

Zen and Common Sense by Richard Rose

The following transcription is from Richard Rose's 1974 lecture. If you like the dynamism and spontaneity of Richard Rose as speaker and teacher, please read his books, which are available at www.rosepublications.net or www.tatfoundation.org.

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Sometimes the people who have been in the group or who have been acquainted with us for awhile -- occasionally some of them will give up and say, "There's an objective here that I don't think I can reach."

And this may be true for a good many people. And sometimes the family of people who are associated with the group will say, "Hey..." Like one fellow from Pittsburgh -- his father knew he joined and thought it was a good idea, because since he joined he hadn't been smoking pot. So he belonged for awhile, and finally the father said to the boy, "What are you doing down there?"

He said, "We're looking for the truth." And the father said, "Well, hurry up and find it, so you can tell a few people and then go back to work."

A lot of people pick it up after they read a little Zen literature -- that there's an ultimate objective, of an ultimate knowledge. Not just a way of life, just a cult, in which you get together and harmonize with similar people. But there is an ultimate objective that when some people hear of it, it frightens them.

Because it involves -- if you read some of the literature you can pick up a hint of it -- it involves a change of being. A change of a person's perspective; an entirely new understanding of the universe. And a negation of possibly a tremendous lot of values that you functioned by previously.

And there's a double reaction to this. One is, first of all, that it's unattainable. And the second is, "If we don't attain it, what good is it? What good is it to lead a life or follow a system if you're not sure of making the whole trip and finding out the secret of everything?"

Now the answer to that is that there is common sense in Zen. And the longer that you follow the self-confrontation, the self-analysis, the better off you are to just live with yourself, and for other people to live with you. Because you drop a lot of the poses which you previously had, and which previously got you into trouble. And you take a new, broader view of things because your egos are not in the way, destroying your friendships, and destroying your family, your financial possibilities even.

But I maintain that Zen is worthwhile. Or I wouldn't have spent these years talking with no financial remuneration. And I think that it has two major advantages, for those who indulge in it. One is psychological, as I hinted before; you become a better person. And of course the other one is a spiritual realization.

And when we talk of spiritual things we talk of religion, philosophy, anything that brings you to the point of knowing who you are and knowing what your relationship is to the visible cosmos and the invisible possibilities of life after death.

And I note that other systems are lacking -- or I wouldn't have gotten into Zen and I wouldn't advise Zen. And the psychological systems are lacking: because they search for what I call a packaged method of helping people become better animals in the herd, rather than people who have a knowledge of their own mind. This is the trend in modern psychology, or current psychology.

In religion of course, the thing for centuries has been to placate and pacify the masses with fable and fairy-tale and some promise of a happy hunting ground later -- with no real realization of it. No real proof of it, let's say, or even a good understanding of such that might happen to you when you die.

So -- what are we curious about? I maintain that everyone is searching for the truth. I've said this repeatedly. I don't believe -- we classify people and we say the truth about the people they're living with -- to know more about the personalities of those people and that sort of thing.

The steelworker wants to know how to put out better steel -- the truth of mechanical processes -- the mathematician wants to know of better mathematics, and the physicist wants to know more about the atom, which is a search for the truth in itself. And so on.

Everyone is curious. Some don't take the time. Some are defeated before they start by believing they're too small to find out. And I don't think this is the proper pose.

But regardless, the systems -- which millions of people follow and build churches and monuments to -- fail to provide the proper answers.

And we get into certain categories on this. We get into categories of people who advise you to believe: Just don't think, believe. And some or many of the people are convinced to just believe.

There are three major questions in life. And you can gauge any philosophy, ism, or movement by the way they answer these three questions. The first is: "Where did we come from?" The second is: "Who are we?" (Or -- "What is life?") The third is: "Where are we going?"

Now this is the province of religion. It's also the province of philosophy, and "Who are we?" is the province of psychology. None of these questions, I maintain, are answered

properly and with the common sense that would encourage people to stay with such a theory, religion, ism, or whatever.

Let us start off with the first one. For instance, what is yesterday? We look upon yesterday as that which is past, as something which is similar to the future, except that we have experienced it. The future we haven't experienced. And we look upon it as a time element we can measure.

Sure, with our radioactive instruments we can guess how many thousands of years a certain being existed on the planet, or something of that sort, or how old the planet is itself. And we get an idea of what I call retrograded time. But is it possible to really measure this time, when you get to thinking about it, in relation to what is the present?

What is the basis of everything I've just said, now in the past? The present is a split second, if there is such, that is here somewhere in between what I'm going to say and what I have said. Because as soon as I've spoken, it is past. So time becomes a portion of experience that is hardly estimable, in the fact that it can't be changed. It is.

We can only view the past as something that is unchangeable, and as a permanent type of experience. And in view of something that is unchangeable, without variation or motion, and that which is viewed the same by all -- it is something that cannot be re-experienced or changed in experience form. It can be re-experienced in memory, but it cannot be changed. Whereas in looking forward, to that which we cannot see, we have an idea that we can change it. This is the eternal hope -- of changing that which is rapidly becoming the past.

But regardless, we have no real knowledge of this relation in the past, relative to our space-time concept.

If we have an element called space-time, the past and the future must be pretty much be the same, being not necessarily a mobile experience, but just a viewing or an experiencing of something which already exists.

So -- this is just a proposition. I'm not expounding or trying to convince you of a logical interpretation of space and time, but I'm just saying we don't know. We don't know actually, except for impressions we get. We get the idea for instance, that time, the past, has duration, and it has duration similar to the calendar and the clock.

This business of experiencing -- when you look back upon the experience lots of time the thing that happened two weeks ago may be very dim in your mind, whereas something that happened ten years ago may be very clear. So as far as our experience of past events, perhaps the long-ness of time passing is determined by our interest in an incident, our attention to an incident, not necessarily the clock or the calendar.

What do you identify as now? If you'll look at the second that is now, we seem to hang continually in a thin thread of desperate realization, of what is rapidly being cemented

into our eternal past, an immobile past -- hoping in that one second of momentary consciousness to change the future. And the past moves up on it so rapidly, the future becomes the past so rapidly, that we really don't have much chance of changing our lives.

A lot of people think about the ability to have a will. That every human being has a will. That's a delightful thought, but with the rapidity with which one thought pushes us into another thought, one incident creates a condition that we have to live in. We go back then to the next question and say, "What are we?" You know, "Who is here?" And of course, people very seldom stop to think about this. People are aware of the question, and you generally get a bit of sophistry in the answer: They'll say, "I'm the person that is sitting in front of you," or something of the sort.

