

Talk at Kent State University – February 6, 1975

by Richard Rose

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Tonight the objective is not to lay out a detailed philosophy – although we do have a system and I'd like to give a general view of it – but to, let's say, try to touch every mind, and the level of every mind. In other words, everyone's got some experience or background I presume. I believe everyone here, everyone in the world, is a seeker of truth. Some define it differently, that's all. For some it's scientific truth. But the beginning of any direction that's truthful, if it's pursued, would include anything that has truth in it.

But still we find that people in esoteric philosophic fields are at odds with each other – because they don't understand each other. This is explained somewhat as people being on different levels, with different capacities. Perhaps that's true. Gurdjieff tried to categorize these capacities, and did a fairly good job of showing the main theme in people's lives as instinctive, emotional, intellectual and philosophic. There are probably other systems of categorizing mental effort, but we find this is a good one for philosophic minds at least.

Not only this but there's a question of reading experience. A lot of people here have read perhaps deeply on Zen and have something of an intuition about what the core of it is, and perhaps some have read absolutely nothing on Zen. And I don't mean that you have to read something on Zen to understand what I'm talking about – I don't intend to get into a lot of technical terminology.

But still there will be different levels of understanding. And I hope to say enough to spark some conversation between us, because I think it's not good to have just a one-sided talk, to have me sit here and preach to you. I don't think it was ever intended that a person who is functioning in Zen should preach.

¹ <http://direct-mind.org/index.php5?title=1975-0206-Kent-State>
For access send email to: editors@direct-mind.org

But I'll try to explain a little bit of what we are and what we're doing. As Don said, we've been here awhile and we have places in Pittsburgh, in Columbus, Ohio and now in Cleveland at Case Western Reserve. Case Western just started this last September [1974].

But we've been in Kent for several years, and enough people have had dealings with me to know that we're not here to rake off or to grab the share of the gravy that follows toward the hucksters of spiritual matters – mainly because I think that as soon as you set a price, why, that's your price, that's all you're worth.

Pyramid Zen Society

Now the Pyramid Zen Society – getting back to what we are – we chose the word pyramid for several reasons, the most important being that all energy, all human endeavor is pyramidal in form. Anything that humans do, whether it's in business, in politics, the field of learning or the field of spirituality, religion, is pyramidal in form. That means that for every millionaire you have a base of a pyramid of perhaps a million poor people. And for every man who reaches an exalted state of consciousness you'll have a million people who do not reach it.

This is not necessarily given forth as a symbol to discourage people, but to call it like it is and make no pretense that all of you are going to be led to some spiritual height just by joining a group, that it will happen.

There's a lot of it that is planted within you; there are certain capabilities that possibly you are born with. I don't know what the factors are, all of them. But I do know that we sift a lot of people. We have had the experience over the last few years of coming into universities where there are fifteen or twenty thousand people, putting up posters and an ad in the paper perhaps – so that we would try to see that this was before the view of the larger percentage of the students.

And of these fifteen or twenty thousand people you'll see the pyramid forming, so to speak. Perhaps out of those we've had from fifty to a hundred people who would show up. Now these are not all dedicated people. Not all of you people are dedicated; some of you come out of curiosity, and there are sundry reasons for people coming.

But out of those hundred people it's almost a predictable percentage who will remain. The group eventually precipitates down to a dozen people out of a hundred. By a dozen I mean a dozen people who continue in the group year after year. So we're not trying to sell something on the open market. We're appealing to everyone, but we're aware beforehand that only a small percentage are going to respond in the final showdown.

Another reason for the use of a pyramid is similar to the "law of three". In this book that I've written [Albigen Papers] I mention some laws that I have encountered in my life that

I think help in the spiritual path. There's quite a little list of them, and one of them is the law of three.

The law of three represents the threefold manner in which all work must be done: you must work with your body and you must work with your mind, and in the combination of the two hope to promote work on a spiritual level.

The work for instance on the physical level from our viewpoint is similar to the admonition of Christ and Buddha both, that there's a threefold method of working. It's called the way, the truth and the life; the Buddha, the dharma and the sangha.

We must work with a brotherhood – you don't *have* to, a lot of people have achieved this by themselves; there are some cases who have done it – but the more fluid way to work is with a group. And while working with the group you also have to work with yourself. And while working with yourself of course you have to practice the truth. You can't just say, "Well, it doesn't matter, it's just a matter of learning mental gimmicks or something by which your mind will be manipulated and a result will be an escape from the relative dimension."

To define the Pyramid Zen Society I could tell you better what it is not. There's naturally some curiosity of why we call ourselves a Zen society. I'm not addicted to Zen as a method of enlightenment. I say that any method through which you can reach enlightenment is good. And I know there have been Christian mystics; I know of one who is possibly still alive,² who had a profound case of enlightenment, and he never saw a book on Zen.

Zen

But Zen is a combination of a psychoanalytic method plus a direct method of going into the head, where you do not have to be involved in and consequently more or less clouded by religious dogma or beliefs in the process of doing it. So I chose this.

I also chose it because I happened to have had two teachers in Zen,^{3 4} and they particularly helped me to demonstrate or to transmit effectively – which you don't get from the ordinary solitary-type of enlightenment.

I was over at the radio station taping a little thing for a program,⁵ and a fellow at the station commented on the many different movements of Zen that are springing up. And he was somewhat dismayed about the rush of Asiatic movements toward this country,

² Paul Wood. See <http://direct-mind.org/index.php5?title=1974-1112-Obstacles-Cleveland>

³ Sokei-an and Pulyan.

⁴ On Sokei-an from Oct. 23, 1974 talk in Columbus: <http://direct-mind.org/index.php5?title=1974-1023-Laws-Columbus> "Now there are many Zen systems that do not go directly to the mind. I was acquainted with Sokei-an and I'm acquainted with disciples of Sokei-an who got nothing from years of attending Sokei-an's meetings in New York City and on the west coast."

