

1972-Fall-First-meeting-in-Kent-missing-tape

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Notes from Alan Fitzpatrick

Title: "Zen and the American Mind" per intro by Al Fitz's in 1992-0326-Truth-Lies-Ultimate-Reality-Pitt (below) and in his book Sex Connection, Probably no tape made. Date from 1974 Retrospect. No poster.

In Alan Fitzpatrick's book The Unpublished Works of Richard Rose, the title is given as "Zen For the American Mind".

intro to Truth-Lies-Ultimate-Reality-Pitt

1992-0326-Truth-Lies-Ultimate-Reality-Pitt

However, I met Mr. Rose – it will be twenty years this spring, and I was a student at the time, probably like a lot of you here; I met him at Kent State University. At the time I was majoring in psychology; I had recently become fascinated with the concept and ideas of Zen, as far as Zen Buddhism. And at the time I met him I was taking a course on Zen that was offered through the university. There was a teacher there who had been – this fellow was a Buddhist scholar; he had been to Japan and he had met D.T. Suzuki who was a Zen teacher at the time. This fellow posed as a certain authority on Zen. I remember that he considered Zen to be very Japanese, very oriental, as far as far as its format.

04:13

So Richard Rose gave a talk that was titled “Zen and the American Mind” and it aroused my curiosity because my conception of Zen was that there was only one form, and that was what I was studying so to speak. And I remember asking this professor what he thought at the time, about there being any possibilities for the western mind to understand Zen. Of course he had been to Japan and he had been studying that form. And he said, “If this fellow has not been to Japan and hasn’t been to a monastery, etc., etc., then he can’t be a credible source.

04:44

And it [?] aroused my curiosity. So that’s when I first met him, and I was struck by two things: One was the message; because Mr. Rose talked about there being a western way, [a way] for our minds to be able to comprehend the search for truth that didn’t rely upon Zen as far as any type of oriental system; that you could do this in your life, that you could search for truth. He’s [?] trying to answer those four [three] questions: Who are we? Where are we going? Where did we come from? – very basic philosophic questions.

05:29

And that Zen was a vehicle to bring this about, a ways and means. And this kind of stood me on my head, because it was contrary to the thinking of the time. And paradoxically, the fellow whom I had taken the class with fell ill a couple years later and he passed away, and he sent a card to all his students saying – and this was contrary to the view he put out – he said, “I was not enlightened in my lifetime, therefore I wish that you don’t follow me in my teaching.”

06:10

So Richard Rose came out and said, "Look, you can, anybody can search for truth. Zen is a manner of doing it; Zen is the best system of doing it." And the reason he said so was that it worked in his lifetime. [?] [or rather,] it was a system he put to good use, and that brought him to a revelation.

06:36

The other thing that I was struck by, probably more profoundly than the first was the man himself, which you're going to meet here tonight. Richard Rose had at that time, and still has, a tremendous conviction and determination in this direction of spiritual search, and has transmitted that [?] to a lot of people that you can do this. His message has been the same throughout the twenty years that I've known him.

07:17

book Sex Connection

I first met Richard Rose in the fall of 1972 while attending Kent State University at Kent, Ohio, two years after the tragic shootings of four students by National Guardsmen. An advertisement in the campus newspaper announcing an upcoming lecture caught my eye, and so I went to hear Rose speak on "Zen and the American Mind."

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It was precisely at this time that I went to hear Rose talk on Zen in the hopes that he might shed some light on an American approach to this inscrutable philosophy, and provide a short-cut to understanding it without having to go to Japan and learn the language.

All that I had studied and learned up to that point had not prepared me for what I was about to hear and whom I was going to meet. Richard Rose did not fit the Zen mold, or any mold for that matter of fact, that I could recognize. He spoke plainly and directly, comparing Zen to a psychological system of looking within oneself for answers. He was not intellectual, nor did he fit the role of a teacher. He didn't have a PhD, didn't wear robes like a Zen master, didn't sit in a prayerful posture like a monk, or spout platitudes on Zen and flatter his audience with reassurances. In fact, Rose seemed to speak without the pretense of convincing anyone of anything he had to say—he told people he wasn't there to sell anyone a "bill of goods" and anyone who was really interested in what he was talking about should doubt him anyway, and go prove the Zen experience for themselves.

The bulk of what Rose said was an analysis of people's real nature and the way people think, talk, react and behave. He was talking about the psychology of people, the practical psychology that can't be found in textbooks. Strangely, this man spoke with an air of authority about knowing people. I couldn't chalk it up to presuming, guessing or calculated predicting. He just seemed to know beyond a shadow of a doubt. It was more, too, than just astute street savvy. For example, I remember Rose said that if you're going to know yourself and the secrets of the universe, you have to start by knowing your fellow man—the way his head works. Really knowing, he emphasized, from stepping inside his shoes, so to speak. "Walk a mile in another man's moccasins," Rose said, and then you'll know for sure how his mind works, which will tell you how your own mind works. This, Rose said, was real Zen, the art of stepping into another person's mind, by "getting inside their head," an intuitive psychology that a person needed to develop along the way—a trip that was going to back into Truth by a subtractive psychological method of taking away what is found to be false. He called this the "path of negation" which could be applied to psychology as well as philosophy.

Rose talked about why, what, and how a person thinks, and what forces are at work that cause a person to come to believe what they do and carry out a lifetime of action from the mental prodding that goes on behind the scenes of the personality—

that ever so subtle, smoky, ethereal and elusive field of the inner mind—a place, Rose said coincidentally, that most people rarely get a glimpse of, yet, in robot fashion, claim to be the proud owners of everything that comes "into their head." Here, Rose was saying that some thoughts are not our own.

I was dumbfounded. He was talking about people, their personality, their mind, their convictions, their thinking, and their destiny in a way I had never heard anyone talk about psychology before. Everything he said had a ring of truth to it, yet how did he know? Was he hood-winking me somehow? It was like he had his own ringside seat inside the mind of a person, and somehow he got there, by some undisclosed method. Everything Rose said about psychology made sense to me, except for one thing. He didn't make sense. Who was this guy, and what had happened to him to give him this ability, if that was what it was, to be able to see into people, to see into their minds? Rose the man was more of an enigma than a psychologist, a philosopher, or a Zen teacher—he had the appearance of an ordinary man, but he was anything but ordinary. Much later I would come to understand at last that with Rose, there was an X-factor about him. That factor made him, the whole picture called Richard Rose, greater than the sum of the individual parts. And that X-factor had everything to do with the experience, what some call the Zen experience or an experience of Absolute consciousness, which had happened to him twenty-five years earlier.

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