

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

An Exploration of the Effect of Zen Experience

On Personal Transformation

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Abstract

This inquiry started by examining my own and others experience of Zen, and comparing it with Self Organised Learning. The aim was to see what effect each system had on the lives of the participants. The thesis plots how I had a tacit reliance on myself as a measuring instrument, and how this became an integrating theme running through my 'finally chosen' methods. The methodological difficulties caused by the paradox of trying to understand Zen and also be scientific converged when I realised that I had treated myself as the central measuring instrument throughout the inquiry. It was this discovery which allowed the thesis to be treated as a koan from a Zen perspective and yet to be a contribution to academic knowledge. The thesis traces how personal authenticity became the defining characteristic informing all my methodology.

This inquiry asks and answers the question *can research be transpersonal?* Initially the research started out looking at a transpersonal issue in the form of asking those who had regular interactions with a Zen master about their experience. This learning curve was contrasted with Learning Conversations with postgraduates at the Centre for the Study of Human Learning, using inner directed learning in their own research projects. During the research process, several major re-orientations took place which necessitated changing my method and my interpretation of the data. These shifts of direction were largely driven by a need to find a method of inquiry which was appropriate to uncovering the transpersonal qualities I was investigating. As the inquiry developed I widened my sources of data to include art, fiction, accounts of death and grieving, and satsang (questions and answers with a master) in order to give an in depth picture of the impact of the transpersonal on participants' lives.

In treating the thesis as a koan there can be no emphasis placed on which purposes related to which outcomes. It was in the gradual abandonment of such a stance that the deeper insights and resolutions occurred. During the inquiry I eventually identified the qualities of wholeness, authenticity and openness as the defining characteristics which appeared to trigger changes in direction. Such an approach made it necessary to examine the implications for validity that approaching transpersonal issues in this way had uncovered.

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PART 1

Chapter 1 - The Reasons Why

This is the story of a man who went far away

for a long time, just to play a game.

The story starts with a battle that is not a battle,

and ends with a game that is not a game.

Iain M. Banks - The Player of Games

This inquiry is partly an account of my experience and those of others trying to play what Hey (1991) entitled The Zen Game, which is not a game. Like Gurgeh in the story by Iain M. Banks, I went a long way and took a long time battling, trying to find some way to study the game in a way that I thought would be acceptably 'scientific'. I only slowly came to realise the methods I was using had implicit assumptions I often did not agree with. Rather than do battle with them I realised that they were part of the game, and should be incorporated into my account. And then when I gave up all thought of the game, I found Zen.

As Suzuki (1973) observes most people assume that there is a real world of senses and intellect and a spiritual world, which at best is quite separate from ordinary existence and at worst does not exist at all other than in imagination. As Suzuki also points out, **this apparently common-sense interpretation is, in Buddhism, seen as quite erroneous.**

In Buddhism the sense world is composed of the Five Aggregates of Matter, Sensations, Perceptions, Mental Formulations, and Consciousness. The Buddha taught that the idea of a self that organises our actions is an imaginary false belief that is the source of all suffering and craving (Bahm 1958). It is the intellect that constructs the sense world, and what we are accustomed to thinking of as 'I' is not our real self but a mental construction. This mental construction is conditioned by our past experiences and all new experiences are filtered through this conditioned consciousness. Thus in Buddhism it is **what we think of as the real world which is illusory**, since it is not seen with clarity. We interpret everything we see, hear, feel etc. and judge it in relation to what we perceive as our own best interests, or what Austin (1998) terms the perspective of I-me-mine. At the heart of Buddhism is the idea that our suffering is self created. Of course we do suffer at times because of external events, like wars or death or illness, but it is how we react **psychologically** to these events which contributes to our suffering. In Buddhism we are seen as imprisoned within a web of our own mental habits, thus we are not free to experience reality.