⁵ <http://direct-mind.org/index.php5?title=1974-0907-WKSU-Radio-Interview-Kent-State>

and he consequently had a little doubt about the validity of all of them. And I take this into question also.

When I studied with Pulyan⁶ there were no ceremonial robes, we lived in America, we dressed like Americans and we had no vocabulary to memorize of Japanese or Asiatic words. Yet it was the most direct, pure system of Zen that I have encountered.

And from it I get a clearer picture when I read books on Zen. And I'm somewhat dismayed by the picture that other people get, that even authors get, of what Zen is all about – such as the idea that Zen teaches that effort is useless and futile. This is not in any of the forefathers of Zen; the old patriarchs did not imply this. If they had, they wouldn't have founded monasteries; they wouldn't have put themselves to work building monasteries to keep people doing something that was useless.

Yardsticks

Another thing is that you can set yourself certain yardsticks for any movement. And I learned these when I was quite young – that the truth does not involve ritual, that is, it does not have to involve ritual. It's not necessary to wear certain clothes, to dress a certain way, to look a certain way, to join a certain highly-mechanized organization. In fact these things may have the counter effect; these things may detract from your doing something serious.

So that I'm somewhat dismayed when I pick up these flyers and circulars that we see around – of the man who has his hands folded and whose eyes are upturned and he's got a salad bowl on his head and a gown, a kimono or something. And he has a row or two of devout people maybe who have tremendous confidence that this fellow has something, and he has sold them gowns and pillows and whatnot. I have the feeling that Zen is on its way out if that's what's going on.

Or movements that advertise more or less a vacation, something of that sort, with a little bit of meditation thrown in – and they profess to take you for maybe a year in what they call meditation without any explanation of where the meditation is going to take you.

Questions religion should answer

Now – what are we about, basically? What do we want to know? I'm curious, for instance, in what you people want to know. Do you want to know something to make you happier? Let's go back to the basic cause, the backbone of religion. Why do people go to church? Why do seekers seek? Do they seek for some magic formula to turn lead into gold? If they do, then that's in a different department.

⁶ Alfred Pulyan. <http://www.selfdiscoveryportal.com/Pulyan.htm>

But I have set down what I consider – and you can accept it or you can challenge it – the purpose of religion, or philosophy as far as that's concerned, esoteric philosophy as well:

The philosophy of religion must answer concerning 1) the nature of man, 2) life before birth, 3) life after death, 4) the relation of man to nature, world and the visible universe, and 5) the relation of man to a supreme intelligence or a God, or the absolute, whichever you might want to call it or guess it to be. (We say there might be something out there – you can say it might be intelligence or it might not be, but that nonetheless there's something out there.)

So these are the five let's say responsibilities of religion.

Now let's look at some of the religions. I'm not going to name them, I'm not going to get into a destructive criticism of religion here today. But I'm just going to say – if you take them one at a time and look through them – how many of them get into the nature of man? We've more or less left that up to the psychological fields, the psychiatric fields.

But what good does it do to believe in a heaven or a hell if you don't know who is believing? Now that might sound maybe almost unnecessary to you at first, but if you stop and think about it, how often do you change your concept of yourself, as the years go by?

Take the family album out and look at some of your pictures when you were six or eight years old and it will bring back to you a state of mind, a state of conviction which you've lost, and a belief that you were something, that the world was accepting you as something. And this changes from month to month and year to year, so that very few of us have a real concept of who we are, of what we are.

And as Gurdjieff says, we may be a bunch of grapes, of egos, a cluster of "I"s, a sort of conglomerate, rather than a unique human being, an individual with sovereign individuality.

So we go back then again to the question of why people go to church – to find out what happens to them after they die? To find out what happens before birth? But you can't hardly ask one question without asking the other.

In other words, it's presumed that if we know what happens to us after we die, where we're going, we must also maybe even beforehand find out where we came from. And again, how many of the religions or philosophies or isms will provide that information for you, or provide a path by which you might find it out for yourself?

What is their answer? Their answer is to believe. And of course if that's sufficient for you, that's alright. But the seeker isn't satisfied with believing. In fact this is one of my tenants, that we should doubt rather than believe. It's not scientific to believe anything; it's scientific to establish by some sort of valid process.

The relation of man to nature – we cannot exist without defining ourselves in relation to our environment, environment meaning our neighbors as well as the planets and the cosmos.

And finally we come to the relation of man to a supreme intelligence if there is such. For instance, we can go along and build concepts as to why we're here, and maybe some of our greater wheeler-dealers even fight wars in the belief that they know why they're here – they're men of destiny and they're here to change the earth.

And invariably down through history they seem to come to the conclusion before they die that they didn't know all the factors. There were factors in this world that were unknown to them – either the thing was so complicated they couldn't know the factors, or else there was an engineer or some intelligence moving things to suit itself, independent of the human desires.

Regardless, the possibility is there, and humanity has made it a factor, a chief point in this business of religion. I can't say that God came down and said, "Make that one off your points in religion, that you're looking for me," I'm just saying that for some reason, all through history people have sensed or tried to establish a credibility about a supreme being.

So how do they react to this? How did we react to it? Well, as I said, the base of the pyramid is full of people who, although supposedly trained to know what rationalization is, indulge in massive rationalizations of faith rather than effort.

Now that may sound harsh to you, but we're not here to waste time. If faith is your thing, that's your privilege. But you'll not get too far in the business of factual self-definition by believing beforehand that which you should find out by exploration.

Physical means

We get to another part of the reaction of man to this riddle that continually faces him, and we find that there have been about four major ways in which man reacts to the unknown.⁷

One of them is mechanical. He has mechanical means of attaining salvation, or attaining the good will of the gods, so to speak, to make the corn grow as Frazer would say.⁸ It could be anything from whirling a prayer-wheel to cutting up a living body and running with the pieces for fifty miles to plant in a cornfield – that this would placate the gods.

