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Intimacy of the moment - Rupert Spira, The Netherlands

Guest: Rupert Spira

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LILOU: Hello my juicy co-creators! Lilou here. I'm in, not Amsterdam, this is my next destination actually tonight. For now, I'm in Deurne, in the [??] with you Rupert. Thank you.

RUPERT: Hi Lilou, very nice to be with you.

LILOU: Thank you for having the time to do this interview.

RUPERT: My pleasure.

LILOU: In this busy conference here happening in Deurne this year, the Non-Duality Conference. You're, I would really love to speak about your story because you're a ceramic artist and you were this artist and now you travel the world talking of non-duality.

RUPERT: I used to be a ceramic artist before I started travelling the world speaking of non-duality, yes.

LILOU: Yeah.

RUPERT: Yes.

LILOU: And so, let's start with what is, how do you define non-duality? Let's start there so that we're on the same page. What is it?

RUPERT: Non-duality is the experiential understanding that our experience is not essentially divided into 2 parts. One part in here, the self, the separate self that knows. And another part out there, the object, the person, the world that is known. This is the normal way we think. I, in here, know or perceive you or it out there and this is the way our experience is normally defined in our culture, these 2 essential ingredients, the inside self and the outside world. So non-duality, the phrase non-duality refers to the, not just the understanding, but the experience that experiences not divided into these 2 parts, it is one whole, not made of 2 separated parts – the self and another, a me and a you.



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LILOU: So as you were, when you were an artist, I guess you had those moments and I guess artists have those moments of total communion and union. Is that what we're talking about here?

RUPERT: Yes. Most artists are either looking for the essential nature of experience and are trained to express it and explore it in their work or they have had a deep realization of this and they are trying to create something that evokes this experience in a way that to create an object or a piece of music or a painting or something that evokes this experience or precipitates this experience in people's actual lives. Cezanne is the great example of this. He said this wonderful thing, he was standing in front of a mountain and he said, -

LILOU: In the south of France?

RUPERT: In the south of France, [??], he said, 'everything vanishes, falls apart, doesn't it? Nature is always the same and yet nothing in her that appears to us lasts. Our art must render the thrill of her permanence along with elements, the appearance of all had changes. It must give us the taste of nature's eternity.' So he is standing in front of this mountain, this rock solid, the most enduring solid concrete object in nature that's been here for millions of years and he says everything vanishes, falls apart, what did he mean 'everything vanishes, falls apart'? he meant all I know of the mountain is perception. This perception, I close my eyes, the perception vanishes. I turn my head, the perception vanishes, then another perception, it vanishes. All we know of the world are perceptions, sights, sounds, tastes, textures and smells, that's it. That's all we know of the world. So he was saying everything vanishes, the apparently solid world is not solid, it falls apart, in our actual experience, it comes and goes. But then he says he kind of contradicts himself, nature is always the same and yet nothing that appears to us lasts. What's he mean? Nothing that appears lasts and yet nature is always the same. And it's true. When we walk in nature, when we're not just in nature, but our experience, there is something that is always the same. What is that? Everything that appears disappears and yet there is something that runs through it, what is that? And then he says, art must render the thrill of her permanence, the thrill of, the delight, it must deliver the delight that which runs throughout nature, that which is always the same. It must give us the thrill of her permanence along with her elements, the appearance of all her changes. So what he's saying is the artist must take, in his case it was canvas, in a musician's case it's sounds, notes, an artist takes all these elements and arranges them in such a way as to evoke in our actual experience, not just to give us the idea, but to evoke in our actual experience what is always the same. He says, it must give us the taste of nature's eternity, that which is ever present, not eternity, he didn't mean lasting forever, he meant that which is eternity present now, our art must give us the taste of nature's eternity.

LILOU: Can we say that through creating art, we're thinking of all those aspects? Isn't it happening naturally through being in the present moment, all of that coexist?



