

IT IS SEEN, BUT THERE'S NO ONE SEEING IT

Han van den Boogaard speaking with Tony Parsons

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All kinds of teachers in East and West claim to be speaking from the non-dual perspective. But in reality it's not a matter of perspective, because it's not about opinion, belief, judgement or experience. A teacher can only say what he is, and therefore what everybody else is.

Tony Parsons' way of expressing truth might very well be the most radical and consequential of all. However friendly, ordinary and approachable he is as a person, his teaching leaves no hope for the individual. Listening to his message, you are left with nothing to hold on to. Although his message stirs up controversy, more and more people start coming to his meetings. And nobody stays indifferent to what he hears as Tony speaks his no-mind.

In the meetings, one of the questions I keep getting is: "So what you're saying is that I can't do anything, and that I have no responsibility?". And I keep on repeating: no, I'm not saying you can't do anything, because that would imply that there's someone who can't do anything.

But the reality is: there is no one. That is something totally different.

Lots of so-called Advaita people just hate this message. They keep coming back to the argument that what I'm saying promotes laziness, that it's a terrible, awful thing to say. They don't comprehend what's basically, fundamentally being said, and that is that there is no choice, there is no free will. There is no one. They totally and utterly still believe in the reality of individual choice. For them to hear that there is no one....it's impossible for them to hear that. So they'll go on arguing in duality.

On the other hand: I know of people who have come once and seen it totally. Others come to the meetings a few times, and then the whole idea of individuality simply disappears. It falls apart.

Awakenings are happening all over the place at this time. And what people say is that when it happens, they realize that it's absolutely natural and ordinary. No big deal, in a sense. In another way, it's absolutely wonderful.

You make a distinction between awakening and liberation.

We become separate and take on the thought "I am a separate person" from a very early age. And at that moment of separation, seeking starts. We seek for that which we think we've lost. And so we grow up in a world where we're taught to endeavor and make our lives work, and then it is possible that we begin to look for something other than being successful in the world, and enlightenment is one of the things that we go for.

Enlightenment being another way of being successful.

Right. And then we usually go to a teacher that teaches us that there's still an individual with choice. Most teachings are like that. It's very rare to find a teaching like this one, that is so radical. For me, the seeker is there, seeking, and then comes a moment when there is no seeker, there is no time, there is just Oneness. And that is not seen by the seeker, but is simply seen by no one. That, to me, is awakening. And forever after that there's a totally different perception, but on a subtle level there's still a person, there's still a seeking going on, a wanting to know what has happened. The person comes back and wants to own what's just happened. He doesn't understand it. And so there's a period of integration of what happened, and the person wants to own that. People can stay in that for the rest of their lives. Or liberation can happen, which is the realization that the seeker who wants to own that is also Oneness. And when that is realized, it is suddenly seen by no one that there is only Oneness, and then it's all over.

In liberation there no longer is a sense of there being a separate individual. Liberation is the complete end of the sense of separation. But there's still a body-mind organism that has conditioned memories, and has responses and preferences. That's aliveness. That goes on.

Emotions still keep popping up.

Oh absolutely. Anything can happen. Nothing is denied. The difference between the liberated one, or rather: liberation, and individuality is that when an emotion like anger arises, it just arises for no one, but all the time there's an individual who thinks it's his anger; that happening to him, that he owns it. In individuality there's always an ownership of everything. In liberation there's no one that owns the anger, but still the anger can arise, as it did before for no one. In individuality the so-called person keeps thinking it's happening to him. In liberation it's simply anger, happening to no one.

Isn't there still a subtle duality present then, because on the one side there is ego-related anger, and on the other hand there's something witnessing this.

Well, that's how it feels, but in liberation there is no witness. That's over. In awakening there can be a witness, and even before awakening there can be a witness, but in liberation there isn't even something that is aware of manifestation. There is just being, whatever is.

And this is not comprehensible

No, it's a total mystery. And of course it goes against most teachings, which teach that in enlightenment there is no anger, there is no thinking.

This is ignorance. This is an idea of what perfection should look like. In liberation, nothing is denied.

Everything is perfect.