These are physical means, doing something with the body. And you will recognize the symptoms in some of the things that are happening today. There are people who believe that by jumping on one foot, or whirling or contortions, asceticism, putting the body

⁷ Physical, mental, self-investigation, direct union.

⁸ George Frazer: Golden Bough. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Golden_Bough

through certain paces, purification of the body by a certain diet and so on, that this will do something. Now don't get the idea that I don't think that some of these things are beneficial. They are beneficial for a limited purpose. For the sake of purification, the purification is good. But this should not be construed as a method of reaching final knowledge. It's good for purification.

Mental means

Now the mental means – of course there's quite a field of these. Here we go into the levels where people realize that they can't do it with their body, that the body is physical and the objective is subjective, so to speak; the aim is subjective. And they realize that if there is something after death, the body is not going to be part of it. So they contemplate the possibility of a mental dimension, or a dimension beyond the physical – and they suspect that they might have to use mental means to get there.

And under this category we have the schools of raja yoga, and various forms of auto-hypnosis, of which *faith* is one type. And we also have let's say the auto-psychoanalytic methods or self-investigative methods *not* using psychology:

We have the philosophies, under this category, by which people build what I call concept structures. Instead of trying to experience what happens to people after death, or wanting to try to find out who they are themselves, they postulate it or they build a concept structure.

And unfortunately most of these concept structures are the fragments of someone else's concept structure; they don't start out fresh. Many of the religions if we examine them bear traces of religions that existed before – some parts of which may have been ridiculous; so the ridiculousness is avoided and the parts that are still not proven ridiculous are accepted and woven into a new fabric, and this becomes either a religion or an ism.

I sometimes think – and of course I'm not sure of Mary Baker Eddy's⁹ motives – but I think that Mary Baker Eddy gained some insight by studying some of the Hindu or yogic philosophies, and felt that she would like to bring that concept of Universal Mind to the western world. But at that particular time she didn't dare to do anything in which the name of Christ was not devoutly involved. So we got a syncretization of yoga and Christianity, and this was in many respects a compromise.

I don't believe much in compromises. I think that if you feel that something is true you should have at least the courage to speak it.

⁹ Founder of Christian Science. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Baker_Eddy

But I think a lot of our beliefs – even major religions – they say that even Christianity may have borrowed tremendously from what they consider pagan religions. And incidentally, the pagans consider us to be pagans.

Self-investigation and direct union systems

Now we come of course to the business of direct union, and now we're approaching Zen. The people who get interested in the real work of Zen – not this business of squatting in a certain position and seeing what an endurance contest it can be, or various things that come under the word Zen such as art and archery and poetry – they dream of a direct union with that which they wish to know, that is, God or the absolute or whatever it is.

Of course they don't postulate it ahead of time, because this has to be a factual thing as well – it's not a postulation that out there somewhere is God and we're going to join him. This would be erroneous to begin with, because you'd run the risk of creating something before proving it or establishing it.

So it's a kind of a delicate balance to keep the mind moving in the direction of joining something or becoming one with something while not knowing that which you're going to join.

Now, how is that brought about? We bring it about basically by a reversal of our attention, away from ignorance – this is the trick. Coincidentally, we employ a self-investigation,¹⁰ a self-psychoanalysis, to keep watch on the philosopher or the person who's searching. Because if the searcher becomes tangential to his search by virtue of some mental complex or some mental weakness, then the final question will be in jeopardy. His answer will be qualified by his mental condition.

So it can be said that the entire thing can be done strictly by that, by going within the self and looking at the self and studying the self – until of course you find your real Self, which we differentiate as being capital-s Self.

We don't know that ahead of time either, of course. This is the result – when we give that formula, it's the formula of somebody who has used that, or found his Self by a self-psychoanalytic technique.

But these things happen automatically; when you find yourself you are automatically joined with that which you search for. The final answer, being the truth, is also the absolute. When you reach it you're also in union with the absolute, and you are also self-defined.

[end side 1]

¹⁰ Compare vichara. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-enquiry>

Our system

Our particular work here is to set up or set in motion a periodic or regular self-investigation. This is the beginning. We use a self-confronting form of meditation, and in our group meetings we use a system of confronting each other to provoke the self-confrontation. So you'll be able to see where your discrepancies are in understanding yourself, or trying to understand yourself.

This isn't the only thing we do; we couple with that whatever is necessary that we think will help to keep the mind clear from confusion or distraction while this problem is at hand.

The theory behind this is that we are undertaking a massive problem. This is not something that can be prescribed, that can be given out in doses that are guaranteed, that once the full bottle of medicine is taken you will reach a certain spiritual end.

This requires individual, dynamic action. The purpose of the group is to help the individual in that dynamic action, to help remind him – and collectively also to find expedient methods for accelerating if possible this whole process.

So that I'm not opposed to a certain diet, if it helps; if a person finds one diet less turbulent than another one and he wants to take it on, I think that's good. I don't say that you *have* to follow a certain diet to find the truth. I don't think that there is more truth in carrots than there is in meat. But if a person feels that, or if the group would hear of something that might help a person to be tranquil, I might say we'd try it.

The next step of course is, once this self-investigation starts, you reach a point of – well, you get interested in it, for one thing – and you begin to see much of the world as foolishness. You begin to see much of human action as a real vanity, and much of the trouble that man causes as being rooted in his own desires.

So your lifestyle starts to change – but this doesn't mean yet that you have reached a point of illumination. It just means that you're beginning to be conscious of what you should avoid in the line of negative thinking or erroneous concepts.

So we next prepare the mind, or try to prepare the mind for transmission; that is, to get the mind to a point where it can accept a state of mind directly, without say years of argumentation, years of whittling down.

Of course, you do have to whittle yourself down; you can't come into this cold, say in just a few days. But the spiritual experience comes after quite a period of struggle, of frustration, let's say. And this frustration is apt to cease if you get tired. If you don't have a lot of dynamic determination you're going to get tired and quit.

