

On the Evaluation of Sects and Isms
(Intuition)
by Richard Rose

We must take into consideration a very important factor when investigating religious or philosophical movements, -- namely the use of skill in the promotion of those movements.

Of all times that a man does not wish to be pressured into buying, is when he is buying an idea that he considers as sacred as life itself. The strange truth is that man is generally pressured into religion, somewhere along the line. As a child he has no choice, if his parents decide for him which church he shall attend. As an adult, his business or political life may depend upon his going to some recognized church. The philosopher generally rebels against the system that may have dominated his earlier years, but the "new ideas" that he must sift, are filled with more subtle pressures.

After considerable comparison we find that each new cult has a carefully planned approach to the public which it needs to sustain itself. This would hold true for any organization, whether the organization were spurious, erroneous but honestly ignorant of the errors, or genuine and sincere.

The Dramatic Announcement of the New Thought comes in various forms. We find advertisements in detective magazines proclaiming in bizarre fashion a new mystical discovery. A more clever ad is the emphasis on stirring questions such as: Will you live Again?... Are you one of the sleeping elect?... Do you wish to join or enlist to better your psychic abilities?... Are your chakras neglected?... Do you wish to know the future, gain wealth and impress your friends?

The above types of advertisements will show that the creator of them finds it necessary to flatter some weakness or vanity in the casual reader to induce his interest.

For those who are alert to this approach new techniques must be applied. If the salesman is out after the wealthy, he must presume that the wealthy will be educated and somewhat skilled as himself in the use of psychological levers. The cult-salesman now uses a different type of Dramatic Announcement. He announces the formation of an exclusive group and indicates that not even money will buy spiritual advancement in it, and he seasons his first pamphlets with exotic, meaningless words mixed with kabalistic references or stately translations.

We cannot imply that all of this skill is evil. Man is a sleepy creature and must be roused. That which causes him to pursue a path may not arrive with him at the end of the path. In other words, vanity and greed may motivate the embarkation upon a path, but before he is through he may have loosened himself considerably from both.

We are shocked perhaps at the indirect manner of seeking that which we seek, of trampling all our sacred conjectures as to how to maintain a truthful and honest search and parallel teaching of the neophytes, and of proudly giving forth a course of lies under the guise of Truth.

The only commendable part of such farces is that they awaken the curiosity and other dormant inner drives. It is doubtful if the end justifies the means. The neophyte is likely to write mankind off as a massive liar, and Truth as but a worthless nostrum, valuable only to the degree of cash return.

Many a spiritual philosopher will use the parables of Christ as an example of the need to be indirect. Esoteric correspondents tell you that a person must be very careful about transmitting spiritual voltage to a person of lower potential. Some sort of explosion is said to occur. We may smile at the delightful innocence of a child who believes in Santa Claus and performs serious rubrics to please that evasive deity, but we like to protest that we are adults and not susceptible to such rot.

Is it not equally possible that we, who kneel before altars, burn candles and incense, spin wheels and joss sticks, commit sins and gain graces, wage crusades and theological wars to determine the objectivity of God, and conjure up ten million physical attributes of God, may all be as naive as the delightful infants ... for God may well be nowhere but within ourselves!

According to the Book of Luke we find that "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither will they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for the Kingdom of God is within you."

Let us for a moment accept the concept of the foregoing paragraph. We still must find some means to find that God within ourselves. And in so doing we seek out others. We ask others how to open doors within ourselves, and we must be somewhat justified because those quotations emanate from a man who was one of the greatest promoters of all time, and if we choose to believe none of his translated words, history tells us that he needed his fellow man and they needed him. He went forth to preach and to even say Lo and Behold. He deliberately attracted attention to the point of practically committing suicide. Some writers insist that his was a sort of deliberate suicide, which was a spectacle planned to imprint himself indelibly upon the mind of mankind. Of course the latter suggestion is entirely conjecture, and it is given only as a possibility emanating from the general conduct of Jesus.

It remains that we seem to be faced with a fact or truth about man that is hard to swallow, -- man must be approached indirectly because man himself does not know direction! Nevertheless we still hang from the horns of the paradox. The parent that demands the truth from the children lies to its mate ... and gives the children their first lesson in life by stunning them with Santa Claus.