Many doctrinal disputes arose within Buddhism, (Bahm 1958, Conze 1959), but these mainly revolved around the methods that could be used to become free of these self imposed mental shackles. Zen Buddhism developed along rather different lines to that of orthodox Buddhism. The intent of Zen Buddhism was to bring the person into union with life and with him/her self. Buddhism with its stress on reincarnation, and acquiring merit in order to progress in the next life was seen by some as too negative. This negativity was felt to create a passive attitude and acceptance that change was slow and

evolved over many lifetimes. In Zen emphasis was always placed on the immediate, on what is happening in the present moment, and in naturalness of being. As Suzuki (1973) points out, in Zen the formal teachings of Buddhism, the sutras and sastras, are seen as just so much waste paper. This is not because they do not contain basic truths, but because the Zen approach cannot be apprehended by the intellect alone and can only be reached through direct experience. Zen points to the fact that reality can be directly apprehended only if the illusory nature of an intellectual self is realised. This realisation is a holistic and intuitive process. The origin of the following declaration is not exactly known, but it is generally regarded as characterising Zen.

**A special transmission outside the scripture;
No dependence on words or letters;
Direct pointing at the Mind of man;
Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood**

Although I was committed to understanding my own self nature, in a sense I started the main part of this research project reluctantly. I saw the problem I really wanted to study as too difficult to articulate and express in a scientific manner. Arising out of my Zen experience, what has concerned me throughout recent years is the difference between intellectual knowledge and a deeper kind of knowing, what might be called in western terms intuitive knowing. Schon (1983) describes intuitive knowing as follows:

“When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with

which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is in our action.”

It seems to me that Schon is implicitly describing a situation in which people know more than they are consciously aware of. They have practical knowledge that they use in real situations. Because this knowledge is tacit, they are not aware of the basis of their knowing. **But the phenomenon I wanted to understand was apparently the reverse of this.** Can you know less than you appear to know? Can you think you know something intellectually, but when you look at your actions in the world then it is clear that you haven't really allowed this knowledge to affect your understanding (if judged by your actions).

Since 1984 I had been meeting regularly with a modern Zen master and trying to understand him. In Zen one learns things intellectually that can make a very great impression. But this intellectual knowledge can drain away and is useless until it is translated into a deeper and more intuitive knowing which informs action in the world. Many times I have experienced a feeling of surprise when I have come across reminders of some knowledge I had encountered years before. When real understanding strikes, there is no forgetting. Schon's description of how this intuitive and practical knowing is developed **in professional practice** is through **a reflective process** of interaction. One tries something and if it does not work then one bootstraps one's way, by trial and error, and by action and reflection, to arrive at something that works. When intuitive knowing is linked to a task then it is possible to demonstrate that people can intuitively perform actions for which they cannot always provide rational explanations. By a

reflective process of action and reflection they can begin to explain post hoc to themselves or to others why they did what they did.

This reflective process is also a component of Self-Organised Learning (SOL) described by Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991). In most instances cited in psychological literature, the sort of reflective interaction described is interaction with other people, or is task related. In the SOL process one can have reflective ‘Learning Conversations’ with others, and with tasks, but emphasis is also placed on the value of **conversations with oneself**. These conversations can take many forms, and the Zen Mondo in Chapter 7 is an example of a Learning Conversation with myself. It should be noted here that the term ‘Learning Conversation’ is used in a formal sense within SOL and will be explained fully in subsequent chapters. Conversation in this technical sense is not casual chit chat, it is a creative encounter, with oneself or another. It is an attempt to reach a **deeper awareness of the person-in-process**, and success is dependent upon the awareness and skill brought to the conversation.

Conversations with oneself as described by Harri-Augstein and Thomas are also both reflective and bootstrapping,

“Sometimes we can perform ahead of our explicit understanding. The understanding exists in the deep, tacit meanings but we have not conversed sufficiently, or sufficiently well, within ourselves to be able to represent this understanding in forms we can recognise and express. If we can learn alternatively to bootstrap ourselves forward from understanding to performing and from performing to understanding we will have acquired a powerful form of learning.”

Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991)

However, they differ in their interpretation of the process described by Schon above. This process is their model of the **Self Organised Learner as a personal scientist**. They lean heavily on George Kelly's metaphor of person as scientist to explain how we construct 'theories' of our world, as we act within the world. These mental theories become the basis of our anticipations and future actions. We revise our personal theories in the light of our ongoing experience in analogous ways to the reflective, interpretative, scientific process. This reflection is part of the process of how we live in the world, and emerging from this bootstrapping reflective process are strategies and tactics, which are the content of our own personal experiments, thus allowing us to develop ever more complex models of our worlds.