But if you have the determination, if you're let's say bullheaded enough to hang on, perhaps, your frustrations will bring your mind to a point of solving a problem. You throw the problem into the computer and say, "Here it is." And now you've got to put pressure

on that computer to carry it out, and stay with the problem long enough to answer it. And of course we say to do everything you can to keep the computer running smoothly until it answers the problem.

So from this point on it is highly individualistic – there's not too much advice that can be given collectively. It's generally a highly individualistic thing, because everybody picks up at different rates, and sometimes it's sporadic even. There will be points of intense activity and points of dormancy – and there are as John of the Cross used to say, dark nights of the soul, where people just quit. They just quit and get a breather, and go back and try again.

Q & A

So – as I'm starting to get a little hoarse I'd like to have some questions from you and find the particular things you're interested in, and I can enlarge from there, possibly. Is there anything that anybody wants me to cover that I haven't covered in what I've said?

Q. What are the important questions?

R. That depends on you. That depends entirely on you.

Q. What I'm getting at is like, is there anything in the Albigen Papers on questions that the individual must ask, or is this the highly individualized process you were speaking of?

R. Well, I tried to guess from the point of view of people who just came in, as well as people who have read some of the book. I'd say that there are quite a few who are here for the first time, at least this is the first time I have seen them. But for the people who have heard this – I think it's important that certain questions be answered.

Even though we know that there's not much dogma in Zen – there's not much philosophic body to a Zen argument or anything of that sort – but still we are doing what I consider a very rare work. So consequently, even though it's indescribable, even though the end result is indescribable – no one should attempt to describe it, because the only way you can understand it is to reach it. No one can explain it to you.

But still, questions are in order. Because this is a process in which – some of the people in the group have already spent three years, four years. So you may be facing the same thing. And if you're facing something in which you're going to become involved for maybe ten years of your life, you should ask all the questions you can think of – to make yourself secure, and to get some idea of the people you're working with, and *why* they're doing what they're doing. Are they idiots, or do they have some profound reason for that that notion?

And of course I can't guess all those questions. I can't guess what doubts are in people's heads or what gaps I have left. That's the reason I leave things open for questions, because I think it's very important that we get to fill those gaps.

Q. Talking about the format, is this something that is being set up on a permanent basis, and is it like therapy sessions?

R. Well, it could be considered therapy – I know that there have been people who have come into the group and later said they were healed. And this is not our purpose; our purpose is not to heal anybody. But it invariably follows that when you get a group of people and there is group energy, somebody might get healed, especially if they're in something that tends to be therapeutic. Because a lot of somatic illnesses are the result of just a mental twist. You untwist that maybe and they're more free. And I have witnessed that in the group.

But getting back to the daily format – the public meetings are on Wednesday, and the format there is either explanatory or it's confrontation. Now confrontation is not forced on anyone; you have to volunteer for it. In other words, you can come and sit in those meetings for months if you wish and do nothing except listen and ask questions. We welcome questions – as I said, that's where we find where your mind is and how much you're willing or able to work with us.

But by the same token we also do not want our time wasted. That is, occasionally we've had people come in just for provocation; they wanted to convert by virtue of argument, and nothing is established that way. So we'll listen to sincere questions from now on.

Now that is the meeting that is open to the public. If you volunteer for confrontation, then you'll be questioned as to certain reasons for doing things. And this is like holding a mirror up.

Then there's participation in maybe some of the group functions. They have little things like contacting the newspaper to get something put in the paper, or posters put up. Sometimes we have other things – for instance, I've asked the boys in all the different groups to write a critique of various authors.

The reason for this is to train them in their intuition, for the various authors that we choose. At the present time these are people like Carlos Castaneda, Krishnamurti, Ouspensky – a lot of these books are read and glossed over very quickly, and there's a rapport with these authors sometimes without the proper evaluation or comparison of their words, maybe from one chapter to another or one book to another.

So when a person accepts something, say a book, because of a charismatic appeal, there's something wrong with his head. If he accepts it by virtue of a perfect intuition, then there's no argument. So the thing is to try to train the intuition to become more perfected.

Intuition

Because in esoteric matters, in the higher levels of philosophic endeavor, logic does us no good. There is no way to mathematically prove what's going on between the atoms or between the thoughts, in subjective matters. When you're embarking in the direction of an ultimate answer which may be absolute – and the hint is always there by the people who return, they say it's absolute, so we know it *may* be absolute – then the relative language and its logic have little value for us. We just can't say it's a mathematical formula of so many digits or something.

So we realize early in the game that you have to develop an intuition – because this is the vehicle that you'll ride when the railroad tracks disappear. And as we go through this, each individual in the group is asked to do certain things to develop his intuition.

Now as far as our daily format, we do not have any of what I consider exercises that have no value, or have little value or are just form. We're trying to keep our heads awake without getting in back from whence we came. Most of us came from organizations or religions that were all form and no substance.

And unfortunately, quite a few Zen movements are doing just that now; they're going back to form. They're putting back on the robes as though there's truth in robes. They have certain exercises of stimulating each other by cracking the students on the back with a stick. To me this is foolishness.

So the parts that I consider foolish, where it's not direct mental work – is eliminated, that's all. And I think in fact that perhaps this *keisaku*¹¹ – Kapleau mentions it in *Three Pillars of Zen*. I've never heard as much emphasis put on it as in Kapleau, if you're acquainted with him.

Other Zen authors maintain that this was just a disciplinary thing that was brought down from the old days in China, when people put their children in these monasteries. It was like a cadet school and they had to have some way to discipline the children, so they cracked them. And now the whole thing, down through the years, the whole system degenerates into a business of cracking people instead of the business of finding the truth.

Consequently, there are some rituals and some pageantry appearing in Zen that I discount as being time-wasting and unnecessary.

Other than that, if there is any information I missed, come to some of the meetings and ask the fellows what they're doing; there are no secrets – they'll tell you.