Everything is perfect, but it isn't happening to anyone any longer.

When you're a small child, there's also no one to whom things happen.

No, just being.

Do you think it's a natural and unavoidable development that a child grows into this illusion of being an individual?

Yes, I absolutely do. Oneness wants to play the game of being an individual, looking for something called 'not being an individual'. Oneness wants to play the game. Oneness is certainly fascinated by not being One.

Isn't this also a cultural thing, because in our society we teach the child that it's separate? If there was a society where a child wasn't taught that it is an individual, what would happen?

I don't know. It would be fascinating. So let's say there *was* a society or a group of people somewhere who wouldn't teach that. Well, then there would just be liberation.

Wouldn't that be very impractical?

It would be just the same, except that there wouldn't be anyone living it. There wouldn't be anybody there to whom it would be happening.

Do you agree that awakening can be compared to looking at those specially prepared pictures, where you only see little lines and dots, and they say: you have to look behind those dots. I tried many times, and then suddenly a beautiful three-dimensional picture emerged.

Yes. And the strange thing is: this seeing seems to have something to do with relaxing, with softening the eyes, and then suddenly something else emerges. Now, the problem with that is that the mind will say: 'Ah, so that is how awakening happens. All I have to do is relax', you know, and then you're back in the wheel, back in the treadmill again, because it is another way of becoming. It is certainly a very good example of it: seeing something that is there that you think you can't see.

And once you've seen it, you will be seeing it again.

Then it's all over, yes.

But there is no way of working towards seeing it.

It's not possible for the dream-seeker to ever awake. There's no such thing as an enlightened person. No *person* can awake. When there is no person, then there is that which always is.

People tend to look for personal enlightenment, though.

Yes. Well, the mind often drafts a picture of what enlightenment would be like. This is a very personal thing. We all have a picture of what we think we would be like if we were enlightened. That has no relevance to awakening at all. But it's a very tempting picture. In a way, it's even better than winning the lottery. It's like: 'Wow, now I'm a superstar'.

And all problems will be over.

Yes, and everybody will adore me (laughing)! It's a picture the mind likes. Of course, you often see examples of this in the world....people who play they're enlightened or put out this message. And they do become glorified in a way.

The world we live in is so interesting, it's so sweet and fascinating. Because somebody says: 'I am this' or 'I am that', and then the people in the audience also want to become that. They seek something special there, they also want to be special. It's a wonderful drug. So it gets bigger and bigger and bigger. It's a mutual agreement to be special.

The disciple makes the guru, and the guru makes the disciple.

Yes, absolutely. It's a dream. And of course the most important thing for the guru is to offer the people something to do. That is the drug. If he can think of something he can give them to do, he's going to get an ever growing audience.

It's different when people start coming to someone and they ask him to say something.

Yes, of course, in liberation there isn't really anybody saying anything.

There isn't anyone there.

I get a lot of people who never come again, because they don't want to hear 'There is no one, and there's nothing that can be done'. That's not attractive to them. It leaves no hope. People want to hear that there *is* hope, and that they *can* do something.

But the point is, you see, that in liberation there is no one there to communicate things, there is no agenda, there is no motive, there's just what's happening. So there is no motivation to capture people, or to make people believe this or that. It's just someone standing there, responding and speaking, without any idea of going anywhere. Because, as far as the speaker...as far as liberation is concerned, the audience is already liberated. So basically, it's not a teaching, it's a sharing of something already known, a remembering. It is already totally known, but not by the mind. There are people who think they come to get something, and then they suddenly recognize that it's actually about losing something, and there's a sort of recognition of something already known, not by them, but by One. Oneness knows there is only Oneness, but it pretends it doesn't. So people come and pretend that they aren't One.

It's Oneness, speaking to itself.

Yes, absolutely. In that way it's very lovely. There isn't anybody there trying to do anything. I never know what I'm going to say. Tony Parsons, the character, is amazed at what comes out.

As I see it, you continually point out to people that their questions are stated from a wrong perspective, that is: from the perspective of being an individual.

There is nothing wrong or right, of course. But it is an ignorance. The questions come out of the idea, the absolute idea, that there is an individual.