But we know that there's a different meaning to this question. There's a book by J.J. van der Leeuw (*Conquest of Illusion*). Van der Leeuw says that very possibly we are or we could be, a point in space, the end of a ray, or something of that sort, but because of collective agreement we assume that things have a certain form. An agreed upon belief and form.

For instance, we know that our senses are limited, and that very much is agreed upon. We know that our retina receives things upside down in the eyeball and we adjust the picture. The chairs in this room that appear to us as blue, in the chemical analysis of the composition of color may really not be blue. Black is not black and white is not white, as we see it. It appears to us that way, but white is the accumulation of all the colors, and black is the absence of color. So white is every thing but what it looks like, supposedly. This is caused by the reflection of the different components of the light that strikes the prism.

So consequently -- what I'm trying to get at is not to prove that white isn't white, but to say again that we have limited senses. Our eyeball has a limited retina; there are only so many rods in there. Hearing has a limited range. Some animals have a better range and pick up different things. And faculties, perhaps. Some animals seem to have faculties that we don't have. They talk of dogs or certain animals that pick up spirits in a haunted house. They pick up vibrations that we don't pick up.

So in other words -- our world, as we know it, can only come to us through our senses. And if our senses are limited or twisted or inadequate, then this world may be entirely different from what it appears to us. And if we can by agreement agree upon a form -- all of us agree together that a certain form exists -- then it's possible that the whole picture can somehow be projected or agreed upon.

Are we just a bag of protoplasm? (I'm getting down to the body as we know it and put it in a test tube.) Are we more than a being with a bunch of conditioned reflexes? This is one of the psychological definitions of what we are.

Are we more than that? A sentient, as we like to think, self-directing entity that moves freely, willfully, and does things? And may we prepare ourselves, artfully, willfully, in this dimension -- and even prepare for another dimension which we've postulated and believe in?

Are we anything more than a warm body? In other words, modern psychology is somewhat somatic -- it tells us that we're basically what you see -- a more or less protoplasmic reacting body.

We'd like to present ourselves, I think a good many would like to, saying, "Well, we're just here," this is our rationalization against action, "so let's take care of the body; let's have fun. Let's get along while we're having fun. Let's make a bit of money, or reproduce, or something of that sort. Because that's what we're going to be anyway in the final analysis, a record of experience. So let's have some experience."

Another thing is -- if we get a particular slant on theology -- we get the idea that this creature, this little warm body, is placed here by a very warm-hearted creature which we call God. And he loves us, and if we love each other -- that's the rule we have to obey more than anything else -- and if we love each other and create a tremendous atmosphere of love, then this God will come down some day, and tell us how much he loves us, and take us off to an eternal happy hunting ground.

But, we never stop to think that love is something we want. We're trying to impose a condition by preaching it. Very few people stop to analyze this thing we're talking about when we're talking about love. Mostly they want people to love them. This is the complaint; it isn't the idea of love of love, it's, "Love me."

And what is love? Is it the compassion for lessers? Or is it the rapport of equals? Now if you stop and think about that a minute -- do you pick somebody that you can manipulate, or are you looking for rapport with an equal?

Can you love the unknown or a superior creature? Most people talk, you hear it in theology, about wanting to love God. How can you love a superior creature, especially one you can't see? Can you love God when you find it impossible to love anything out of your range of rapport?

Do people have rapport with or love only equals, or are they just harmonizing with particular similarities, or experiencing chemical familiarities? In other words, is chemical familiarity translatable as love? (If you find two people who harmonize chemically, having physical things in common.)

Can you love a dog? You hear a lot of this talk: "I love my dog." What type of person would claim to love a dog more than his neighbors? We find this all the time -- these people are great lovers of dogs, but hate their neighbor, especially when the neighbor doesn't like the dog. Sometimes they love the dog more than their mate.

How could such a person ever find love for a superior one? Much less a God possessing all the superlatives with which God is endowed by man?

In other words, people who manifest this tremendous emphasis on loving humanity -- I think if you run into them individually, you find out they don't love much but themselves, and they don't really truly know how to love themselves.

Is not our feeling for lesser beings one of pretended compassion, for those inferior that we can use or wish to use? This thing of loving -- your children even -- we like to pretend a compassion, we ennoble ourselves by announcing a compassion. And this gives us an ego trap; this is what it amounts to. We can work a little harder, try a little harder, if we think we're tall.

Is not our pretended love for our superiors one of inhibited envy? Loving really that which they have, which we do not have but we want -- while trying all the time to pull the envied ones down?

(Now you get into an analysis of this. You get a superior and you pretend that you love them -- you'll see this a lot in politics -- we only love them long enough to pull them down and use their head to climb on.)

To dispossess them, to rape, seduce, use, and even dominate in turn, if you can get away with it? To get but not to give? Where do all these great love affairs go six months after marriage?

What is this pretence of nobility? Is not this in every case a desire to force a projection -- a projected fictitious person which we'd like to claim to be ourself -- upon those we need to use or we need to dispossess?

It comes very easy for a person to say they love. But watch these people who say they love so much, when it comes to really laying down a bit of work for the other fellow. Or still having that same emotion, ten minutes after they're satisfied. Do we love the truth? We hear that too. Really love the truth? For instance, could we love Jesus, who many accept as the truth, who said he was the truth?

Or would we try to pervert him, tempt him, be healed by him, use him, corrupt him, drain him? Tell him that we love him -- while posing in the nude -- hoping to seduce him? Make him carnal, make him want us? Not be satisfied with love or rapport, but endlessly and relentlessly play games with Christ -- in the hopes that he would develop a lust for us, for our erogenous bodies -- so that we could be better than Christ by spitting in his eye in contempt later on?

What would we do if we really knew Christ? Would we love him?

Why is it that love has to be digestible? Why does the love of children involve ownership and smothering? Why does the love of the mate require dominance, and hate for dominance by the dominated party, and contempt for the party who is being dominated?

What strange type of person would it be that could be dominated and love the dominator, be content with it? What strange type of person is it who could be totally committed to a person and yet dominate them? Seeing in that person a great stature, in view of the fact that they can be dominated?

Are you capable of love -- or glandular sickness?

What is equality? Is anyone equal to anyone else? Is a child equal to a dying old man? Is an idiot equal to a genius? Is bestial man equal to the saint?

Are we all equal because of an indwelling essence, or is the statement a form of political euphemism?

In other words, our democratic system is based upon the equality of man -- a political euphemism. It has nothing to define that with, except for the fact that we all have a soul, and you'll never be able to prove you have a soul. But yet the whole political system is based upon the fact that we are equal, in that we all have a soul, I presume, because physically we aren't equal.

Do we really have an essence?