Q. inaudible

R. Would you like to risk those odds, though? That's the thing. Out of India come some fantastic stories. From the time I was 21 until the time I was about 30 I was into yoga

¹¹ Hitting with a wooden stick. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keisaku>

rather heavily. In fact I was initiated into two raja yoga sects. I had heard quite a few of these accounts – for instance, one of my friend was initiated into the Yogananda sect. And these people believe that Babaji, I think that was his name, was an avatar that could come back into the physical plane.

I suspect that this is another bit of concept-structuring. Even if it is not – I cannot say that anything is not true, because this universe has infinite possibilities. It's possible that most anything can exist. But – it's just like this business of reincarnation. I don't say that you don't reincarnate, but I say how can you stand to play those odds? – by waiting, say, until the next incarnation, or waiting to work until after you die.

And we also have yogic teachers from the opposite school of thought, who say that the only place you can work is in the body; that after you're dead the only thing you can do is observe, ruminate, so to speak, and wish you had been able to dream a different dream.

So it's just a matter of the odds and the propitiousness of your efforts.

And of course the business of challenging, too: go to the root of the concept. Any concept of that sort, I think a person should go to the root of it, and find out where this fellow heard it. Where did this originate? Or was it from a personal experience?

Incidentally, there are many personal experiences of life after death that I consider valid that are not instances of enlightenment. By this I mean that nearly all the accounts that I have run into in my lifetime about enlightenment were pretty much the same. There were differences – they were all spontaneous and they were all different to some degree – but they had things in common.

I don't know whether you have read a book by Ramana Maharshi. If you haven't, this is a good book to get the descriptions of the different types of spiritual exaltation; describing the difference between cosmic consciousness and enlightenment, or what he calls kevala samadhi and sahaja samadhi, respectively.

[break in tape - missing segment]

... Something he might have heard or he might have been exposed to some conventional religion all his life, and dreaded it, feared it, and hoped that he could attain it or something, and at the moment of death a vision would appear to him. And this would satisfy him – momentarily, maybe, until he examined it.

Q. inaudible

R. I can't agree with that. You mean that they can re-animate their body?

Q. inaudible

R. I don't doubt that this is maybe possible, but it's also possible for animals. This is the thing. Some animals know when they are about to die. Do you mean that a man who is

enlightened knows when he is about to die? Supposedly they said that about Buddha; Buddha knew he was about to die, supposedly.¹²

But of course quite a few people know, or have the knowledge. It isn't because of a terminal disease, it's just basically a premonition or a strong conviction.

Q. Will you tell us [what life is like for an enlightened person?]

R. Well, you'd have to be more specific about what you want to know.

Q. Anything that you can describe, I'd appreciate.

R. I eat, I go to the bathroom. Is that what you mean?

Q. Where does your consciousness reside?

R. My consciousness resides in my capital-s Self. In my Self.

Q. How do you mean that?

R. Well, that which you see in this room is highly illusory in regards to the real Self. So to say that my consciousness resides inside this suit I'm wearing would be facetious; I would be misleading you. But basically it's not my consciousness either. We're using words which we may have to define. After awhile you realize that if you're saying "my" consciousness, Richard Rose's consciousness – Richard Rose's consciousness doesn't exist, except in relation to the total consciousness.

Q. How about prior to that time, before you were enlightened? - inaudible

R. Well I think that before you reach enlightenment you're quite convinced that you are a body, and that you're possibly a body with some divine spark or some essence within it. And this is probably true, too, that the essence is there as well as anyplace else, and localized in that body.

But – sometimes I think it comes as a bit of a surprise that we lose our identity in the process of enlightenment. This realization comes upon you.

And when it passes, that is, when you return to conscious activity in the world again, you still have to focalize your consciousness in the body again. You have to be aware of it and you have to speak from that viewpoint. In other words, you still have to earn that nickel for Kroger's and keep out of trouble, so to speak.

Q. inaudible

R. Yes, that's unfortunately what is published – that as soon as a man finds the truth he's able to manipulate the cosmos, which is what you'd have to do. This is not it.

¹² Mahaparinibbana Sutta.

First of all, this whole pattern, whether it's projection or reality, was not created by my brain. The formation of this manifest world of illusion occurred long before I was born. There were things set in motion – possibly way, way back there I might have agreed on them – but they were set in motion before I was born. So it's impossible for me to alter the blueprint.

I'm not saying you can't alter things to a degree – there are certain degrees – but this is one of the misconceptions; that the man goes to Tibet, like in *Lost Horizon*,¹³ and he learns great secrets – in which he's able to live to be 200 years of age. And this makes good fiction, it makes for publication, so to speak.

But all you have to do is examine the lives of all these people – Buddha died presumably of cancer, if we take the symptoms. And he advised his disciples that when they got sick to go see a doctor.

I'm not saying they couldn't have healed themselves, I'm just saying that it's absolutely foolish to prolong a miserable existence which in the first place is unreal. You've come to realize it's not real. So just to prolong that and to slip down into patching up old inner tubes so to speak, there'd be no real point in it.

Also, to manipulate for the purpose of money or food or power over other people – it becomes absurd. Because you found a meaning. Of course, maybe you don't understand that this meaning would supersede or make all other little human drives somewhat meaningless.

One of Buddha's disciples was panhandling for something to eat – and some guy put a bowl of rice up on a pole and said, "If you can get that with your divine power, you can have the bowl of rice." And the monk did. He made a few passes and down came the rice and he ate it. But Buddha was standing there and he said, 'You know what you've done? You have wasted yourself on a lousy bowl of rice – when you can run out and work for two or three hours if necessary and get ten times that much. Instead you wasted spiritual quantum energy on something that wasn't worth it.'¹⁴

So we set a new set of values, even in the physical energy field, in things that you do.

Of all the teachers, the lives of all the people that I have encountered, I have never found any of them who were interested in prolonging their life. I've never found any that were interested in committing suicide either. So there are laws of acceptance of the thing as it is.

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_Horizon

¹⁴ Vin. II, 110-111 Public display of psychic powers.