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RUPERT: I'm just articulating what for the most part is not being rationalized and certainly the artist may or may not rationalize this before or after the creativity. But in the moment, you're not thinking this, Cezanne was thinking this, this is him reflecting on his work and an artist or a sports person for instance is not thinking that there's no time for thinking. If you're totally, as an artist, if your, any musician knows this or a painter or a sculptor or a writer or a poet, as well as a sports plan, there's no time for thought in the moment and as an artist, you're trying to create something that evokes not what seems to be there, not the appearances, but what is truly the substance, the reality of our experience. And that reality, whatever our experience is really made of, it doesn't come and go, it wasn't born, it's not evolving and it's not going to disappear. And the reality, the essential substance of what we experience out there is identical to our own reality. What I essentially am is what it essentially is. In other words, it is not self and other, we share one being, one presence, one reality. The common name for this experience is love. That's what we mean when we fall in love, even in conventional language, when you fall in love or when you love someone, you feel that you somehow merge with them, you melt into each other, that is the dissolution of being a separate self here, I, the separate well-defined self here and you, the separate well-defined self there, that the experience of love is the dissolution of these 2 entities, the realization of our shared being. So, in relation to another, we call it love, in other words, love is the discovery that others are not really others. Exactly the same discover in relation to objects is called beauty, when we're walking in nature or when we listen to a piece of music or we see a work of art, the experience of beauty is the dissolution of the sense of me and it. In other words, love is the discovery, the revelation that others are not others, beauty is the revelation of the discovery that objects are not really objects, they're not out there made of stuff called dead in that matter. They are all we know of the so-called world is the knowing of it and that knowing of it is totally alive that there is no dead matter in our experience. Dead matter is a concept that the Greeks invented a few thousand years ago, but scientists are still looking for it that nobody's ever found this stuff called dead matter in the universe. All we know is experience and the experience is totally alive with the knowing of it. So that is what non-duality, I'm articulating something that is not necessary to articulate, it's a living experience and it's what is known as love, it's what is known as beauty, it's what is known as happiness.

LILOU: Because we can see there's also really beautiful places, some people that are most spiritually in tuned with, we talk about energies and auras and fields, somebody even that is, just from the beauty perspective, we could sense that, it just awakens something in us. Sometimes it's not always seen at this, what I'm trying to say is that it's not always experienced or seen in the same way by the eyes of the observer, but the effect of beauty and that harmony definitely affects us and we can interpret it in many different forms because some people see the invisible and some others don't. but the effect is very calming, centering, loving.



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RUPERT: It's true. If you, for instance, you go into a building, you walk into a building and the building has been designed from this feeling understanding that I speak of, whether the architect or the designer rationalized it in a way I'm doing so is not important, most probably wouldn't, but nevertheless, if the design and the building of this structure came from the intuition or the experience that I'm referring to, then this intuition or experience informs what we make. It somehow goes into the make of it and that is the way this understanding communicates itself. It literally takes the form of what we make so then when somebody walks into such a building, they may not have any of this thought, in fact, it's best not to think about it because it's not about concept, it's not a new idea, but you go into such a building or you listen to a piece of music that has come from this understanding or from an intuition of it or you see a painting that has come from, and you stand in front and you somehow, your mind falls away. Sometimes you get goose pimples or you find that you're weeping for no reason or there is this tremendous opening or relaxation in the body. You don't know why, you don't have to know why. But what is being, it's the communication that the object is somehow leading you to what Cezanne called that which is to nature's eternity, to that which is ever present in our experience which is identical to what we essentially are which is awareness.

LILOU: We have a visit from a friend. Hi, buddy. Beautiful, yes. Are you finding that, what are the things that can release this flow, that can help artists to be more in tuned with that aspect and us also as artist, I believe we're artists in our own right, all of us in life, is there some things that you also teach to help be more in the intimacy to the moment? or it's all just an experimentation?

RUPERT: There are things, there are lines of investigation or exploration that we can undertake to make what I am suggesting here is a possibility, an actual reality in our lives. And the first thing to do is to explore what we are, what I am. Everybody knows that I am present and that the I that I am is aware. For instance, right now you are aware of this conversation and we are aware of the sound of the birds and the sight of the trees and the tingling of the sensations of your feet and whatever thoughts are present in your mind, we're all aware of this. Now, what is it that is aware of that? What is aware of your thoughts?

LILOU: I've heard deep actual [??] and I would say the soul.

RUPERT: No, no. refer to what anybody –

LILOU: Intellectually, yeah, it's my soul.

RUPERT: No. because soul is just, okay, I'm just going to ask you what you mean by your soul. Because right now –

LILOU: My essence.



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RUPERT: No, you, yeah, you, I, the one that is called Lilou, I, you are aware of your thoughts, yes? Now, whatever it is that's aware of your thoughts is not itself made out of a thought, yes? Because the thought flies by, yes? The thought is like this, it just sails by. What should we have for dinner tonight? It comes and it's gone.