Some modern psychological schools claim that all we are is what you see, the reactions you get from the protoplasmic body. Are we not then little more than a pile of protoplasm, ingesting and excreting, not acting but reacting, swelling up and reproducing, chemically moved and chemically burning out, having a personality that is nothing more than a posing and positioning for body wants, and having a mentality capable of all sorts of dreams, including the dream of a soul?

Are we a soul?

Do we think, or are we forced to think? That's another ego that we have -- that we are great thinking creatures, powerful mentalities. Can we stop thinking? Try it. Try right now to stop thinking.

Do we think that we think? How can we think, if we only think that we think? Meaning that we suppose that we only imagine that we are the thinkers. Are we the thinker, or do we just imagine that we're doing it?

Or is all this caused? Is it forced upon us? If you examine your thoughts, you'll find that people have a tremendous impressionability. Television for instance, if you're not thinking of anything else, may subliminally produce results in you. Literature, drama may produce action in you.

When I was younger I'd go to a show and come out and I'd have a whole burst of determination -- that I was going to go out and do something. And half an hour later it would leave, of course. But for about thirty minutes I'd have a tremendous revolutionary burst of energy -- that I was going to change the world. Now I don't know why, but these thoughts were imposed upon me by the drama.

So -- how much of our thinking is imposed upon us? By our family, parental state of mind? Or the scholastic, teacher state of mind, or school state of mind? Companionship state of mind? And the necessity of it -- you have to think a certain way if you want to get by. So we try to twist our head, and by adjusting our personality we eventually get our thoughts inhibited or encouraged along certain lines.

Is sleep the absence of thought? Then consciousness is an endless concatenation of unavoidable thoughts, one inspiring or creating the other. One of the definitions of sleep is that it is the absence of thought or the absence of consciousness. And of course consciousness is defined by thinking; that if we're not thinking, we're unconscious. And what we seem to be are consciousness experiences -- one of an endless concatenation of thoughts, and termination in an unconsciousness of sleep.

Now is this type of consciousness the highest form of awareness possible for man? Being able to be alive and think, in which thought is physical, somatic, or molecular? Does it survive death, or even disease? We find that some people can't think just before their death; they seem to be unconscious or crazy, if you want to use that word.

Are we our thoughts? If we are not our body then are we are thoughts? Or are we the observer of our thoughts? Now everyone can realize now that we're talking about thoughts, but we are also observing them.

The question at hand here is, "What are we? Who are we?" We say well, we're not the body alone because we think. Now these thoughts may be just reactions, as some psychologists may claim. Or they may be a definite plan of our conscious being, our total consciousness, maybe our total thought plan.

Are we the observer of these thoughts? In other words -- is our body the only self? The first premise is that the body is all that we have, and that thoughts are something like little electrical impulses -- that can be recorded on a machine that will pick them up, such as an EEG machine.

Well, we're not content somehow, very few of us are content, to believe that this body with its reactions is the only self. And yet it is a definite self; it is marked by a personality. Each one of them seems to have a different little mental pose. And for awhile we may decide that this is a self that we don't want to lose.

When personality functions largely in behalf of the body, is that not the self, then? But is it the only self? As we're looking at this thing, we're looking at ourself thinking; then -- there's an observer of the thought process. Who is doing that observing?

Now it sounds sort of frightening to say, "Who is thinking about thinking?" Or, "Are we thinking or are we just thinking we're thinking; are we just watching a certain action going on?" And if so, who is this person? Who is being watched and who is watching?

A man can have an argument with himself, and this happens often. You know what I'm talking about; a man argues with himself a lot of times, especially if he has a hangover from being drunk. He may say, "You're crazy. What did you ever get yourself into that for?" Again -- there are two people there. There are two sides in combat; one of them is criticizing the other.

So we talk then about an observer. (There may be Freudian terms for these, but I don't pay too much attention to them, because they seem to include things that I don't understand, or that don't answer the question.) And this anterior observer is still a thinking creature. Now, Gurdjieff calls it the Steward, if I'm not mistaken. The steward of the mind. But this has to be a mental self, then.

So we begin to see immediately that there is more than one of us. And the observer is like an umpire over the many externalized selves, or appetites. For instance, you might get a vocal argument from your gonads, or from your stomach if you're hungry. You might get voices saying you'd better get up and get something to eat, or grab that as it goes by, because of your body. You'll get some pretty plain messages, if these egos are under pressure.

So this observer or umpire or steward is necessary to keep order among the many factors that make up our opportunity in our life.

Now is this anterior observer the soul? We might say well, this is the inner self then. Or - is there another awareness? Not necessarily thought, but the awareness of this observer, and the awareness of the whole pattern of an anterior ego or self watching other egos. Is this final awareness, which is not vocalizing what it sees, is that the true soul?

We get a better view of ourself as a viewer, by watching the view, the scene or the creation, until that leads us back into ourself. Now this is a little trick that happens in an esoteric digging such as Zen. As we watch that which is outside of us, it will eventually lead us to ourself; when you watch yourself long enough, it then becomes possible to understand the viewer.

The reason I'm harping on this point is because what we're doing all the time instead of looking for the soul of man is looking for outside effects. We're looking for a button to press, like in an automat. One button says "soda pop" and another one says

"immortality." So it's that one; put a nickel in, press the button, and out comes immortality. It becomes an objective thing.

How do you do it? You do it by eating certain macrobiotic foods, and you'll live forever. Or you do it by chanting a certain mantra, and you will become transformed or translated. Or you say certain prayers, and you get the deities on your side, and they pick up this cruddy little animal and make an immortal being out of him.

So, we're going to try to look at the thing. We're going to try to look at ourselves. And what makes a dependable looker, a dependable viewer?

And we define this: We say there are people who are smart, and there are people who are not so smart. The people who aren't so smart don't get the answer. And we equate this of course with answers such as how smart the guy is who can get four rabbits, as compared with the guy who comes home with a rat. One is smart and the other is stupid. So the person who can come home with a million bucks is much more intelligent than the person who is sitting in some shanty on the other side of the tracks.

But regardless, we realize that there is a mentality of accomplishment and a mentality of non-accomplishment. And we call it sanity. Now we're in the province of psychology again. There are different ways, as I said before, of finding out who we are. (The second question or step.) One of them is the religious way. That is, taking someone's word for it that either knows or pretends to know. It's generally a subjective path, in which you are largely required to believe.

Then we have another method of finding out who we are, and this is the psychological path, which tries to analyze the brain processes or the mind processes, doing it scientifically and methodically. This is a true self-knowledge process, and this is very similar to Zen.