Carlos Castaneda – fiction

Q. I've heard you mention Carlos Castaneda. I wonder what you thought of the philosophy that he presents.

R. I don't know whether it was written tongue-in-cheek but I read it tongue-in-cheek. I didn't even know it was a philosophy.

Q. I'm into his third book and I wonder what you think of the Yaqui philosophy.

R. Yes, I think he talked to some Indians or somebody – there's too much of it that rings true to my own experience – like in the book *Black Elk Speaks*, you'll find that this type of vision was common among the Indian medicine men: this business of having visions, and putting themselves in a position to have visions through which they would guide their tribe or their warriors to do things.

But I can't speak for Castaneda, I just have suspicions, that's all. My intuition tells me that he's in the publishing business. I'll tell you the reason that stopped me on the second book. I read the first one, in which he's talking to what seemed to be an ignorant, laconic type of primitive man who had some knowledge he had inherited somewhere, got by hook or crook down through the Yaqui traditions.

But when I looked at the second book and ran through it – we were reading from this the other night, some people were talking about it – and I ran into 16 cylinder words and a professorial attitude. And this Don Juan is now talking like a college professor.

Before, he was saying little, short sentences and dealing with little symbolic things, no great theories, no great concepts. And entering the second book we're now graduated – and this transition was too much for me. I think he wrote the second book too fast – he could have made the transition more convincing, perhaps. I think he failed as an author, and as an author of fiction predominantly.

Because when you're writing a book and it's filled full of quotations – which these are – it's very difficult to keep your type in mind, especially when it's a fictional type. For instance if you're writing a book and you get acquainted with people in this group – say I'm writing about him – I know what type of answers he would give to certain questions. And I can keep his type true all through that book by just thinking of what he would say.

But when I've made a composite creature and put certain words in his mouth, and built up an imaginary personality, it's very hard to keep that true to form all through the book – much less go on into the second book, with a new revelation coming up. The character had to fit the new revelation.

And the second thing, of course, is that he makes it very hard to corroborate, and I think that's his art.

[end side 2]

I think you'll find in the next couple years – Castaneda is deliberately keeping out of sight and I think eventually he'll come to view. There have been two articles written in Fate Magazine, one from his wife. He was evidently married at the time he was going to school, or right before he went to school. And his wife's writings will soon be as popular as his, if she has anything to say, because people are curious about Castaneda now.

And the impression that his wife gives – at least I got from reading the article – that he was more or less of a floater, that he was married to her but she very seldom saw him. She didn't know what he was doing half the time, and he was going to school in southern California. But as a husband he wasn't too constant.

She doesn't go into any corroboration of any of this stuff that he claims. She just says, "Well, he was always interested in this sort of thing" – this was about the gist of the article. And then there was another article written I think by a girl who knew both of them. But this wife, incidentally, if I read the dates in the book correctly, is around sixty years old. She's a native of Charleston, West Virginia, now living in Phoenix, Arizona.

So it's just a matter of time before someone finds her and asks her some pertinent questions, and they'll establish how many years he was in southern California, how many in New Mexico and Arizona, and in Mexico.

Koans

Q. Do you utilize koans?

R. I think that life is full of koans. Occasionally I do things or say things that will provoke people into thinking. I don't believe in this idea, again, this story we get out of China or Japan, that you get the koan "Mu" and you hang onto it until you solve it. I think this is just an absurd way to build tension. I think there should be a little thinking along with the tension.

So we do not employ the senseless koans. In other words, if you get a koan it's going to have some sense to it. It's going to be, "Why did you slip on a banana peel, socially?" or "Why are you inconsistent?" or something of that sort. Or do something to indirectly point out a person's inconsistencies, rather than just take some meaningless word and harass him with it.

Satori vs. enlightenment

Incidentally, I want to explain this too, about the definition of *satori*. *Satori* is not synonymous with enlightenment. *Satori* to me is synonymous with the "wow!" experience. The wow experience or the eureka experience occurs in the transition between the emotional and the intellectual levels.

An emotional person graduates into an intellectual being as a result of let's say prolonged investigation into mathematics, or logic, in which he harasses his mind with figures or symbols. He may experience for a brief interval a flash of exaltation, some awareness in which he realizes the meaning of the algebraic problems and the gist or the way to solve all future algebraic problems. Whereas before, it was quite hard.

Now if any of you have had that experience, this is what we call the wow experience. When you take the books that are written on Zen, the accounts that are written on the satori experiences – and Kapleau has a whole batch of them in his book – these are all wow experiences. These are not prolonged experiences in which the mind is dead. The mind doesn't die for one second. I mean, when you go through that, it's not just a "wow!" and you're back in circulation.

The descriptions are of a man working with a koan and he goes back into this little room where the roshi is. And he says, "Is this the answer?" And the guy says, "No. Back to the drawing board." And two weeks, two months, two years later he goes back and says, "Is this the answer?" And he says, "No. Back to the drawing board." And then finally one day he goes in and says, "Go to hell." And the roshi says, "You got it."

This is "wow!" He got it. And whereupon he's got his shingle and he goes out and sells this stuff to other people.

This is not my concept of enlightenment. You can get ahold of Ramana Maharshi's explanation of the two samadhis: kevala and sahaja samadhi. Both of these are above that. Both of them involve prolonged experiences.

Cosmic consciousness, for instance, is a relative experience yet, in which you witness for a long period of time. Richard Bucke was in Montreal I think when it happened, and for hours the city of Montreal was lit up – he was the only one who could see it – the whole horizon of the sky was lit up with a rose-colored glow. He felt an intense bliss that lasted perhaps for days, weeks – he said for the rest of his life in fact it colored his thinking.

These accounts are in writing if you want to study them. But these states are both beyond or superior to the satori experience. So if you notice, I don't use the word satori when we talk about enlightenment.

And this is the reason I would not ever be affiliated [with a line of teachers]. In fact, Pulyan asked me one time, "Do you want my lineage?" This is another little thing you hear about, that a Zen master is not authentic unless he has a lineage, that you've got to trace his lineage back.

