location 1; some of that conditioning stuff may not have burned off but at the end of the day, now if you don't get the car, it's not the end of the world like it was a minute ago.

And so that goes to a detachment, if you will, from certain forms of cognition and certain forms of thoughts and thinking, so there is a reduction in self-referential thought for most people. For a tiny percent of people there is a huge increase in self-referential thought, like their mind just gets full of thoughts, but the thoughts are not paid any attention to, it's just like a background sound that maybe someone can hear right now and they're ignoring the sound, but it's always there - when there's an increase in thoughts, that's sort of what it becomes for people.

But in most cases there is a significant reduction in self-referential thinking, which is thoughts about *you*, basically, and thoughts that relate in some way to you. So instead of thinking, “I have to go to the post office because that’s a chore I have to do ... I have to get something in the mail to somebody because I said I’d get it in the mail to them ... where am I going to park? ... What am I going to wear? ... Should I go at a certain time so that I meet such and such on the way because I like the way that person makes me feel?” – it’s just endless.

Our minds are almost entirely full of self-referential thoughts and when those start to decline and they lose their power, people say things like, “All my thoughts went away!” All their thoughts didn’t go away, they’re still functioning, but self-referential thinking has taken a hit.

Rick: All the unnecessary ones go away.

Jeffery: Right, if you want to think of it that way, yeah.

Rick: Yeah, mind becomes more efficient.

Jeffery: Yeah, totally, exactly, there’s a lot more space for stuff that matters more ... than whether or not Rick’s going to like the color of my shirt that I picked today, or whatever else I might have thought but just didn’t occur to me.

So there’s also a reduction in ... a rapid falling off of emotions as well, compared to what was the case before. And so on the emotional component, if somebody cuts you off in traffic you’re probably not following them for blocks, riding their bumper, or any of that anymore. You may still have a reaction ... maybe you’ll flip them off, but pretty much once that conditioning triggers and the neurochemistry of you - up to maybe 90 seconds, but maybe just milliseconds – fades in the body, it’s gone. You’re not hunting the guy down and showing him that ... “You hurt me and my baby and my car,” and whatever you thought otherwise.

And so then if you take that and you go into location 2, and location 1 is actually dual –not to get into dual and nondual stuff because we can take a lot of time on that – but location 1 is really sort of dual. I was talking to John Hagelin, who is a big TM spokesperson, he had a great slide in one of his presentations that he was showing me over dinner one time. And he had broken up the 4 major locations, levels in TM into first one being dual, second one being nondual, third one being dual, fourth one being nondual, which fits exactly with this – just in case I forget to say that later, that they are 4 locations as well.

And so location 1 is essentially where we’re still in a dualistic reality and you have a mix of positive and negative emotions, negative emotions are falling off more rapidly, you’re usually in a deconditioning process so your conditioning can trigger you more than it can in later locations, it can suppress the well-being a little bit more than it can in other locations but you bounce back, you’re very resilient.

Location 2, the mind continues to quiet, the self-referential thought continues to quiet, your experience becomes increasingly positive in terms of emotionality. And usually if you land right

in location 2 versus location 1, you have a lot more conditioning that burns off in that process of what I just think of as neural circuits being deactivated in the brain; “burning off” sounds a little whatever. But I think whatever the huge reorganization that’s taken place in your brain, it has shut some stuff off that used to trigger you because there’s just been this reorganization in your brain, it’s going in a different direction! But some stuff is still going to be there that triggers you, especially from spouses and parents, and possibly siblings.

And so you have a continuation of what you think about in location 1 ... there’s continued quieting of the mind and the self-referential stuff, there’s a continuing of the falling off more rapidly of negative emotions; you’ll experience negative emotions a lot less, now you’re bias much more toward the positive, and it’s a nondual location.

And in location 3, it’s sort of what we said earlier ... a good way to think about it is if you think about the end of the Christian mystical path – which is often described as and is mirrored in so many other traditions - many traditions consider location 3 to be the epitome of human experience. And so it is basically like a single emotion; it feels like you are experiencing a single emotion most of the time. That emotion has different facets to it, like a dispersonal or a Divine love, joy, compassion, that type of thing.

If you could live in a community of location 3 people ... you would *definitely* want to live in a location 3 community people. That would just be amazing because they are so wonderful, helpful and loving and caring, and all of that. Not a place that you necessarily want to run a company from because you’d just give away the store.

And so these locations, that’s why I call them ‘locations’ and not ‘levels’ – they’re good for some things, not good for others. I totally want to live around a bunch of location 3 people but I don’t want to invest my money in a company run by them. So if you think about location 3 you have this experience where mind quiets more. Your experience of the Divine doesn’t have to be there, you can also have a panpsychist experience, and so it can just feel like everything is conscious. You feel a sense of union or merger increasingly with that, which is where that duality sort of sneaks its way back in. It’s very subtle, the duality is very, very subtle but it’s there.