“Thus, without a totally preconceived notion of the form which the conversation will take, nor of the content, the conversants (which may be one person, or between persons) within a conversational paradigm enter upon a collaborative enterprise for which they can only have significant expectations. The outcome depends upon their conversational skill and know how.”

Harri Augstein and Thomas (1991)

So what interested me was why this self reflective process apparently did not 'work' when it came to understanding some aspects of Zen teaching. By 'work' in this context I mean that for myself and the other Zen participants in this project certain kinds of change, which have been worked towards, have not happened. What is being described above is a level of action that cannot be conceptualised readily, although it may with reflection gradually become part of consciousness. It might have been of course that this reflective process simply had not matured in myself and the Zen

participants in this study. I was not convinced that this explanation was correct. It was equally possible that, as Zen asserts, we were trying to understand some process **which was not amenable of realisation through reflection**.

In the reflective process we use ideas, feelings, knowledge and intuition to deepen our understanding by interacting or conversing with ourselves and others. The problem for Zen students is that **they cannot conceptualise the enlightened state** for which they are aiming, indeed they are told that **if they can conceptualise it they have gone astray**. So how can you 'converse' without concepts or models? Is such a thing possible? Certainly all usual definitions of conversation and discourse seem to need concepts. But can one approach or apprehend knowledge without the mediation of thought?

Polanyi (1958) points out that man's intellectual superiority over animals is almost entirely due to the use of language. However speech itself cannot be due to language and must therefore be due to pre-linguistic advantages. He describes two kinds of awareness with two separate kinds of meaning. In *denotative* or *representative* meaning one thing (e.g. a word) means another thing (an object) and all logical thought is concerned with this relationship. However *existential* meaning like recognition of a face or a tune, has no *denotative* meaning but means something only in itself. Its meaning is implicit and tacit and is **within the thing being sensed**.

Classical Zen masters, like Hui Neng or Hakuin, insist that Zen is the recognition of the existential reality that is consciousness. Approaching such a reality is a living experience, one in which the ultimate flowering is enlightenment (or satori in Japanese).

Another name for satori is kensho, meaning to ‘see essence or Nature’, and for reasons which will unfold, I think this description is less likely to be misunderstood by a Western mindset. Like Polanyi’s *existential* meaning, this seeing is beyond logic and has a different **quality** from what is ordinarily designated as knowledge. Austin (1998) describes a brief experience of kensho as follows

“It strikes unexpectedly at 9.00 a.m. on the surface platform of the London subway system. Waiting at leisure for the next train to Victoria Station, I turn and look away from the tracks, off to the south, in the general direction of the river Thames. This view includes no more than the dingy interior of the station, some grimy buildings in the middle ground, and a bit of open sky above and beyond. I idly survey this ordinary scene, unfocused, no thought in mind.

Instantly, the entire view acquires three qualities:

- *Absolute Reality*
- *Intrinsic Rightness*
- *Ultimate Perfection*

With no transition, it is all complete. Every detail of the entire scene in front is registered, integrated, and found wholly satisfying, all in itself.

In this case the process is instant, and reflection was not the trigger to precipitate the change. It was certainly the case that much reflection had been involved at an earlier stage (Austin had been working on a koan) but this experience came when he was relaxed and unfocused. Not everyone seeks or experiences kensho, but one way of exposing to oneself that there are different levels of understanding is to recognise when our feelings and emotions are very different from our intellectual knowledge. Do such deeper (or higher) levels of knowing involve emotional and intuitional

resources that few people have easy access to? These were the sorts of problems that concerned me when I was starting out.

All Zen students have similar problems of trying to raise levels of consciousness without involving preconceptions and use the Zen master to interact with and pick up clues to 'what works'. The master is a teaching device on how to **be**, Zen teaching is not contained in its epistemology. Since the master's actions emanate from a different perspective, in effect he acts as a mirror reflecting to the novice how they are. I was interested in a better understanding of Zen experience, and all the Zen participants I talked with in the course of this research were certainly accustomed to pondering deeply and reflectively about aspects of their knowledge, but in spite of this none had reached the state they sought. One could argue that these people have simply not been reflective enough, but in Zen they are encouraged to give up '*judging and choosing*'. It would appear that since the reflective process as normally conceived, moves from action to reflection and involves values and judgements, that in Zen there is something else to be understood.