And then there is a third method. And that is going directly into the head. And this is one of the four precepts or directions given by Bodhidharma. The fourth one is: "Direct pointing at the soul of man." That is, you can't do too much speculation or argumentation - just go. Just look inside. And don't even go to too much bother to read books on how to look inside. It's there - the inside is there - just look.

So this is the third system. (Now, it may be pretty hard to understand in just a few words.) And of course, we're concerned when we look inside, with what we look into - the mind. What is the mind?

Is it possible for the viewer to know himself by knowing the view - by knowing the actions of the body of the viewer - and then of going directly to the viewer, looking inside of the viewer himself? This is a meditational technique. And this is the whole trip.

We like to place a tremendous lot of attention on the senses. We like to play, "Let's experiment, let's get this down in a formula, let's try to chalk a blueprint for going inside,

in the most efficient way." Of course - I say again that one person can help another - there are some formulas. But I don't think it's a good idea to write them down in a book, because they're not universally applicable.

After we look inside we start to see that things aren't what we previously thought they were. And we begin to get strongly the impression that a tremendous lot of that which we experience in life is illusory. What you discover is not what other people estimate life to be.

And this is what I was referring to when I first started talking. That when people get this far into Zen, or into the approach to nirvikalpa samadhi, they become frightened - because they realize that this world is going to change. Reality is not that which we hope we see now.

It's like you're looking at a hologram. I saw one in a university someplace. This is a tubular thing, and you get the impression that there is a real thing in the middle - but all it is is a picture. So if this is possible - that we can look right at something two feet away from us and be subject to an illusion - how much of the universe is a hologram? How much of it is, as Einstein says, that which curves in space? That it isn't really infinitely out there, it's just curved into space.

And this thing about space: What is space, and what is time? These are questions that everyone takes for granted. They take it for granted, yet they believe. Everyone has moments when the idea gets into their head, "How can I know of heaven and how can I know of everything that is to come?" or, "How can I know the nature of everything that is?"

We get the idea of this tremendous unending universe, in which we are microscopic, even our planet is microscopic, and we are much more microscopic and much more insignificant. And how insignificant are we? We're able to think about the insignificance - or think about the relation. Now inside of this tremendous gigantic cosmos - now this is a seeming tendency of people, to say, "Now this is too vast for me to encompass, so I'm not going to pursue this study any longer."

But still - if you do not give up - you say, "Well, I realize I can't get into geology and analyze the substance of the earth and I can't become an astronomer and spend thirty years studying stars just to find out what my relation is to the cosmos." Because of the simple fact that it's even greater than that. It's manifest that there are dimensions that we don't see, interpenetrating this dimension. So that even if we were able to understand this dimension, to pick up these others would require work, time, a century perhaps, of individual effort.

So what is behind this? Should we surrender and say, "Well, it's too big a job"? Or can we stubbornly pursue our curiosity and come up with a result?

I used to say: "What is time? Is it the number of thoughts in a step?" How can you measure thought? How can you measure the duration of a thought? And, if you can measure a thought, if you can relate back to the mind - it's very difficult if not impossible to measure a thought and then give a clock figure of that thought. Because very much of our thoughts are split-second states of awareness - some psychologists claim that a long dream will occur in just a few seconds, which we may think lasts two or three days in the dream.

Another thought I want to leave with you: "Can we be saved, or has everything already happened?" Is it too late? Is the world a big block of solid ice in which we're running around here in a trance - or is there hope of change? If there is no hope of change - then why worry? Why do anything?

Can we afford that answer? To pretend that everything's already happened? I mean - it might be a nice thought, or it might be a painful thought, at the same time you might be able to permit yourself to live with it. But can you live with it? Nobody does. The existentialist, the fatalist - he goes out and works for a living. He doesn't stay home because he's fated to be fed. He doesn't really believe.

Nobody totally believes in fatalism or existentialism. They ultimately get out, when their energy runs down, and they do something to build it up.

Now, is there a method of finding the real self - using this inadequate vehicle that we've been describing, or this lower self? This is the big question.

Now - again I say manifestly there are ways. We have evidence down through the ages - strangely enough even in what we like to consider today barbaric times. There is evidence of men who have reached an understanding of what it was all about. And I quote Plato's Republic, the story of the man in the cave, and sacred writings - if you want to call them that, they're just old books - from India. Some of them are reflected in Ramana Maharshi's works: the descriptions of sahaja samadhi. The descriptions of the final enlightenment in some Zen writings. (And, some Zen writings are confusing on what the real enlightenment is.)

The logical mind and the scientific processes will not take you there. I majored in chemistry when I went to college - I thought I was going to use this chemical education to analyze matter, analyze the the brain tissue if necessary and find out about thought, for instance. And after awhile I realized that chemistry was something that was becoming infinitely complex - the more I studied the more there was to know. The more that was discovered the more fields there were to study in. And I realized that I would never approach the answer with the logical computing mind. Regardless of having computers to help.

I sensed that there had to be a direct method. This is all I knew at first - you had to have some direct short-cut. Whether that was to press a button, or some profound drug experience that would do it - whatever it would take, I decided I was going to try. If

somebody proposed one - I tried to find a guru or a wise man, somebody that had a few hints even. I looked for people with little bits of knowledge.

And I came to the conclusion that man has to become. He cannot learn. He can learn a tremendous lot - but after he becomes, he finds out his learning was useless.

The whole process then is one of becoming. And this is a change of being, because the present being is incompetent. The present senses are inadequate. So we look for a system in which the being or the vehicle changes, the radio set is adjusted so that a new wavelength can be picked up, if you want to call it that.

And then of course there's the next one: "How do we find this? How do we find this system?"

Now, how you find it - you have to go through the existing systems. The Hindu system as founded by Ramana Maharshi - you look it over, and if it's found good and if there's a method there, you may try it. Or you may get into Zen, and you may get into Christian mysticism.

But you have to have some intuition, or you'll be led blindly by emotion. You may have a charismatic guru, or books that are filled with sciences about how you're going to get there, and you may take that instead of the more direct or difficult way.

So consequently, you've got another step immediately: How do we find the intuition? How do we develop it?

Everybody has it as a child. Everyone has it at the peak in their childhood. And you have to develop or regain the basic intuition of your childhood. Children have good computers, they've got clear heads, they haven't been burnt or loused up too badly, and they have a good appraisal.

Now of course, they are emotionally led, out of their childhood. This is one of the things that destroys children - the love of the parents. I maintain that children have very clear heads, and they have a very clear perspective, possibly even of both sides of their existence, that is, their eternal existence and their knowledge existence.