You don’t think about, “I am merging with that” if you are nondual, but there is this experience of merging with the Divine, merged with everything that’s conscious, and there’s a deepening that could occur in terms of that degree of merger and what not.

And then location 4 – basically it is all different. The last vestige of emotion, that last vestige falls away any sense of Divinity or panpsychism basically falls away. You had agency at these other locations, in different ways, that’s a complicated topic, but in location 4 you just swear that there’s no agency.

Rick: Meaning everything is running on automatic and you’re not the decider?

Jeffery: There is no decision ... I mean, you can't make a decision.

Rick: So George Bush definitely wasn't in that state, because he said he was the decider.

Jeffery: So there are changes that occur. It's a very different kind of state and people describe it as feeling very alien.

Rick: Yeah, until they get used to it.

Jeffery: Because it's funny, when you experience it ... I remember the first time I experienced it and it was really interesting - of course I have *all* of this knowledge about it, right, before I experienced it - and so it is fascinating to me. And I'm analyzing it and all of that a little, while I'm in it - I should say I'm watching my *brain* analyze it, I didn't really feel like I was doing anything - but I could feel my brain analyzing it.

But there was this sense that - people were coming to me and I was in a busy environment - people were coming to me and they were wanting to have these conversations, and I just *couldn't* have possibly been less interested in their conversations! And what it felt like I had heard described many times but I hadn't really understood it, is that there's only so much energy - I think of it again ... please excuse my psychology and neuroscience viewpoint on this - but I think of it as there only being so much energy available to your brain at any given time, and it takes an *enormous* amount of energy in our brain to process symbolic language. And that's of course how people are talking to you, they're not telepathically communicating with you, they're wanting to *talk* to you.

And you don't mind talking to people, like I could talk all day to you and it would be no big deal at all because we're not wasting our words on stuff that doesn't seem like ... well, it's just fine. But when someone is coming to you and they're just doing their normal social approval stuff or they're talking about the normal, mundane bullshit people often talk about just to maintain social relationships, you don't have a lot of tolerance for it.

And that's because you feel like, it's so much better when the energy is over *here*, being used for this experience, why would I want to drain it off to have *this* conversation? This is not valuable. And so that's roughly 1, 2, 3, 4.

Rick: Okay. A lot of times when I do these interviews and this is no exception, I wish we could sit and read the whole book together and then stop and discuss each point as we read it, but then it would take a week to do the interview and that's really not the point of an interview; it has to be a snapshot. And I do in fact have about 8 or 9 pages of notes here that I took while reading your book.

But in any case, we need to wrap it up and you haven't talked about the *Finders Course*, so why don't you take a couple of minutes, at most, to ... you've tried to distill all of this knowledge into a practical thing that people could do actually have these experiences and you call that the *Finders Course*, so why don't you explain just a little bit what that is.

Jeffery: Right, to me the *Finders Course* is an experiment, a crowd-source, crowd-funded experiment, because nobody really funds this stuff.

Rick: But people do pay for it if they take the course?

Jeffery: Exactly, that's what I mean by 'crowd-funded.' It is basically a way that we have been able to fund a lot of research in recent years, without me having to keep dipping into my bank account endlessly for another decade. Which has been really nice, I have to say, I'm *super* grateful for that! Because it's not like the National Institutes for Health is like, "Hey, that guy is studying PNSE, let's give him a few million dollars!" There's just no money for this, you know, unless you want to study addiction or PTSD or meditation, which is not my focus.

So to me it is an experiment. And basically the day came where ... and I had thought forever that we would solve this with technology, that literally ... like I have all these transformer technologies around here – this is a Brain Zapper.

Rick: I see it.

Jeffery: And this is ... you probably heard of the God Helmet, and stuff like that, and other neuro-feedback technologies. And so I thought technology would probably solve this, first and foremost, but when we got some of the early FMRI results back, the regions were too deep in the brain, you couldn't get to them with these surface-ee consumer technologies.

And I really was not happy with our data set at that point. I was very happy with the continuum and all of that, it was consistent and I was fine with all of that but I wanted to know, who were these people *before* their transition? Because if I say, "Hey Rick, who were you 3 years ago?" or "Who were you 30 years ago? Can you precisely describe for me who you were 30 years ago?" You can't possibly do that; I can't describe who I was last *week* probably.

And so we would always ask them, "What were you like *before*?" I knew that I couldn't trust that data except in very broad strokes, and I want the *data*, I want to know what changes *before* and *after*. And so we needed some way to do that and I thought we would do it with zapping or brain zappers or whatever, but then that didn't work out because of the deep regions of the brain.