The whole thing comes back to intuition. It is perhaps advisable, before embarking upon a path (spiritual) to do a bit of introspection and attempt to sharpen the intuition. It is like a compass when the stars have been blacked out by the storm.

We have to employ certain yardsticks. We must beware of the sects that employ cunning, that have excessive ritual, that charge by the week for indoctrination, and for those whose secrecy may well be a cloak for something clandestine or dangerous.

The yardsticks, however, are not sufficient. The intuition must make the final decision.

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Let us next take the skill that is employed in the second stage of indoctrination. The pupil is now hooked and must be regularly dosed with proper suggestion to retain him, and to lead him into surer bondage.

It can be presumed that the skill employed in the first stage is to a degree pardonable, if the employers of it are sincere. However, stimulating a person's inner dynamism is one thing, and enslaving him economically and mentally is another. Unless we are absolutely sure that such a system of enslavement will bring a prescribed result of ultimate nature ... which is practically impossible.

By taking note of some of these systems of enslavement, an idea can be gained to what extent the enslavement may be part of systems in which we now have almost absolute faith. Many religions find that the easiest way to nail down the human mind is to catechize it regularly in childhood. The catechistic process is a clever method which employs the forcing of students to memorize questions and answers, before he reaches the age of enquiry wherein he might ask the question of the minister or priest. He is trained in theology by rote. When he gets around to being naturally curious about his origin and destiny, the answers that the priest wanted him to have are already implanted in his mind. He answers himself, and finds a sort of smug satisfaction in being able to answer himself.

But then he gets older, and the computer by now is trying to iron out some of its own kinks. This may come in adolescence. Thereupon, Lo and Behold, the good servant of the cloth is waiting for him with new magic. The youth is now told that he is old enough to enter more deeply into theology. It is now admitted that certain things were not explained previously because of the immaturity of the mind previously. This is a subtle way to re-hypnotize the victim with his own vanity. Instead of liberation with adolescence, he is bound more tightly. The youth is commended because he is one of the elect who may humbly despise his non-believing neighbors of other faiths. He is assured that he is intelligent, and that he will be able to understand God with his intellect, and he is assured that he is loved by the hierarchy, which hierarchy will give to him the key to salvation. And the key is simple. Believe the hierarchy.

The youth now grows into manhood. He catches the priest or preacher in the taproom or worse. He reads books that hint that the padre is a non-believer in the sermons rendered. His computer again makes a valiant effort to rouse itself from the effects of external tampering and programming.

However the padre is waiting for him. The adult treatment now varies with each individual case. One method of handling the really tough adult is the utilitarian approach. The padre points out the beneficial effects of a devout life. It has kept you out of the penitentiary, and will keep your children in line. Your business will run more smoothly because all your business contacts and competitors will believe you to be harmless. He will proudly point to himself as the unsung psychologist of the confessional, and as being more welcome than the physician at the approach of death.

In the event that you laugh in his face at this point, and demand that he prove his point as he professed to do when you were taking his axioms for granted, -- he will overwhelm you with dialectics. He will remind you that your pride has lost for you the gift of faith. And when the efficacy of believing is challenged he gives you quotations from the Bible. He will tell you that faith has substance in the next world not visible to us now, and by this mechanism we are automatically saved. He will tell you that you cannot disbelieve in God without using the concept of God. He will tell you that your mind is finite, and will never be able to accept as a problem for solution anything less than finite. Consequently he will remind you that you will have to trust him, because he trusted his teacher, and his teacher in turn trusted someone else. Now many of his comments are worth contemplating, but they give us no reason for trusting or supporting him.

The same gradualization of training is employed by sects and cults or new religions. These new sects supposedly grow out of disillusionment with older faiths. They soon fall victim, however to the same trappings and ritual, and learn to depend upon dialectical skill when it comes to survival. They are clever enough not to rely upon argument to justify their difference of approach.

Seldom do they provoke the larger religious entities by muckraking. They find something unanswered and answer it. They find some unreasonable part of Christian theology and instead of arguing as we are doing here about the unreasonableness, -- simply proclaim new discoveries that have more appeal. They indulge in politics, in other words. They do not call the opponents or competitors liars, but by talking incessantly about their own virtue, instill in the listener the feeling that everyone else has less virtue.