LILOU: Some get stuck longer.

RUPERT: Some get stuck a bit longer and they go round and round, but nevertheless, they all go. But you are there, aware of that passing thought. You weren't made of the thought because when the thought vanishes, you remain. Same with your bodily sensations, all the sensations that are present in your body now, they disappear, but you, when they're present, you're aware of them, when they disappear, you remain. So you can't be made, you, this aware presence is not made out of the sensation or a thought or a feeling or a sound or a shape or texture or a smell. You are aware of all these things. What is that you, that aware presence? If I was to ask you, for instance, turn your attention towards your thoughts, take a thought now, any thought, what should we have for dinner, you don't have to tell us, any thought, just watch the thought float by. It's very easy to watch that thought, it's like watching a bird, you just watch it. If I was to suggest you, turn your attention towards the tingling sensation of the soles of your feet. You go straight there, very easy. What are the sound of the birds. You go straight there. Now what if I was to ask you, turn your attention to whatever it is that is aware of your thoughts, your feelings, your sensations and your perceptions, where do you go?

LILOU: Inside.

RUPERT: Inside where?

LILOU: More on the heart area.

RUPERT: Okay, what you find the heart area, what is it that is aware of the heart area?

LILOU: I would say my essence, my beingness.

RUPERT: Whatever it is, can you find it?

LILOU: No, it's not definable.

RUPERT: It's not definable or findable.

LILOU: Findable.

RUPERT: If you go to your heart are, you find a sensation or a feeling, but something in you knows that sensation is aware of that sensation. If you try to find that one, you can't find it. Why? Because it's not



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an object, it's not a thought, it's not a feeling, it's not a sensation, it's just made out of pure empty awareness. Empty because it's not made of an object. It's like it's transparent, it's empty, it's made out of pure knowing, pure awareness. If you ask yourself, is there a limit that awareness? Can you find –

LILOU: No I cannot find boundaries.

RUPERT: Can you find a limit to it? Does it have an age?

LILOU: Mm-mm.

RUPERT: Does it have a gender?

LILOU: mm-mm.

RUPERT: So immediately, this that we call I we're discovering, this I is not a 40-50-60 year old man or woman, it's not white or black, this I is transparent, colorless, without boundaries, without limits, without gender, without age. And if we look deeply, in other words, it has no limit, and if we look deeply as well, we find that it is always present. Have you not always been present as the knower of your experience. The 5-year old Lilou, wasn't her experience known by the same transparent awareness?

LILOU: Yes. I was experiencing life differently.

RUPERT: The experiences were different, the thoughts were different, the feelings were different, the sensations were different, the world was different. But the one who experienced them, was that one different?

LILOU: Based on our conversation, no.

RUPERT: No. it wasn't. It doesn't change because only an object could change. But this is just, this I, this essential self, your being, is just made out of empty awareness. It's the same I, it's not growing older, it's not moving or changing and it doesn't disappear. You've never had nor could you have the experience of this I disappearing. It wasn't born. It's not evolving, it's not going to die. Yes, the mind appears and disappears. The body appears and disappears. But you, the essential you, is without limits and ever present. Without limit means infinite, not finite and ever present means eternal, eternally now. That is the great discovery to make the what I am is not a cluster of thoughts, feelings and sensations that was born with the particular time and place, that is moving, evolving, growing old and is one day going to disappear. This what we essentially are is this ever present, luminous, empty, transparent awareness which is intimately with all appearances, just like the screen is intimately one with the image that appears on it but at the same time absolutely free, the screen is not stained by the movie. You are not stained or hurt or harmed by any thought, by any activity, by anything, life can't hurt you. you are this



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pristine, indestructible, ever present, infinite awareness which is intimately one, the sounds for instance, all we know of the sound is the experience of hearing. All we know of sound is hearing.

LILOU: How close does the experience of hearing take place? 20 meters away? Or this close? Where is hearing taking place? How close do you?

RUPERT: I can hear the birds out but it resonates aside.

LILOU: The experience of hearing, where is that taking place?

RUPERT: That's a good question. The experience of hearing, here, here.

LILOU: Here, here. Is it at a distance from yourself?

RUPERT: No.

LILOU: Is there some space between yourself and hearing?