Rick: Not only deep, but I think that what we're dealing with is so much more complex than a brain zapper. The brain is so sophisticated, we don't really understand what's going on. And there's a profound, we could say "Divine" intelligence orchestrating this universe that I think is moving everything along in an evolutionary way to higher and higher states of realization.

And we don't even fully understand what a single neuron is or exactly how it functions, that *that* profound intelligence can orchestrate and coordinate functioning of trillions of them, and it is doing what it needs to do, if we cooperate with it, to bring about the sorts of changes necessary in order for enlightenment to be realized. But some crude little device like a helmet is kind of a joke compared to what really needs to take place.

Jeffery: I just had a little faith that that intelligence could give us a helmet ☺ ... or whatever, would give us some tool that I could just push a button, you know? Just get humanity to a point where it would provide the button! But anyway, long story short, that's not going to happen soon.

And so I ignored so much of it; we collected too much data and we could only process so much of it, and a lot of it was with people ... and I wanted to collect everything I could. And one of the things that we asked on peoples' intake forms was: what worked for you?

So when I was clear that technology wasn't going to get us there, which was right around that 2009, 2010 timeframe, we went back and we looked at that question on peoples' intake documents for the research. And it turned out that there is only a relatively limited number of things that people answered, and so we started screwing around with them.

And so we basically got around to a certain sequence of them – some of them produced 'dark nights,' which are intense emotional periods which can last even for decades ... negative emotional periods - and so we had to spend a year or so engineering our way around the dark night problem with some of the methods.

And so anyway, what we wound up with was this cocktail that we felt we could ethically use in research and get approved by our [inaudible], and that had a certain 'before and after.' And originally, that worked on me, it worked in a onesie-tuosie kind of way on people, but we didn't know if it would work on groups, and so I didn't expect it to actually work on groups.

And one thing I think is important to realize about me is that I'm almost *always* wrong. Like all of the things I thought were going to be true turned out not to be true ... pretty much the opposite of that, and so it was the same with this. I set up the pilot experiment for the first group of people using the protocol – longitudinal data collection for two years and very little research resolution in the early part of the program. And then over the course of the 12 weeks of the first one – the protocol is like 17 weeks now, but back then it was like 12 or 14 weeks maybe – of the 6 people we took in, and we took in 6 because we took in the number that we thought if they all went crazy we could psychologically support, ethically.

There was no way of knowing what was going to happen, nobody had ever tried something like this before, and so it was all ethically driven, essentially. And so of those 6 people, one of them dropped out towards the end, so 5 of them completed it successfully. And *all* of them were reporting this transition to what I call now 'ongoing non-symbolic experience,' because persistent means you've been in it for more than a year, on an ongoing basis. And I had defined that term a long time ago so I needed a new term for these people, now that we were in the region of the research [with those] that hadn't been in it for a year, so I just called it 'ongoing non-symbolic experience,' so when you see 'ongoing' and 'persistent,' that's the difference.

Rick: Yeah, short-term, long-term.

Jeffery: And I didn't believe them. I mean these people, I really grilled them. They really had to sit through intense research interviews with me, because I personally couldn't believe that you could put people through a 12 or 14-week, or whatever it wound up being, protocol ... even though I'd seen it work on individual onesie-twosie basis in the previous year or year-and-a-half or so. I don't know, I just found it improbable and so I grilled ... I kind of in a way feel bad because I grilled those people so hard - they're very nice people of course, they were patient with me.

And so right away we wanted to run another one because we wanted to see ... and I was comfortable running more people through the second one. And so in subsequent Finders Courses we ran about 60 people through one and it had roughly the same effect. It wasn't 100% rate like the first one was, but it settled somewhere around 70- 73% of people report ongoing non-symbolic experience.

About 1% of people report absolutely nothing, and some of those people don't even have an increase in well-being! All of the positive psychology interventions were enforced, all of the stuff that was drawn from the earlier research and the protocol ... I mean, they don't even increase in well-being. And those people as you can imagine, as a scientist, are the most interesting ones to me.

And then the rest experience temporary versions of it – have a peak-experience or they might be in it for a week or something, but it doesn't become an ongoing thing for them. And some of the temporary people transition *after* the fact and get in touch with us, and some of the people who report ongoing non-symbolic experience were maybe in it for weeks and weeks in the course, the protocol, report falling [out of it after].

We didn't do ourselves any favors initially, we just kind of *stopped* and didn't provide people with any guidance after they were done with the protocol. And people would just sort of return to their old habit patterns and their lives, as we talked about earlier, you have got to treat this well.

Rick: Yeah. So now the course is not being taught by you anymore; it's being taught by something called the 'Willow Group,' and does *it* provide ongoing guidance?