Sometimes you don't answer questions directly. You just try to point out the very fact of their ignorance.

No one is trying anything. But what in fact is happening is that there is a continual description or revealing of the reality that all there is - is This. When there are questions about reincarnation, I say that there is no one to reincarnate. And then I say: 'So what is happening right now, what are you feeling right now?' 'Oh, I feel hot'. 'Okay, so hot is This. This is what's happening. There is something that is aware of that heat, something that isn't you that is aware of that heat'. It's continually bringing people back to the realization that there is no one, and all there is, is aliveness. All there is, is what seems to be happening. It's really a dissolution of the idea of separation.

It makes me think of the way Vipassana meditation works, because that's also focusing on whatever you feel, or think, or experience.

The problem one has with formal meditation is that one can be sitting in the kitchen, having a cup of coffee, and then one thinks: 'Okay, now I'm going to meditate and be in This'. So what one is actually saying is that drinking a cup of coffee can't be This, it's got to be upstairs....That's the mind-set. In fact, the reality is that everybody in the world is meditating.

You often speak about therapy as an intelligent way to make life easier.

Making the prison more comfortable. Yes, well, obviously people over many hundreds of years have been in fear, or whatever, and they've turned to religion, basically, to comfort them. You know, religion is the opium of the people. And somehow, that is beginning to fall apart in this apparent world. But I think a lot of people are turning to therapy to try and make themselves feel more comfortable in their separation.

As far as I'm concerned, therapy is the most intelligent thing around, but only to make the prison more comfortable. It has no bearing on awakening, because it's working on an apparent individual who's still separate. So you can work on anger with someone, and it may be that for a while he could think that he's dealing with that anger, but underneath all of that anger or jealousy or neurosis or longing, there is one thing that isn't dealt with in therapy, and that is separation. So in therapy you're always trying to plug one hole by pulling something out of another hole.

You have a beautiful expression for this: it's just moving the furniture around.

Yes, (laughing). People say to me: 'Oh, you're saying that meditation and therapy are rubbish'. But I'm not saying that. Meditation and therapy are what they are, they are just things that are happening. What I'm really saying is that there's no one ever to have chosen anything. There's no one who can choose to meditate or go to therapy.

Yes, it happens or it doesn't happen. Still, to some people it can be soothing or helpful.

Oh yes. It's so intelligent. But it's all still in the dream.

Yes, but some people have nightmares for dreams. So if the nightmare changes in a more comfortable dream....

Why not make the dream better? And anyway, you can't do anything about it. It just happens.

Still, I find that more and more therapists try to integrate the non-dual perspective into their therapy. Do you think that's possible?

That depends. What I'm finding is that there's a lot of books around called Advaita books, there's a lot of talk about non-duality. I've been to America recently, and there are hundreds of different processes going on, and therapists and teachers who claim to be non-dual. Non-dual has become the fashionable word. In America you go out and buy a non-dual hamburger nowadays, (laughing)! It has absolutely no connection to non-duality. These people speak in a non-dual way and say: there is only Oneness, and then they start saying: in the meantime, you have to do something like meditating in order to find It's so contradictory.

How do people in America react to your talks?

Oh, some are aghast. There's frustration, anger, and a sort of laughter and hysteria that happens around this continuous saying that there is no one, there is nothing. "But what about this", and "what about...", and "what can I do about...", you know. It's just wonderful to listen to.

Our society is so very much into doing.

Certainly, when you tell some people that there is no one, and that there is no choice....that's the last thing they want to hear. Well, in all fairness, it's the last thing anyone wants to hear. What we fear most is our own absence. But there's nothing to fear. This is all there is. But for most people there is this fear of losing themselves. They are afraid of losing control.

What touched me deeply the last time I attended a meeting of yours, was the silence between the answers you gave and the next question.

In the meetings we talk together, and at some level that's a description of something, it points to something beyond expression. But the most powerful thing in the room is the energy of boundlessness.

That's why the idea of having a silent retreat is so ridiculous. It's artificial, because silence just naturally arises. Even in speaking these words now, this is only silence speaking”.