RUPERT: No. none.

LILOU: Can you even find 2 things there? Myself and hearing?

RUPERT: No. they're like this, yes? Thought says I know the sound in here but the sound is over there. Thought divides hearing into 2 parts - the self on the inside that hears and the sound on the outside that is heard. That's duality. But if we stay close to our experience or the intimacy of our experience and we ask what knowledge do I have of the sound of the birds? It's just the experience of hearing and hearing is not divided in 2, into a me part and a not me part, into a Lilou part and a bird part. It's just hearing one seamless, intimate substance. and seeing is the same, it's not divided into a see-er in here and the seen world out there. It's all just seeing and seeing is made out of the knowing of it. You are that knowing, you pervade the entire field of your experience, nothing is separate from you.

LILOU: Yes, I love how you put it. It's so clear. You're juicy. Oh my goodness. Yes, but that's not at all how we were raised.

RUPERT: No, it's not how we were raised.

LILOU: It's the whole brain fights for a [??]

RUPERT: It's not how we were raised. I don't know what you had when you learned to read and write. We had these hardback books called David and Jane. David sees the tree. David loves Jane. David feels sad. A subject joined to an object through an active knowing, perceiving or feeling. This is the fundamental presumption of our culture, a subject and an object that are essentially separate.



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LILOU: But both are needed.

RUPERT: It's fine to have the concept, the concept of duality, of a subject and an object, but to believe that this concept were flexed, the reality of our experience is a catastrophe. It is responsible, if we go deeply into the causes of suffering, we always we find that the belief that what we are is separate self is the fundamental cause of all suffering in individuals and that suffering multiplied 7 billion times is responsible for the conflict, disharmony, the aggression that we find in the world today. So this, and the reason why in spite of all our attempts to find peace in ourselves, in our intimate relationships, in the community and in the wider world, the reason why these conflicts persist is because we don't go to the root of them. And the root of all these conflicts is this one essential belief that what I am is a separate, limited, temporal self. Until that self is seen to be non-existent, the conflict will continue both in ourselves and we will spread it around us, in our relationships and in the wider community.

LILOU: Well, I was gonna say, so the answer is love, but –

RUPERT: You're right, the answer is love if as long as by love –

LILOU: Yeah.

RUPERT: We understand. Not a feeling from one person to another, what love is is the dissolution of the sense of self and other. so, yes, absolutely love is the answer. Yes. Love is a, it's like the common name for non-duality. What I'm describing in a rational way is lived and felt in our experience as love, it also experiences peace and happiness. These are the ways that this understanding is revealed in our actual experience – love, peace, and happiness. And think about it. If you were to stop, if you were to do a poll of all seven billion people and ask how many of you are interested in non-duality? Who would say yes? Hardly anyone. .0001%. but what if you asked all 7 billion, are you interested in love and happiness? All 7 billion would say yes. What is this experience called love that everyone seeks? It is the dissolution of feeling that we are a fragment, that we are incomplete, that we are missing something, that we are needing something from another, or from an object, or from the world. Everybody longs for that sense of incompleteness to be dissolved. Why do we go for chocolates, cigarettes, drinks, activities, the next sexual encounter, whatever it is, what are we looking for? We're just longing to be complete again, to be whole again, for the feeling of fragmentation, separation to dissolve and these objects, they temporarily dissolve the sense of separation but they don't truly uproot the sense of separation. So as soon as the chocolate or the alcohol or the relationship wears off, there's a longing again, the seeking comes back. And we go out again towards another object until it becomes clear to us that we're seeking for is not an object or a state or a relationship but we're longing for is to be healed of this, it's like a wound in the heart, that this wound of separation, that's what everybody longs for and the healing of that is called happiness.



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LILOU: Thank you Rupert. Thank you for this happiness moment. thank you. this was delightful, what a great surprise, I love it!

RUPERT: Out here in the woods talking about these things.

LILOU: Where do you live in England?

RUPERT: I live in Oxford.

LILOU: Oxford, I love it. I studied in Oxford, Brooks University. Yes. I really enjoyed the city. I just came back and stopped in Oxford all the way from Glastonbury. I was there for some interviews.

RUPERT: I know [??]

LILOU: Love the beautiful, beautiful city. Much love my delicious co-creators from Holland, from the woods here and thank you Rupert.

RUPERT: Thank you.

LILOU: Bye-bye!

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