Suzuki (1969) tackles the difficult area of accessing deeper aspects of consciousness in his book *The Zen Doctrine of No Mind*. In it he shows the relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind from his Zen understanding.

“In the traditional terminology of Buddhism, self-nature is Buddha-nature, that which makes up Buddhahood; it is absolute Emptiness, Sunyata, it is absolute Suchness, Tathata. May it be called Pure Being, the term used in Western philosophy? While it has nothing yet to do with a dualistic world of subject and object, I will for convenience sake call it Mind, with the initial capital letter, and also the Unconscious. As Buddhist phraseology is saturated with psychological terms, and as religion is principally concerned with the philosophy of life, these terms, Mind and the Unconscious, are here

used as synonymous with Self-Nature, but the utmost care is to be taken not to confuse them with those of empirical psychology (my emphasis); for we have not yet come to this; we are speaking of a transcendental world where no such shadows are yet traceable."

Suzuki goes on to say that movement arises in the Unconscious or Mind or Self-nature that then becomes conscious of itself. How or why this happens are not questions which have any meaning in this context, the process is transcendental and is not amenable to analysis in terms of cause and effect. It cannot be understood, only experienced. In Suzuki's description the self reflective or enlightened mind then functions in a two fold direction; both towards the Unconscious, the Self Nature, (which is much greater than the personal unconscious) and the conscious, which is thought. By his definition it is the conscious mind with which the reflective self of psychology converses.

From the perspective of Western psychology it might be proposed that conversations can be attempted with the unconscious mind through such techniques as guided fantasy, and lucid dreaming. But Suzuki makes a distinction between the earlier named Unconscious and the unconscious mind of psychology and psychoanalytic theory. Suzuki's explanation makes it clear it is the **personal** unconscious we contact. I would say that even when in guided fantasy one contacts the '*higher self*' what is being made available is a personal conception of how a higher self should be. Suzuki, and classical Zen masters explicitly state that if even once, one accesses the greater Unconscious, then that is enlightenment, and this is irreversible. Therefore, by definition the brief period of insight, illustrated in Austin's account above is not that, since as his account

makes clear, this feeling wore off. Indeed when he recounted his experience to his master, he was counselled not to try to hold on to it, but to move on. Suzuki and other great Zen masters of the past like Bassui (Trans. Braverman 1989) or the even more formidable Hakuin (Trans. Waddell 1994) stress, one cannot use mind (without the initial capital) – which is thought, in order to reach the greater Unconscious. Traditional Zen training methods therefore revolved around the use of meditation, (emptying the mind) or koans and paradox (exhausting the mind).

So the phenomenon which fascinated me had a tacit aspect in that it is beyond the reach of thought. But say Zen masters, it is a state reached when all the resources of thought (which includes reflection) are seen to be useless and abandoned. At that point, according to Suzuki, the larger Unconscious is made conscious, but that process is not amenable to description. Since this experience is reached by very few people one could argue that it is of little interest to science. However even if science cannot find an explanation (in the sense of pointing to a cause which leads to an effect) for the experience, trying to understand such experience is of great human value. A science that is concerned only with cause and effect is ignoring important aspects of reality. Even when one cannot create explanations, merely asking some kinds of questions can raise and pose problems for current theories and practice that involve changing attitudes to the nature of knowledge. I feel that this kind of progress where the limitations of knowledge can be seen has as much value to science as any other.

I came very slowly to understand that although this inquiry wandered down many byways it was an attempt to examine critically all of my own beliefs and ideas about the

nature of my experience with Zen. I saw this Zen learning process to which I had subjected myself as different to other forms of learning I had experienced. Communicating why this was so important to me is as difficult as describing the experience itself, indeed in a sense they are the same. In Chapter 4, I try to convey some flavour of why I found Zen unique in my experience. These excerpts from meetings and workshops are designed to show how one modern Zen master worked with others, and why that process has a wider learning context.