In this faster moving action society they put you to work instead of arguing the point. They boast of being able to show the neophyte tangible results. They give you exercises to perform, and exercises generally make anyone feel better. They prescribe periods of meditation, and anyone can prescribe them for himself. And meditation is good and helpful. It is not of a necessity the only thing to do. They employ gradualism by putting forth lessons, most of which are mumbo-jumbo. As the years of subscription to these lessons go by, more promises and more exercises are forthcoming.

Skill is also applied in the use of secrecy. It seems difficult to imagine that anyone could remain a paying customer after twenty years of paying, regardless of the degree to which his ego has been flattered or his fears allayed by concept building. The club atmosphere helps to hold some members. Some people go to the church for the same reason others go to the bar room. They get into the habit of seeing their friends regularly, and for some it becomes the only pastime. Lodge-work has degrees of prestige without which most lodges would cease to function.

People do remain paying customers however. They are given formulae that will open up chakras, bring the "Guardian of the Threshold into sight," attract avatars or masters to personally instruct them, or bring to them for years of silent service a living master who will whisper into their ears the magical words that will open up all doors. Most of the movements have been examined. We have examined many esoteric systems. The skill in the use of secrecy serves to

prevent the victim from comparing notes, feelings and hopes with even the same people in the sect. And it also prevents him from complaining to anyone on the outside.

If the neophyte goes to his elders and complains, he is reminded that he has not given the system justice. "You did not keep your heart pure while you were meditating, -- you must try more sincerely."

The neophyte is never given a definite promise and cannot ever make a precise demand, or take the case to court and get his money back. And he is told that the reasons for his dissatisfaction remain his own weaknesses or inconsistencies.

From these observations we conclude that while none of the claims either religious or metaphysical are herein proven false, nor intended to be minimized in their value or sincerity, it is nevertheless significant to know that certain skills are used, and that it is advisable to avoid the sects that apply the skills in preference to sects that are more inclined to honesty. It is understood also that even a sincere sect might employ, or seem to employ skill in maintaining itself, but we contend that it still is not commendable, because it adds confusion to the neophyte who is aware of the use of skills.

The very life of the organization must be forfeit if the members do not see the importance of the work, and the near-impossibility of anyone doing anything alone. Groups must be formed that are dedicated to the work of retreating from ignorance, with absolutely no certitude of finding the final summit of knowing or being. With that in mind, all gains will be profit. These groups will of a necessity consist of friends. This will avoid a system run by leaders with pontifical hauteur whose haughtiness prevents argument or even questioning.

It is advisable to continue to seek for a man who can demonstrate achievement of any of the aforementioned ambitions, but we do not have the time to spend twenty years in any of them foolishly. We do not need our backs scratched for another's profit. Joining a sect has little value unless the leader, or member professing achievement of the aims of the sect can be found and, upon being found, be found willing to at least attempt to convey his knowledge or stir our intuition with his change of being. Without any tricks.

It is impossible to give fool-proof methods of analyzing movements, cults, religions or esoteric societies, to establish their honesty, validity or significant value or lack of it.

We need but to attend some meetings to find that a majority of religions and cults look upon the others as erratic. There are some who while not denouncing all others as erratic, still expound the "ladder theory" by preaching that various religions are only true to people on certain levels of spiritual climbing. The point, however, here is that most religions and cults testify against the validity of most of the others. If we allow them any sort of authority in the matters that they profess to have authority, we can conclude that the majority of them are liars, by verdict of their fellow peers.

There are some things that we can note with justifiable suspicion and there are some points that will qualify judgment, and should influence choice of religion or society.

There are questions that we should ask of these societies, such as:

1. Is there a leader who is willing and able to answer our questions?
2. Or is the leadership intangible?
3. If the doctrine is based upon an ancient manuscript, is there one and only one possible translation, or are there numerous conflicting translations?
4. If the doctrine is based upon a recent manuscript is its validity traceable?
5. Are the claims of the author validated?
6. Is it something that is supposed to have evolved from a trance?
7. Is it consistent within itself?
8. Does the author refer to some mysterious authority such as an invisible avatar that becomes visible only to the faithful?
9. Does the movement employ dialectics?
10. Does the movement employ massive brain-washing techniques?
11. Does the system lay claim to logical proof? This is one of the bald-faced pretensions by a few movements.
12. Does the system prey on human fear of the unknown?
13. Does the system promise monetary gain?
14. Does the system promise power?