But they are called out of this. Completely called out. Forced to learn a language, forced to go through certain things in order to function in this stageplay. And as they're called out, they get away from their innocence and their clearheadedness, and they lose their intuition. They become specialized, and they become verbal, and that sort of thing. So consequently they learn confusion. They accept the language.

Incidentally, I think the Tower of Babel is symbolic of the deterioration of man into specialized knowledge and consequently confusion. He loses his way to heaven - heaven being that which is within. The true state is within.

Now you don't find what I'm talking about in Zen; Zen doesn't talk about finding your intuition. Although it does enjoin you to continually keep your attention on the problem until it's solved.

Now if you keep your attention on any phase of searching, you'll eventually find a way of searching. If you keep your attention on ways of searching, you'll eventually find one you can put to use, and you'll find some results in it.

I maintain that it's possible for every human of average intelligence to find the answer.

Words have positive intention, but often in a negative type of definition.

In other words, we can take the word "apple." Most of us know that which an apple is - but try to define it to a person who has never seen an apple, or to someone who just demands a definition from you to challenge your knowledge on the matter.

So we say that an apple is a fruit. And the person wants us to define "fruit," and we get into an endless description of biological classifications to show mostly the types of fruit that an apple is not, down to the types of plants that are not fruit-bearing. Because we must define by distinguishing that apple. Not by describing its uniqueness, but by making it unique by describing everything else and then saying or implying that an apple is not all of these things.

The shortcut of course is to seize an apple and say, "This is an apple." Then if a person persists in childish sophistry by saying that it might be an illusion foisted upon the observer, then of course the proper thing to do, or the most propitious thing to do, would be to hit him with the apple. Definition has run its course. Subjective evaluation will produce no more meaning. The only thing left for the student is the apple experience.

So the student approaches the teacher and tries to get that teacher to define the Truth. The teacher knows that the truth must be an experience, not a bit of wisdom gained by argument, but he also knows that he must communicate with the student in the student's language. And hope by a special type of answer to illustrate and convince the student that language can be an everlasting tangent.

So he says, "The truth is a white swan gliding upon blue waters."

And the student replies, "I do not understand. Does the swan always have to be white?"

And the teacher replies, "Make it any color that you wish."

Then the student comes back, "Then why did you say that the swan is white, if it can be any color?"

And the teacher again enigmatically replies, "My swan is white, but I cannot expect you to see it." And saying this he gets up and leaves, hoping that the student in the quiet

that follows will understand that truth, like the swan, cannot be identified when it refers to the absolute nature of man; yet it is a fact that can be grasped somehow.

In the absolute sense the truth is a white swan, it is a lake, it is even an apple. It is also a black swan, or it is an ocean, or it is even a plum. You can make it any color you wish, for all objects, even though they are illusion or imaginings, may exist absolutely - but only as projections, illusions, or imaginings.

The thing to be aware of is the fact that the swan, the lake and the world may not exist at all as we see them. Even though, our short-lived body and limited senses must be able to touch the absolute and hence be related to it, because the teacher - in such a body and with such senses that are primarily and manifestly subject to error and individual coloration - while in that erroneous body, has found this truth.

And consequently he has survived, or transcends, the individual coloration that he goes through to find his absolute answer.

The swan is a swan, for all eternity. The swan at the same time may not exist at all except as a projection. The swan is as real as the mountains, and the mountains are as real as the planet, and the planet is as real as the visible constellations. But all of this may be a projection or an illusion.

But if man and the swan are projections, and they appear to our minds as real, then before we could ever demand of ourselves the acceptance of man and swan as not-being, it is evident that such a truth could only be observed with any degree of conviction by another mind. Since our mind believes that we are substance.

Zen would then be a system of looking at man with another mind.

If man is to look at himself objectively he has to first realize that he is not really scientific about himself, and he must take a first step and assume the position of scrutinizer, of impartial observer, and not listen to the self-definitions of the man under the microscope.

If we just take the idea that it is possible for man to be projecting a false picture of himself, and it is possible that man is defining himself according to that which he wants to believe himself to be, or according to ideas forced upon him by prenatal programming, then we have no other course as laboratory scientists except to set up a system that carefully takes note of such projection possibilities, and qualify all findings, statements, and conclusions with the reminder that such a projection might be there.

So we say that a swan is white - but it may be black. We say that black is black, but it might also be the absence of color. We say that a swan is on the lake, but the swan and the lake may very well not be there.

Now you might say at this point, "Is this really common sense, to keep qualifying everything that is witnessed?" I do not think it is so necessary to keep qualifying everything, once you know that we are relative creatures viewing a relative world. We go back immediately to things that seem more certain and avoid things that are manifestly erroneous.

In other words, we have to live with a world of swans and mountains until we can function with a mentality that demonstrates, if ever, that the swan exists only as a projection of ourself or some other mind-self.

The real common sense lesson behind this swan-episode is the realization once and for all time that man is not going to reach an understanding of reality by a type of reasoning that accepts things as his body vehicle sees them, or as his desires wish to see them.

He must be objective, even though that objectivity requires that he qualify every conclusion with the chances or percentages for error that lie in the human factors: the limitations of the senses; the ability to project things which even our neighbors project differently; the ability to accept concepts, theories, or ideas that are born in fears and desires of all men.

So I maintain that it's common sense to first admit that we do not have a perfect system, or science, or definition.

And it is common sense to note that a man could be more objective about the analysis of the cat or the mouse than he could be about his analysis of himself. (In other words we can very objectively dissect other creatures or analyze them, quite convinced that we're not taking the animal's psychology into consideration and allowing it to color our findings.) We must find some way to detach ourself from our specimen, if man wishes to be objective about the study of man, i.e., about himself.

It would appear that we will get nowhere by continually questioning everything that appears to mankind as being a fact or factual object. I don't deny that to do only that - to evaluate and hesitate forever to take any stand, or to accept any premise because of the finite or fickle nature of man's mind - would cause a stalemate that would put a stop to any future investigation or prospecting.

There is a way out of this. There is a way around this seeming dilemma of - "Shall we accept things, or shall we before we move deny everything, or question everything?" We keep in mind our fickle mind and try to plan around it.

Most of the writings on Zen do not get into psychology much. If self-psychological systems were taught in old Zen schools, it must have been done privately; perhaps the koans were goads to force each student to come to the same conclusion, but each in his own way.

While much of thinking is not truly objective, each of us must keep on thinking, because the problem is not solved by just admitting that our heads are messed-up with body-oriented ideas or desire-born concepts.

Our first reaction is to rationalize that we cannot plan around our own mind. And this is not true. Religion for centuries has been at the task of planning around the instinctive or natural directions of man's mind. Our civilization and perhaps our technology may well not have been what they are today if man had not inhibited some of his more body-oriented appetites, or had not transmuted them into mental energies that led to technological advances.

