



18. PETER BAUMANN

Peter Baumann began his career as a member of the internationally acclaimed 1970s band Tangerine Dream and later founded the Private Music record label. Instead of being derailed by early fame and fortune, he asked himself this in his late 40s: “Given that I probably have about 10,000 days left on the planet, how can I use this time in the most meaningful and useful way possible?” To address this question, Baumann assembled a top-notch interdisciplinary think-tank, the San Francisco-based Baumann Foundation. He serves as a trustee of the California Institute of Integral Studies and as a fellow at the Mind & Life Institute.

INTERVIEW

Q: To begin with I would like to ask you a brief background question, how did you become interested in consciousness?

Peter Baumann: About 10 years ago, I woke up one morning and I realized I had about 10,000 days left to live. That's the average life expectancy of a white male when they are in their late 40s. I had a lot of success by then. I was happily married and I said, how am I going to spend the last 10,000 days.

I said I'm going to study that. So I took upon myself to study wisdom traditions, science evolution and all about that which led me to my own perspective on consciousness and nonduality, and how we make decisions, and the sense of a self.

Q: Prior to that, did you have any sort of traditional beliefs?

Peter Baumann: None whatsoever no. I was involved in the music business and was brought up in Germany in a relatively Protestant environment. We were not active in the church.

Q: Ok, what about meditation. At any point, did you practice any type of meditation?

Peter Baumann: I had some experience when I lived in southern California, but not extensively. I did a couple of retreats and I thought it was cool but it was not something that was a major part of my life.

Q: Was it like a vipassana retreat?

Peter Baumann: Yes, Shinzen Young.

Q: Did you have any other teachers? Also, up until the point when you had this awakening, did you read anything that may have led to this?

Peter Baumann: Not really, maybe a little bit here and there of traditional Buddhism - Sounds material from sounds true. Nothing really significant.

Q: Did anything from 'sounds true' stand out in your mind? Or were there any Buddhist teachers in particular that you liked?

Peter Baumann: No nothing really stood out. I thought it was all pretty interesting, but nothing hit me.

Q: How did you become interested in the Science and Nonduality conference?

Peter Baumann: Well I mean by that time I had started the foundation to explore human well being and it's certainly a related subject, so I hung out there like I do at many other conferences.

Q: Do you see nonduality going more towards a scientific inquiry and not so much a traditional guru oriented inquiry, as in the past?

Peter Baumann: I certainly feel that science is getting a little bit more attention. My personal view is that human life happens and can be examined from different perspectives. From a third person objective perspective and a subjective perspective and how it actually shows up in

your awareness, and those are two realms that you cannot conflate. They deal with just different aspects.

Q: This next question has to do with the business side. Traditionally, what they had was dana or the giving of the teaching. What are your views on the practice of dana? Is this changing today?

Peter Baumann: I'm not that familiar; it's always been a tradition to deliver teachings without charging for it and a tradition to make a donation. I don't know how much that has changed. It's worked for a long time. I also understand that when teachers have a retreat or something, they can be compensated for their time. I don't think that the substance of what they are teaching or the framework is in any way changed by charging or depending on dana.

Q: Ok, what about with satsangs? Would that same theory apply with satsangs?

Peter Baumann: That's a good question. It's a very difficult question. There's a whole range of associations where people just come together and congregate. And that's a satsang. The traditional church obviously invites people in without charging for it. The problem when you charge is people expect something. And all the direct delivery of teaching is different from a satsang.

If you pay for its expenses, that's perfectly fine, but if it's an organization that makes a profit from it, the sense of the satsang falls apart.

My view of a satsang is that everybody contributes and revives in equal amounts and that's the value of a satsang.

Q: And when you say contribute, do you mean donations or like a set fee or a charge?

Peter Baumann: No, contributing by attention. Sharing themselves and by just showing up they contribute.

Q: Right, do you see a problem with the tradition of dana working in contemporary settings? Do you feel that Westerners understand that when you go to a teaching, you are supposed to donate something rather than pay for it?

Peter Baumann: Yes, I think it needs to be made explicit that it's really an exchange; they are receiving something and the whole universe works with exchange of energy. And when they receive something, then they have to compensate with energy themselves in a form of work, contribution or financial contribution or in other ways.

END OF INTERVIEW