This is like genealogy: you want to be a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, pick yourself a name and just run it down and you'll find out you're related to it somewhere. In other words, you can create lineage, if you wish to. Or for all that matters, if we do have a lineage, we have no guarantee of what happened a hundred years ago; we might have ten idiots stuck in there someplace who knew nothing about

enlightenment. But they just had the right, they had the rubber stamp, they were in charge of the zendo.

Now this is not all said without speculation on my part, because I can see that it doesn't matter. I said to Pulyan, "I don't want to know your lineage." If I can't make any sense out of you, I have no concern for your spiritual ancestors, so to speak. But there's a tremendous lot made of form, and that's part of it.

Ramana Maharshi – samadhi

Now on samadhi, the definition which you'll find in Ramana Maharshi's book, the *Spiritual Teachings of Ramana Maharshi* – he likens the states in relation to the mind, using the mind as a point of comparison.

When the mind is asleep it is still alive. In the state of kevala samadhi the mind is still alive. But in the state of sahaja samadhi or enlightenment the mind is dead. This is a tremendous difference; there's no difficulty there in drawing a line. Whereas in most abstract or subjective experiences it's difficult to draw a line, but there is a line you can draw, that the mind is no longer alive.

He likens the mind in cosmic consciousness or kevala samadhi to a bucket that is lowered into a well and left there with the rope still attached to the windlass up at the top, so it can be pulled out at any time. He likens the sahaja experience to a river that has drained into the ocean and its identity has been lost. So there's a tremendous difference.

The bucket is still attached to the fellow who wants to pull it out. He can still come back and be whoever he was before. The river does not return from the ocean. There's no way of extracting that same water from the ocean.

The farm

I want to make a point here before we go any further, and then we'll continue with the questions. There will be a meeting here a week from today as an explanatory follow-up, and setting up a procedure for the coming months, for this semester. August Turak from Cleveland will speak at that meeting and you'll be able to ask more questions and learn more about the physical structure of the group.

I want to explain this too, as far as requirements for the group – we may sound like we're somewhat elitist or something of that sort. I don't deny that because I think that we are elitist, but I don't want to say that we have a closed door.

The main and only requirement for really joining the group is sincerity, a sense of honor to fellow members, and necessarily a sincere desire to find the truth. We don't say that you have to find it *my way* – this would be foolish. I realize that there are many different

ways that people find. But I think it's good that you associate with sympathetic fellows while you're doing it: a recognition of the need for a group and some kind of a will to preserve the group – wherein we may have free speculation but we will not disrupt, that's all. We don't want anybody preaching from the rostrum some religion that we all can't participate in

But that's how simple it is. There's no great amount of forced belief – there's no forced belief, it's just a matter of joining efforts.

So have I touched on everything? Are there any other questions?

Q. Are you in West Virginia?

R. That's where our ashram is, our rural ashram. We have centers in these college towns but the rural ashram in West Virginia is where we go for more prolonged retreats.

Q. How long do the people go for?

R. Well, they vary. There's no restriction; they come and go all the time. But they're heaviest in the summertime because the majority of them are in school, most of them are young people. Last summer we had between twenty-five and thirty there all summer.

Q. Are you pretty much isolated?

R. Well, we try to be. Before we were isolated we found that we had trouble. So we try to be as inconspicuous as possible. But the ashram isn't open to the public. The ashram is only open to the participating members. And this may sound strange to you, maybe it doesn't – if you've had much experience with groups you find out that there are a lot of bums who show up. And they have a big personality-grin and a lot of manifest cooperation, but they just come in and flop on you and smoke dope, and tell you how ignoble you are for protesting.

I tried to initiate the thing as a sort of commune. But people don't work; the people who protest the most that they want to be in a commune are the enemies of communes. As soon as they get in there they kill it; they just bear it down with their weight, and some straight person has to feed them. The people that they supposedly hate have to feed them.

So we got to the point where everything is highly individualized; everyone had to have their own food, for example. We have one room that is full of refrigerators, and certain people are allocated to certain refrigerators, because if they didn't keep their food separate then people would come in and eat their food. And some people had their money planned where they could just afford to spend say 60 days or so, they had just a few dollars saved.

The pro-rated expense of staying there has to do with the rent that I was getting from the house before the group was formed. That's to keep the insurance and the taxes paid, and a bucket of paint if it's necessary. And it amounts to anything from \$5 a month to the

highest charge of \$20 a month to stay in the house. It's no great rake-off but at the same time, it makes it possible that people with a limited amount of cash can come there and buy a few groceries and get by.

There were a lot of them that go into town and work; they'd get a job there. And the result is, some of them are living in town. There were two boys that lived there all winter. I had a house in town and there were boys who lived with me year round in Benwood, that's a suburb of Wheeling.

But really, the reason for the rural ashram is that you can get a lot done if you set aside a certain time of each day and a certain day of each week to do things, like doing a certain amount of meditation. We have a special form of meditation; we don't practice the TM type. We have an irritational meditation, a confrontational meditation, if you want to call it that.

But if you can do a little of this every evening – and you come to the meetings as a sort of a reminder. The group becomes a reminder and the group also becomes a unit of voltage. And of course you contribute to that by your presence, and this keeps the thing going, it keeps your spiritual path growing.

But there are times when you'll want to do this full time, if you can. I think everyone should. I think no matter how old you get, everyone should take a month out of the year at least and go sit by himself.

Now we don't have any prescribed discipline. If you want to go out in the woods in a tent – we have a flat fee to support the place, which is \$10 a year – and if a person's broke and they want to go out and just live in a tent, there's no charge beyond that. They can go down there and stay, as long as they don't make any trouble.

This is so they can totally isolate themselves and meditate. I realize the need for this. To really do things spiritually you occasionally have to get away – to get away from other people, even from the people in the group. With this you give yourself a new perspective. Then after you've cleared your head up a bit you can come back and work with more ease and more fluency.