Jeffery: We hired Willow to handle all the registration because you know, we're a lab, and I don't want to run a course. But the crowd-funding works out really, really well to get subjects and to get the thing to pay for itself.

Rick: And you're still going to be offering more *Finders Courses*?

Jeffery: We're doing one right now that uses stuff like *this*, it is the first time we're connecting the biometric data. So this headband goes on your head like this ...

Rick: Oh, cool.

Jeffery: And this is heart strap, you put it around your upper chest, right under your nipples. And this is a GSR device, and you stick these two electrodes (demonstrating) basically like this onto your fingertips.

Rick: So you get biofeedback on what's going on?

Jeffery: Yeah, it gives you a really accurate read on your sympathetic system. We didn't run a *Finders Course* for about a year because the psychological data was solid and we just didn't need any more of it. But then a mutual friend of ours, Deepak Chopra, he's been on me for a while about collecting more physiological data – and he really is a doctor, an M.D.

Rick: Oh yeah, an endocrinologist

Jeffery: And finally I thought, "Well, if there's enough of these consumer devices out there and there's a company called Neuromore that makes a pretty good app that can stitch them all together." So we ran an FC-9 about 4 months ago or so, we just started FC-10 on Saturday. [Audio cuts out for 3 seconds]

I assume we'll keep running them, I assume that we'll keep collecting data, but I can never promise that because for a whole year I didn't run one because we couldn't think of more data that we needed on it.

Rick: So let's say this: I could ask you a million questions about the *Finders Course*, I could spend another 4 hours bringing up points that I took note of when I was in your book, but that's not the point of an interview; the point of an interview has to be a bit of a snapshot.

So let's say we've given people enough of a taste, and you'll be writing a book, it'll be coming out pretty soon, you've got a website, there's a *Finders Course* website – I'll be linking to that stuff – and if people are intrigued by all this they can find out more. They can get your book, they can read your website, they can possibly enroll in the next *Finders Course*, if you offer one, and we'll call it a day, because I really love talking to you but we probably should wrap it up.

Jeffery: I don't know when the book will come out or if I will use it in the *Finders Course* – halfway through the *Finders Course*.

Rick: Yeah, it's in pretty good shape. I've just been reading it and enjoying it. I sent you an email with a bunch of typos that I found in it.

Jeffery: Awesome, thank you. And every time I run a *Finders Course* I ask people to find the typos, and people are *still* finding them ... it's crazy.

So the best place for information, for right now for *Finders Course* stuff, is at [www.finderscourse.com](http://www.finderscourse.com). They can get on that mailing list and they can get notified of later ones running. But the information, where they can really get the information is on the core center's website, which is at [www.nonsymbolic.org](http://www.nonsymbolic.org). And on the 'Publications' page there is this

summary paper, which is a little dated - location 1 is a little ... I would say location 1 a little differently now than I did in that paper – I just haven't updated it yet.

Rick: Okay, I'll be linking to all this stuff, you have tons of stuff.

Jeffery: Videos, interviews, data presentations from academic conferences where we dig into the minutiae of all this, and this and that. So that's the place, that's basically the place. And your interview is at the absolute top of it ... I've waited so long.

I just *knew* that you were going to deliver a great interview because of your perspective. It is very rare because ordinarily you're interviewing with people who don't know what the heck any of this is, so I'm going to stick *you* right at the top with Jeffrey Mishla who did a pretty good interview with me recently too.

Rick: Okay, well you were very patient and you actually never asked me for an interview, but I think we both sort of knew we were going to do one eventually. And I just felt like, "Alright, let's do it," and you were available and I appreciate your flexibility on doing it in a relatively short notice – not that you needed to prepare.

Jeffery: Well I appreciate all that you bring to it. You ask the good questions, you have the perspective – you don't know how valuable that is, or maybe you do, I hope you do. I hope you realize how much we all appreciate you.

Rick: Well thank you, I appreciate your appreciation. Oops! Infinite feedback loop (makes screeching sound) ☺ Alrighty, so let's wrap it up then. It's really been a joy talking to you and I'm sure I'll see you again soon, probably in October out at SAND, if not sooner. And as usual, I'll link to all the stuff on your various websites – I've already said that 3 times ... Irene is reminding me.

So let me just make a couple of general wrap-up points; one general wrap-up point, which is that if people would like to know more about *my* show, go to [www.batgap.com](http://www.batgap.com) B-A-T-G-A-P. You can subscribe to the YouTube channel and YouTube will remind you whenever a new interview is posted. Otherwise, go to [www.batgap.com](http://www.batgap.com) and there is an 'At A Glance' menu, which we put together last week that kind of summarizes everything that's on the site and links to it, so that would be a good place to start.

So thank you for listening or watching, and thank you Jeffery, and we'll see you next time everybody.

{BATGAP theme music plays}