I personally depart from the limitations of what is called traditional Zen - from the limitations that inadequate literature about Zen impels upon us.

Zen is a mental system. And the field of the mind is its battlefield. We hear that the battle to know the mind may well wipe out the battlefield. Meaning that in the process of analyzing the mind we may destroy the specimen.

Since Zen is a mental system essentially, it comes within the province of psychology. And it is either something that enhances psychology or detracts from psychological discoveries. And naturally, I assume that it not only enhances psychology, but it is the best system of understanding the mind that has ever existed.

It is vastly different from Western psychology. Western psychology attempts to build a system based upon the observation of the effects of stimuli upon the body. This is the reaction-science, or behavioral psychology. It relates to the body, not the mind of man. Our psychologists will answer this accusation by saying that there is nothing but a sort of somatic-mind: that's all there is, just what you see. Man is only that which you see, and if man has any attributes besides what you see, they can be traceable or witnessed through the body.

All of this is an attempt to be scientific, but the error lies in trying to analyze intangibles in a test tube. And arguing that it is not the chemist's fault that the mind or thought under observation can't be made visible, tangible, and capable of proving its own existence.

In other words, the chemist-psychologist just says, "Well, the thought doesn't exist, like you think it does; there's nothing outside of the body - those are just reactions, sometimes they're copied by electrical readings, on an electroencephalograph - but they're just electrical impulses that accompany certain reactions. And you can't prove otherwise." So he blames the thought itself for not being able to manifest itself more clearly, you might say.

The mind, like electricity, is, and like electricity cannot be weighed. But it can be measured by its effects. What it boils down to is monism as opposed to dualism. The current trend is to simply deny anything which cannot be scrutinized with the tools with which we are limited.

But we have diverged too much. I want to get back to the system of simplicity - of doing things simply and directly - that will lead us to full realization of the final state of reality or existence.

This system says that there's garbage and then there is stuff that smells worse than garbage. Discrimination is largely the ability to know the difference.

So that when a man comes to us and announces that he can multiply our money for us in a few seconds by hiding it under his house in a paper bag overnight while we chant mantras in the attic - we don't bother to trust that man with our money. We just don't think that common sense would advise that type of risk.

We avoid the obvious charlatan unless we are very stupid or retarded. We will avoid charlatans in proportion to our stupidity or good sense. People who put their life savings into a bag and hand it over to a stranger have spent their lives foolishly.

People who dedicate a life's energy to the first system they encounter (which is generally through their parents) may well be spending their life foolishly.

To be alert for false concepts, and to keep alert to the idea that we can be duped, even by ourselves, we set up yardsticks. These yardsticks help us to sort the garbage.

Man cannot approach the Truth. (That which I call "capital-T Truth". Small-t truth is just the evident, the everyday things that we accept, i.e., a lie that we recognize, or something in chemistry or science that we generally all agree upon to be true. Whereas capital-T Truth refers to the final state of things.)

Capital-T Truth relates to the final essence of man. The anterior observer of all that man is, and if possible, the qualities and conditions of that kind of essence and its relation to all other being.

Man cannot approach that which he does not yet know. It is like saying, "Let us go to the planet Theos," before knowing beforehand where it is, and before knowing that which is needed to make the trip. If the trip is going to take us two hundred years, we might find a way to build a faster ship; but there is no way at all to find the planet Theos if we do not know where it is.

The truth is a postulation only, until it is reached. There is an attempt to postulate theological truths, and then try to prove things which may have no bearing in fact at all, but were things which we just wanted to believe.

The sum total of all theological and transcendental findings is an unproven mass. And we must work with it, because we have no other data to work with, except with dogmas which evolved from concept structures.

Then there can be no other way [to approach the truth, that which we do not yet know] except to retreat from the erroneous human methods of thinking, all the while closing only the doors that lead us into manifest absurdities. This is the technique of the reverse vector.

We become a vector which searches for the truth (small-t and capital-T), and we live the truth to the best of our ability. Then we are a vector at least. And as is the testimony of every sage that found the ultimate state of existence, we later find that this is the universal method of the becoming, that results in a gradual change of being.

"Milk from thorns" is pretty much what it sounds like. We are animals, who may evolve into self-sentient beings. (In other words, we can get something perhaps more sublime out of rather crude material.) And it is not in pretending that we have as humans a perfect system, or the only system, that we will take the giant step into being and reality. It is rather from taking and observing the phony philosophies and religions, and avoiding their basis in wishful thinking, that we will make any progress. We can't make any progress by just accepting things.

Reversing the vector is also called backing away from untruth. There are many religions on the earth that profess to chart the skypath to the planet Theos. However, by the use of yardsticks and by examining religions persistently with the idea of sorting and discarding the manifestly absurd, for those less absurd, we will arrive where there is less and less absurdity, and where with new courage we can evolve only in the direction of true choosing.

In other words, this is basically an idea of gravity. Evidently - if you train yourself to avoid the untrue, to reject and reject and reject as you find stuff absurd, you can only go in the opposite direction. Your intuition, your whole mental systems, are going to be skilled or directed or trained to move into a computation that is valid as opposed to something that you'd just like to believe because you're tired.

For instance, a long time ago we decided that human sacrifice was absurd, in the practice of religion. And later we may decide that burning candles or turning prayer wheels would be equally absurd, or would leave no impression on an intelligence of God that transcends the galaxies, according to the beliefs of that particular religion at least.

In this system of thinning out the religions and transcendent movements we find less and less confusion. We find after awhile that nearly all of the major religions are ninety percent mumbo-jumbo, and that ninety percent of the remaining lesser religions emanated from them.

Then we run across an arcane system, or a system that calls itself transcendental or metaphysical, which seems to agree with some of the mumbo-jumbo content of the major religions, and we decide that we have found the truth. But - then again it may be

that we are committing the old error of joining that which agrees with us on some prejudice or other. Which we'll have to check.

I mentioned yardsticks before, but didn't elaborate on the word: Yardsticks are a means of measuring the religion or system under appraisal without taking years to argue down every premise or pretense of the particular movement.

For instance, some of the yardsticks are the motivations of the particular movement. To see - if it is motivated by money or power. I have without hesitation walked away from movements which charge enormous fees, or which are more interested in power than in helping someone look for the truth.

Other yardsticks measure them for ritual, pageantry, and dogma. Some religions, lodges, and movements have become Roman circuses, attempting to assuage the fevers of the unsatisfied minds with pageantry and mummery.