Some of the most recent movements that have arisen have done so with the ghost of a human being as the background or reason for being. Strange new spiritual leaders have lately risen up, and their influence is not to be minimized. They are drawing their following from the more intellectual classes and hence from people of some means. This is a particular type of spiritual leadership that needs to be interviewed personally wherever able.

I have mentioned here some of the general questions that might be applied upon examination of a movement. Three questions are more important than all of the above mentioned, and have generally been used as yardsticks by searchers down through the years. These are:

- Do they ask for money? And with the money do they build monuments, or places called temples?
- Do they have great emphasis placed upon spiritual rank among fellows?
- Do they have excessive ritual, heavy advertising and mumbo-jumbo?

It is possible that there may be a very valid and honest movement that still cannot answer one of the seventeen mentioned questions to our satisfaction. This does not automatically mean that such a movement is to be avoided. These are guideposts. Common sense must still be applied. However it is true that if the above questions touch more than one sensitive area of the movement under examination, then our suspicion is justified in proportion to the number of sensitive areas, as irritated by the corresponding questions.

There has been a feeling among philosophers down through the ages that most religions, having endured for a hundred years or so are then spurious, if they were not so originally. The seeker has quite a task on his hands if he is sincere in his search for Truth.

Let us for a moment take the life and teachings of Christ, and for the sake of example, accept Christ as a valid figure in history. If we accept his existence as described in the bibles of today, we have to admit that he was an outstanding man and prophet at the least. He sealed his message to man by dying steadfastly, and again, if we believe the bible, he rose from the dead and walked among them.

He was not dead too long however until the same records that glorify him, show that his religion began to shift and change. The disciples began to dissemble. Christ himself, in his life, had not a place to rest his head. But not so for the ones who fell heir to the Church. Temples and then cathedrals rose up across Europe to keep the rain from the sacred heads therein.

The philosophers have noted this trend in movements. The trend is one of degeneration of quality almost inversely proportional to the increase in power and material wealth.

When the spiritual pirates run up the skull and cross-bones, many devout people are apt to part with their money. Religion has always been for some, big business. In some Asian countries where opportunity is scarce because of heavy population, many intelligent young men join monasteries, and if they get the chance, they start something of their own. In India religion and politics are barely distinguishable.

I have talked with priests and ministers who laughed at the idea of immortality, or God or gods. They protested that their role in life was that of a sedative upon turbulent emotions of men.

It remains that we must search. And the fields in which we must search are not always Elysian. Many a rotten carcass must be examined, and many inconspicuous crannies explored. The well advertised groups may not bear light nearly as efficiently as some obscure movement, or some book.

And it has been my good fortune to meet rare individuals who possessed keys of sorts, or whose hints described things that could only be described with a hint. So that it may be a book wherein we may gain a step in our search, or it may be in an individual. Or it may be in a gold-plated temple.

Our search, however, need not be foolish. Our time need not be wasted if we ask ourselves and our religion or cult of choice a few questions. Our search can be scientific in that we seek out all possible data on the search before plunging into any one for life. We must ask ourselves for our motive in the search. Are we looking for immortality, for a vision of God, or for Wisdom and Truth?

If we profess that we are looking for immortality, are we going to decide beforehand what type of immortality we are going to accept? Are we going to lay aside all books and evidence that might jeopardize our fathered creed?

If we profess to be looking for God, we are of course presupposing God. We are not just looking. And consequently we may build God according to the image of what we like. And if we are professing to seek only the Truth, we must be prepared to dispense with immortality and

God both. Now this is not a dictum. I am not asserting that immortality has no meaning, nor am I negating God. But it is important that we do not begin a search with definite ideas of what we are going to find. In abstract matters and investigation of intangibles we are known to get our realities and pseudo realities entangled somehow with beliefs.

Beliefs are dangerous. They should become part of man only after long and careful analysis.

To summarize this chapter, we might say that we can begin our search in the library and in the public square. If we are dynamic, we will begin now, and work from the place or land in which we are confined by necessity. Truth is not necessarily found by running, although travel helps to get some of the binding cobwebs from the mind. We must seek out our fellow man, especially the fellow-seeker. We must look for critics, not just platitudinous preachers. And we must work with them, because the work was never meant for one man alone.

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If you like the dynamism and spontaneity of Richard Rose as writer and teacher, please read his books, which are available at www.rosepublications.net or www.tatfoundation.org.