The impetus to start this research project came after I had met Dr. Jonathan Hey (hereafter referred to as John) the Zen teacher mentioned above, who had made a great impression on me. This was not my first meeting with a 'guru'. I had been to India to meet Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. This led to me doing an immense amount of work in what is often termed as 'personal growth'. On my return to the UK I attended weekend workshops in Psychosynthesis, Transpersonal Psychology, Reichian Bodywork, Jungian Dream analysis, Western Zen Retreats, indeed for about 5 years I actively explored a wide variety of personal growth techniques. Then I met Dr. Hey, who had just formed the Zen Foundation.

This meeting had a profound effect on my psychological attitudes to just about everything, but most notably my sense of self. It also caused me to cease all of my other formal 'personal growth' activities. I felt that these had in fact been exploring with greater or lesser degrees of rigour, the parameters of my own mental prison. What Zen seemed to be offering was a way out of my self imposed and limited view of reality. After 7 years of trying to understand this Zen perspective, I decided, with Dr. Hey's

encouragement, to undertake a more rigorous and systematic attempt at understanding Zen, by undertaking a more formal inquiry into some aspect of the Zen experience.

His encouragement both surprised and puzzled me. I was well aware of the aphorism in Zen, *those who speak do not know, those who know do not speak*. Having initially encouraged me to undertake some sort of systematic inquiry, he then left me pretty much alone to get on with it for some time. John never ever suggested what I might do. If I specifically asked him for his opinion on some matter he would always turn my question back on me. An example of this process is given later in my account of how I derived the topics for the 'Learning Conversations' carried out.

What I did not realise then, but will become evident in my account, is that this refusal to give help or clues but leave the learner to find out by experience, is a classic method of teaching in Zen. Curiously although I had read and enjoyed Herrigel's '*Zen In the Art of Archery*' (1953), I did not relate that process to my own experience at the time. Herrigel's account of how he had to unlearn all ways of conceptualising about what he was doing and just do it, have close parallels to my own experience.

When talking over this dilemma of how to look scientifically at some aspects of Zen, a friend, Dr. David Fontana, suggested that I might find a suitable environment for such a project within the Centre for the Study of Human Learning at Brunel University. Early discussions with Professors Laurie Thomas and Sheila Harri-Augstein proved fruitful, in that they were willing to consider projects on any aspect of human learning providing these were conversational. Furthermore they had a particular interest in certain aspects of Zen which had influenced their own philosophy. They encouraged me to think

widely about the sort of project I wanted to undertake. I felt that Zen had helped me to be clearer and more relaxed about myself and initially I chose to carry out workshops using what I saw as a Zen perspective in stress management.

My first eighteen months research as part of a PhD thesis I now see as my way of avoiding the real issues. I spent that time carrying out two phases of research that I then discarded. These phases I now regard as feasibility exercises in methodology in that they used modified repertory grids and talk back as reflective components of conversational interactions. However I discarded the outcome because I came to realise that there were certain issues in Zen that I wanted to know more about and my early projects did not address these issues. I feel now that **I was set this thesis as a sort of koan and that only ultimately did I accept it as such.** A koan is a question that cannot be resolved by the rational mind. In terms of my own personal journey, I was not clear at the outset what my question was, although I felt that the kind of experience I was undergoing in Zen was valuable in and for itself and should be more widely known. Although I had no clear ideas, nonetheless I had hopes that some sort of 'insight' might strike along the way if I just started doing something. As I tried to observe carefully my own beliefs and attitudes and those of others on the same path I found that we held lots of mutually contradictory feelings and attitudes. So this thesis became a way of clearing out the debris in my mind and trying to look with as much critical attention as possible to what was left.

This process profoundly affected my methodological choices, and became a further strand of a paradox, the difficulty of reconciling the researcher with the Zen seeker. On

one hand I had a personal quest, to understand my Zen experience and why it had not taken me further. On the other hand I had to inquire into this matter in a way which would be systematic, and provide information or knowledge which could be assessed by some criteria of validity.