Personal experience in Seattle

Q. Was there a story about - inaudible

R. There were two times when I went to the west coast. One of them was to stay in Death Valley – I was there for awhile, right over from Death Valley. The other time I was in Seattle, which was where this enlightenment experience occurred.

Q. That's what I wanted to ask about.

R. That was a combination trip there. I was about ready to throw over the whole spiritual pursuit; I was fed up with things. I thought I was kidding myself. I was working alone at the time; I had no teacher. The only thing I had was books in the library. I'd get books on yoga – I didn't have enough money, and I'm glad, I'm grateful that I didn't have enough money to go to India, because then I might still be over there, staggering around, hunting somebody to tell me something.

Q. You were travelling?

R. No, I worked. I worked in the Seattle Tennis Club on Lake Washington. I worked as a waiter. I'd go down in the evening – it was the evening shift. In the daytime I'd go down to the library and read, and go back to my place. I was in a hotel, a little apartment like. I'd go home and do my yogi exercises, so to speak.

I was sitting on the bed one day and I started to get a pain in the top of my head. And I thought, "Oh boy, I'm going to blow a fuse." I didn't think I could stand it. And I thought I was too young to have a stroke; I had no idea what was going on. The pain was so intense I started to weep; there were actually tears running out of my eyes.

How long this went on I don't know, because I had no reference. The only person I knew in Seattle was a girl, and I never told her what I was doing, because she was highly critical if it wasn't practical to her. I had spoken about philosophy and stuff and she said, "That's nonsense." The only thing that was important was getting ahead of the rest of society.

But I had nobody to call if I felt like calling for help, so I was just sweating it out.

The result was that I went out the window. I was aware of going out the window. This happened in daylight – I was aware of seeing the people. When I stayed in the hotel room I could look out and see the Cascade Mountains, so I was headed in that direction when I went out. I was going up, so to speak, and I could see the city disappear as I was approaching these mountains.

But then there was a complete change, like a flip-over of a scene, in which there was no longer any Seattle, no world, no planet, anything. There was nothing but a tremendous pyramid of humanity. And I felt that if I had the time to look, I could identify every person I ever knew. They were in there.

I looked and I found myself. I found myself in this milling heap of maggots, all climbing and slipping, trying to get to the top of this thing. Of course, this was traumatic, very traumatic. All the way through it was traumatic, until I realized that the man in the maggot pile was me and I was also the observer, and I was also the Absolute, and that my experience was one of nothingness – everythingness and nothingness.

And the immensity of this of course took my attention for I don't know how long. It could have been hours, it could have been days. But I found myself back in the hotel room and the pain was out of my head.

Of course, when I came back again I was weeping – this time not from the pain but from the idea that I didn't think I could adjust. I didn't care particularly to adjust, and I didn't see how I could possibly live in what was manifestly to me a picture show.

I was quite upset, and coming back you realize you're going to see your relatives again – and it's quite upsetting to feel that you're not going to be able to talk to them.

Q. How old were you?

R. Thirty-two. [Later R corrected this to 30.]

So I didn't try to talk to too many people. I wrote the experience down, incidentally,¹⁵ it's in the back of the Albigen Papers. I came back to Cleveland and Andy's dad [Robert Martin] was the first person I showed it to.

The old groups

His dad and I had talked philosophy years before that, and we had tried to establish little groups, just people dedicated to searching together and putting their energies together. But – people will join hands for almost anything except finding philosophic values. They'll join efforts for some foolish political purpose for which there is no real end, or to save the kittens or the lost puppies or something.

But to get them to do what I consider the most important thing that any human can do – to identify themselves – it's just hard to get them to do it. It seems as though heaven and hell are pitched against them, to stop them.

So through the years various little groups were formed, but they were always – well, the majority of them were fresh from some traumatic experience, or they wouldn't even have listened very long. And in those days they were fresh from Alcoholics Anonymous. So you can see what hopes there were for building a spiritual group – a bunch of ex-drunks, their heads were blasted.

Now what do we have today? The candidates today are predominantly from people who have had their heads into LSD, and they've had a glimpse of another dimension. And I say that if it weren't for this drug experience there wouldn't be anybody in this room tonight. There wouldn't have been enough interest in any university to where you would have had more than one or two people.

But there have been people who have seen that there is more to this world of experience than what meets the eye. And I can say this from personal experience: my experience was with LSD – I took it once myself, to find out what they were bragging about. And I found there was a tremendous excursion into another dimension – equally as valid as

¹⁵ Three Books of the Absolute. <http://www.richardrose.org/ThreeBooks.pdf>

this one. Equally as valid and equally as illusory – neither of them are real. Neither this one nor the LSD experience is real.

But nonetheless I'm glad I took it, because I could see then where the people who were groping for understanding as the result of that experience were coming from. The thing was to try to catch them before they went over the cliff. Maybe that's my motive – that once they've had this partial realization to catch them before they stick their head into the meat grinder or jump over a cliff or something.

So it was for quite a few years that I didn't speak. I found even in fact it was better to keep my mouth shut than to talk about it. But we still met people. Through Andy's dad I met a man who was spiritually enlightened – Paul Wood. He was a Christian; he had never heard of any oriental philosophy or religion. And he had become enlightened as the result of tension and trouble, trauma, coupled with prayer, Christian prayer, the Lord's Prayer to be exact. And I have as much respect for him as I have for Pulyan, although he couldn't teach. The man who had the Christian experience could not teach it.

There's a difference between having an experience and being able to convey this to someone else. I find it increasingly difficult to find the right words to talk to people even. As soon as you open your mouth in fact the majority of people think you have an ulterior motive. And it's very difficult to overcome that because most people do have an ulterior motive. So language is a poor medium of communication.

[chit-chat]

Don: Are there any more questions? I guess we could call this meeting to a close then.

R. It didn't work. They're still sitting here. (laughs)

[chit-chat]

[end of talk]