There are still other yardsticks. We must measure the movements to see if they appeal to our fears, or to our desire. We must measure them to see if they are deliberately soporific: Trying to put us to sleep, trying to soothe, trying to placate the troubled people who are concerned about their immortality.

We must examine them to see if they are trying to compensate our weariness, by offering gimmicks and formulas that will enable our souls to develop while we sleep - or they might give us secret words that will supposedly overnight transform us from pumpkins into celestial potentates of some sort.

At this point a person might argue about the utilitarian values of Zen, or point out that Zen is largely a system with an unattainable goal, and that while we accuse other religions or systems of being time wasters, it seems evident that since the goal of Zen, meaning Enlightenment, is very difficult to attain, then a large percentage of dedicated Zen students waste their time, because of the mathematical percentages of failures.

In reply to this, first I must make the claim that the goal is not unattainable, while admitting that not all who start searching wind up at the desired goal. However, if Zen were ruled out because of the percentages of dropouts or failures, then the field of medicine might be a waste of time, for the undergraduates who were washed out of the class before graduating.

We all know that every system of merit has its casualties. And I do not criticize the major religions for being time-wasters except for those people capable of transcending the goals of those religions. In other words, the religions are good in themselves - they satisfy a certain level of people - but there are religions that are a waste of time for people whose goals are different or higher.

The religions we talk about are important, and although many people seemingly are wasting their time in them, each religion is a vehicle for its constituents. And each needs the other; that is, both religion and the people on that level need each other.

I like to go back to the early days of my own search, when I knew the odds that were against me. In the first place, I did not know that Enlightenment was a goal; in fact, I did not even know what was meant by Enlightenment. I knew that I did not know myself. Nor did I know anything about the relation of my religion to the general picture of man, much less that of the universe.

I had vague ideas of reality being things that could be apprehended with the senses. And I had a vague idea that there must be a God, or so many people would not be talking about one. God was some sort of invisible being who had made a material, substantial universe for reasons unknown to everyone.

I decided to define myself. To find out the score. And I came to the conclusion that life was not worth living if I did not know who was living. I realized that I could submit to the herd patterns, and get something of an adventure out of just living and accepting things as everyone else did. But I also realized that I would be living in a sort of fool's paradise - that need not be a fool's paradise.

I knew that the making of the search for truth as my tantamount goal might cost me. I might find death or insanity as the price of the searching. I had heard of people going insane over religion, and I had heard of people impairing their health with ascetic techniques.

I decided that despite these possibilities, life could only be endurable if I were making an attempt to find the reasons for life. I did not have any advance proof that I would find the answer. But I decided that even if I failed to find the truth, and seemingly wasted my life looking, I still would prefer that prospect of failure to a situation where I had not even tried.

In my perspective, life is wasted if you do not define yourself. It is better to die trying. At least that leaves behind a record of struggle, rather than a record of despair.

But there is more to it than these two alternatives of realization or despair. These two extremes are only viewed as possibilities that a student measures when he starts out on the path. There are milestones along the way, and experiences along the path, that make the search rewarding even in a utilitarian society.

And also, incidentally, there are other things that we discover as we go along - that sort of reinforce our belief or feelings or intuition, that we are getting someplace; that it isn't all going to wind up in despair. It's not all a blind struggle clear through to the end, although much is undefined until every thing is defined. Still we begin to feel that we're gaining momentum on the field of not-knowing, the field of ignorance.

People outside of the Zen groups who have relatives in such groups, can only see their brothers and sons victimized or having their time wasted. This is because everybody looks upon his own efforts, regardless of what these efforts are, even if it's a business, as being the most important thing for anybody to do; he doesn't just say, "It's important for me."

Most people identify their desired path, whether it is business or religion, as being the proper thing to do, and they look upon themselves as being wise deciders. And regardless of what any of their relatives are in, if it's different, they'll take a dim view of it.

We get the idea from various remarks that most people take a dim view about looking for the absolute nature of things.

The truth of the matter is that everyone wants all the truth he can get, but he does not want to put out too much effort. We find that the average person gets very excited about relative truth, but he is inclined to leave matters of an absolute nature up to people whom he considers experts in that field. Meaning, people in churches - that have been chartered by the state to instruct about things of an absolute nature.

All men want the truth. They want to know the truth about business dealings, they want to know new truths about electronics and materials so that they can have more comforts and more killing capacity. Technology is based upon relative, scientific truth-finding, and such truths lead us to a more complicated society, and lead us to discover better methods of fighting wars.

I maintain that all relative truth must lead to a desire to know more truth, and to ultimately try to get at the capital-T Truth behind all the enigmas of life.

There are three major questions that we mentioned before, that satisfy this lack of knowing the different enigmas of life. And I know that the answering of those three questions sounds like a big order. But man's curiosity about these matters is always there, even though man only works at answering those questions when he has little else to do.

For instance, let us take the business of our origin, or our condition before birth, if there was any existence before birth. When we think about birth we cannot help thinking of time - past time - and this brings us immediately to think of future time, the time not yet experienced.

We immediately accept the time measurement systems handed us by our parents and ancestors, and we find that our birth was located in time according to the movements of the sun and the earth. The earth turns on its axis every twenty-four hours and that is a day; the earth floats around the sun, and that's our measurement for the year.

We get the idea that time is an endless ribbon or strand, beginning infinitely way back in previous ages and extending up until now, where it is being spontaneously manufactured. In other words, we really have the idea that the future does not exist, only the word "future" to define that which as yet does not exist.

This idea about the future enables us to feel important, capable of forming our own future - so we'd like to think. If we set to work out our own future and if it does not happen the way we planned it, we feel guilty. And this guilt is the result of an artificially implanted conviction of capability to change the future. Which then is followed by a feeling that we went about things wrong, or else we would have been able to effect the changes in our environment that we wanted to.

It may be important for us to determine whether the feeling of importance about our capabilities for changing the future is keeping us from possibly realizing that there may not be a future; or that our ability to change that future is more limited than we suspected.

All of this means that time may not be the ribbon whose near end is constantly being created. It may be that the whole ribbon is already formed, and the future is just that which we have not yet experienced.

The basic difference between Asian and European, or eastern and western, thinking lies in the different appraisals of the time strand. Oriental philosophy and conduct are more passive and more fatalistic; western thinking would be more willful.

To the eastern thinker we are like impulsive children, beating our heads against things that cannot be changed, at least to the degree that we think we are changing them. We look upon the oriental as a sort of phlegmatic fool, who has been defeated so completely that all initiative is lost.

