

A Weekend with Tony Parsons

Dublin, Ireland May 25-27, 2007

“This is all there is. There is no other”. Thus began a three day Tony Parsons meeting in Dublin, Ireland. What then followed was a sustained frontal assault on the idea that you are someone and can do something to make your life work. Tony then opened it up for questions which consisted mostly of people coming up with objections to this message in one form or another. There would be question after question, followed by Tony breaking apart the question to reveal the assumption of personal identity hidden within. The confrontation didn't let up until the very end of the talk.

I attended three talks of this same format spread over three days. The entire experience felt like a continual pointing out of the nonexistence of the separate individual self. Tony functions as a living koan and even though he has an easy going personality, there was always an intense, confrontational energy in the room with nowhere for the mind to rest. There is nothing more sacred to the human personality than the sense of being a separate person with a life that has meaning. Parsons exposes this idea as being only a belief combined with an energetic contraction and not the truth of what actually is. He reminded me of Rose in that he treaded on sacred ground which made many uncomfortable and a few angry. The only person I've met who had as powerful a presence as Tony was Mr. Rose. They were both equally confrontational, but with messages that are almost directly opposed. I've found both messages to be equally challenging to live when taken head on.

Tony is an energetic, lively and charismatic and yet ordinary looking 73 year old with a great sense of humor who doesn't stand on ceremony or pretense. From what I gathered from his books, listening to his talks and from talking with others, he started early on the spiritual path because of his experiences as child growing up during World War II. His seeking ended when he had an experience leading to the loss of self which he calls liberation at 21. He later was a bus driver, used car salesman, and successful builder. He didn't start talking publicly about his experience until the 1990's partly because he said it can take years to process the experience and speak about it with clarity. He has been married for many years to his wife Claire, who reportedly is also in the same liberated state and he has four children.

The two statements “There is no one” and “All There is, is This” sum up Parson's entire teaching. He states that once you begin to see through the foolishness of the idea that there's anything to seek or anybody that can do it, then another possibility arises. His method consists of challenging people's thinking on their assumptions about their identity and helping them become open to the sense that there is no one here. It seems to be effective. From what I can tell there are at least twelve people who regularly went to his meetings and have been liberated into the state of no-self. A few of them whose writings you can read on the Internet are Nathan Gill, Jan Kerschott, and Leo Hartung. I believe this high success rate has occurred around him because there is a readiness to

accept his message by the time a seeker goes to hear him. This state of mind probably doesn't happen to most people until years of letting go of lesser beliefs has occurred.

My main point of contention with Tony's point of view is that even though he says there is no one and therefore no one who can do anything, he himself was an intense seeker when it happened for him and all of the liberated people associated with Tony who are communicators (people who communicate the message to others) were serious seekers before it happened. All practiced forms of self-inquiry, including Tony himself. He doesn't give useful pointers since he says there is no one who seeks, but perhaps if you're on the edge of the abyss of nothingness, meeting him may be the exact thing you need for the final push.

Below are a few statements he made during the meetings which gives a brief taste of his message:

“We live in constant grace.”

“This is complete absurdity to the mind.”

“The biggest addiction by far is being someone – meing instead of being.”

“This place is the worst place for a seeker to be since it might lead to the death of the seeker. It's of no benefit to you. It's of benefit to no one.”

“Being a seeker is itself one of the biggest trips of all. It's better than being a rock star since it'll last for eternity.”

“A complete understanding of what is being said here, utter clarity, is not liberation. All it takes is an emotional event to stop the clarity because there is still someone who can take ownership.”

“The mind does not like the absolute simplicity of this.”

“You didn't choose to come here.”

“This message is totally uncompromising. There is nothing for sale here.”

“There is simply life.”

“It is utterly simple.”

“This is the most dangerous place for a seeker to be!”

“You're given nothing here!”

“I'm not saying there is nothing to do. I'm saying there is no one here.”

“After awakening, ambitions can still arise, goals can still arise. Before awakening, the whole idea of a goal is that somehow it will fulfill you. Afterwards it is known that it won't. Then that goal is just another part of the play. There is a joy in running faster or further, or in painting a better painting, because there is no neurotic drive to fill a sense of loss. It is spontaneous, unconditional love, spontaneously acting.”

“The great avoidance of presence is the idea that what you are looking for is over there. It can't be this. It isn't just this!”

“The most important thing happening here is what is happening energetically and not what is being communicated.”

To a practicing psychotherapist - “After liberation happens to someone, they could no longer be a psychotherapist since there is no way confusion could arise out of clarity!”

“We've put on the guise of being adults which is a pretend game. This is more about the simplicity of being a child.”

To a person who said that the ideas being discussed were abstract and complicated - “Not at all. It's utterly simple - there is no one and this is all there is!”

I had been practicing Douglas Harding's headless meditation of staying in the first person perspective fairly intensely before going to see Tony and I fell into that state often during the talks. Something about the energy in the room and the message of the nonexistence of self seemed to make the headless state occur spontaneously. From this perspective, Tony is just another appearance that arises and passes away, just like everything else, but it was a most entertaining appearance indeed! He gives you a strong sense of the complete freedom that results from being no one at all.