We fail to take note that some of our most admired thinkers and spiritual leaders in the western world took a position that implied that they were only pawns in a game already determined as to the outcome. Both Einstein and Ouspensky had space-time concepts that had been accepted in other terminology by eastern philosophic minds. What Einstein was able to put down in mathematical form had already been stated by many Tibetan and Indian scholars.

The space-time continuum concept tells us that there is no time separate from space and no space separate from time. We do not know that a mile is a mile until we measure it, and it takes a given amount of time to measure it. This implies that unless you take time and apply it to a given space, you can't realize that space; a given space depends upon the amount of time it takes to reach it, to reach from one point to another.

We talk of light-years, but to find this we measure the distance that light travels in a second, and multiply that by the number of seconds in a year; the answer is a unit called a light-year. But to get that designation "light-year," we had to first get a spatial

measurement, so that the word light-year is really a spatial measurement whose computation is arrived at only by relating it to time, a year. And a year is a configuration of a planet around another star in space; a complete circle in space is one year, a half-circle is six months.

(What I'm trying to say is that this is a synonymous way of understanding this business of space and time. That a year may be something of "duration" to us, but a year is actually a circle around the sun by the earth.)

Zen has its origins in eastern attitudes or philosophies that take into consideration at least the possibility that much of the game is already fixed - now I didn't say all of it - and that it is a good idea for us to look into the real state of things as they are before going through some absurd process of trying to change things that cannot be changed.

We hear much talk in Zen of phrases like "no-mind" and "non-action," but these terms are misleading. The person who has reached the state so ineptly described as no-mind is responsive yet, and is using the same type of mind that we have when he communicates with us about no-mind.

There is an implication of such a change of mental attitude or ability that makes our present mentality look like no mind at all, yet both mental realizations or states are aware of the other: We are aware of the man talking about no-mind, and the man in the state of no-mind is aware of talking to us, and he's aware of our state of mind.

The whole game is for the somatic mind, our present mind, to be aware by some means of an eternal mind or essence. The term non-action does not imply physical atrophy, but rather a detachment from action. The attitude becomes like, "In God I live and move and have my being; in myself I am nothing."

This latter is a Christian statement that involves postulating a God, if the speaker had not yet reached some point of illumination. The term non-action is not quite so authoritative. It implies: "What do you think you are able to do?" or, "Someone else may be pulling your strings."

Now I started all of this a little while ago by trying to show that the three seemingly simple questions that any person wants to answer about his nature, origin, and destiny, can lead to deep thinking if we really want to contemplate answers.

Another point immediately comes up: To do all this deep thinking, a person would have to have a specific special life-style. He could not worry twelve hours a day about getting food for his family or worry about getting killed in the urban jungle life, or worry about his health or about a disease killing him on the way to the truth. He has to take care of the body, or the mind will never know what it missed if the body is cut down.

A way of life becomes necessary. And I maintain that we do not have to join a monastery, but we either have to join forces with people equally interested in protecting

themselves and each other, or we have to design a lifestyle or curriculum of our own, figuring in every possible factor - which means figuring in hundreds of factors that a close-knit group would not have to worry about.

This way of life is a factor that is both necessary and something that appeals to the common sense of anyone trying to accomplish anything worthwhile. We know we have to work with our colleagues; the corporate form is more successful than the individual business or even the partnership.

You may set out to get rich, to make a million. You will find that you are not getting very far alone, and decide to form a partnership. But the partnership form is limited, and you find yourself liable for the partner's debts and inhibited by the limited talents, capital, and energy of your partner. You finally become incorporated, and you find that you can write a lot more expenses off and avoid taxation by expansion. You seem to have a lot more capital available if you wish to sell stock, and your business can grow by leaps and bounds.

You may get rich or you may lose everything, regardless of the corporate form. But you will never regret forming the corporation, saying and knowing that that was the only way to go.

The same common sense applies to a spiritual adventure. You find that you cannot get too far alone; you have to read books that someone else wrote - so why not talk to the guy that wrote the book? You know that you have a limited perspective, so you want to talk over your evaluations with someone who has read similar books, or talk to worthwhile teachers.

So you form a partnership of sorts. The partnership may soon involve a half dozen serious people, but you soon find that the partners do not put in as much energy as you do, or they become leaners who drain your energy.

The next step is to form a group, or to join a group, that is large enough that most of the personality frictions, periodic energy lows, and diversification of spiritual directions will be diffused or dispersed within the large membership. The membership will also afford to spend much of its surplus energy together, and many things can be accomplished that would never be accomplished by an individual or several individuals working alone.

Talents of many types will appear within the group, and make possible the investigation of many directions. Teachers may even appear in the ranks. But a significant thing must be remembered: This spiritual corporation can fail. The whole thing can go down the drain. Or the corporation may survive, but a particular individual may not get the goal that prompted him to join.

But - can that individual really say that the system was a mistake? That he wasted his time? Like the man who incorporated, he must realize that regardless of success or failure it was the only way to go.

The truth of the matter is that there are things to gain along the way, even if complete or absolute success is not achieved. This point is something I want to emphasize, in talking about Zen. There are fringe benefits. Win or lose the jackpot, you really cannot lose, because Zen is a psychological system, and you can become a better psychologist as more time is spent in Zen.

You get to know your head better, and you get to know other people's heads better. You know a lot more about human capability and motivation. And you learn not to get excited if you lose a few marbles in a marble game.

You also get to relax more with the seeming traumas of life. Because once you understand that this is perhaps a drama of sorts that you're not going to change - once you realize that you can't change it - you realize that something else that is more let's say capable, has set up the rules for the game and the rules for the drama, and you just sort of relax and don't try to change them.

When you come to this particular point of conviction, or let's say point of surrender or point of acceptance, it's then that life becomes considerably easier. Instead of becoming wrapped up and being capable of having tremendous anxieties about things going wrong with us, we're able to sort of step back and observe the whole process, as a person would a picture.

Some of it might be - I don't say it isn't unpleasant - but at the same time, a tremendous lot of things that we consider unpleasant will be avoided. And I'd say that ninety percent of the things we consider unpleasant aren't really worth the worry, two weeks later when we look back upon them; they weren't worth the temper or the anger or the frustration that we go through, making crises out of every little encounter with other human beings, or crises out of every sickness or little cough that our children get.

And we're able to ride out this tide of adversity, that is caused by our association with other human beings, much more easily.

It's not that I'm trying to endorse a utilitarian value for Zen; I'm just saying that you don't become a recluse. It's not necessary to become a person who rejects society, you become a person in the final analysis who understands society, a little better.

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The above transcription is from Richard Rose's 1974 lecture. If you like the dynamism and spontaneity of Richard Rose as speaker and teacher, please read his books, which are available at www.rosepublications.net or www.tatfoundation.org.