This dichotomy which appeared in various ways throughout the inquiry had a number of consequences. One major effect was that my purposes changed in response to what I was doing. I now see this meandering of purpose as a demonstration of how my mind became increasingly desperate, as I got no nearer my Zen goal, and kept re-expressing the problem in a slightly different way. With hindsight I can see that I set up a process which led to my giving up cherished notions, and forced me to be ruthless with some of my favoured fantasies. This led to a kind of minimalism. **That minimalism was an expression of how I understood Zen at that time.** I became dissatisfied with many forms of data collection and analysis, and the reasons why I either did not proceed with some sorts of methodology, or abandoned others after starting them are now a major strand of this thesis.

I did become discouraged at one stage, thinking that all I was proving was that what I wanted to do could not be done. **In fact that was quite correct, what I started out trying to do, e.g. explaining Zen, cannot be done.** However my stumbling attempts at this led to a surprising discovery in the end. I feel now that showing the steps along the way that led me, rightly or wrongly, to take the decisions I did has great value. My journey, which started as taking a critical look at myself and others in the Zen

Foundation, also became a critical look at ways of doing qualitative research when it concerned a subject such as Zen.

Initially I was not concerned with the methodological problems inherent in researching Zen, because I did not see how I could inquire into the sort of issues I have been describing. Instead, I had become interested in the fact that in Japan where Zen is a part of a long culture and tradition that Zen training is used to train business executives. I was fascinated by the idea that Zen might be able to help people by transforming their attitudes in everyday life. This, I felt, was a 'good' application of Zen. I felt that Zen had clarified my own thinking and wanted to see whether this had a more general therapeutic value.

In this spirit I therefore carried out two initial phases of action research that are not fully reported on in this thesis. The motives that I had at the time were to see whether Zen values, as I understood them could be incorporated in some therapeutic way to help people understand themselves better. With hindsight I now feel that such an approach might have been adequate if I had been interested at a therapy level, but I was actually interested in a much deeper and more radical process. (I discuss in chapter 15, what I see as the differences between therapy and Zen). The function this early research performed for me at the time, was to eventually convince me that there was no way I could avoid at least attempting trying to find out what was really important to me. What I thought I wanted to know was the impact of Zen on the lives of those who had encountered it, and in what way that knowledge had affected them. This purpose, which arose organically, as a result of deciding not to pursue my original aim of 'using' Zen,

would I thought, lead to some understanding of the connections between intuitive and intellectual knowing.

Early Experimental Research

The purpose of this brief report is to show that although I felt that the outcome of this phase of research was not furthering my Zen understanding, nonetheless the repertory grid methodology had been satisfactory. It was an action research methodology which had given me key constructs of the participants, which were then explored in repeated group talkback sessions, and led to personal discovery and change. It reinforced my belief that although I had changed (or perhaps evolved) my purposes, the methodology was still appropriate for a phenomenally based action research project.

Although my perspective has now profoundly changed, the reason for leaving this description intact is that it shows very clearly the mindset I had at the start of the formal inquiry. I was trying to use some of the tools of psychology, in conjunction with Zen. It was my preliminary attempt to bring Zen into some kind of everyday life context, by applying my knowledge to some practical problem, i.e. stress.

These initial discarded phases of research consisted of carrying out eight weekly stress and relaxation classes with two separate groups recruited through the Norwich Women's Health Information Service. The method used modified repertory grids, Thomas and Harri-Augstein (1985) in order to help participants to identify their problems. We then

used relaxation exercises based on a mixture of autogenic training (Kermani 1992) and guided fantasy (Assageoli 1975) followed by a discussion group as heuristic tools for the reduction of stress. The 'Zen' orientation of the groups was that I tried to guide the discussion from a Zen perspective as I understood it. Participants were encouraged to identify and bring into awareness what was worrying them and then rather than confronting problems, accept what, if anything, could be done in the now and let everything else go.

Since in Buddhism the self is illusory, then the preoccupations of the self and its desires are seen as the cause of suffering. The Four Noble Truths, as Bahm (1959) observes, are really four statements about a single principle. The principle is that desire for what will not be attained ends in frustration; therefore to avoid frustration, be realistic about your desires. Although I tried to guide the discussions in this spirit I did not feel it appropriate in the context of the short term nature of the groups (eight meetings of 2 hours with each group) to attempt any formal teaching of Buddhism or Zen. However the process of encouraging participants to let go of past problems, and deal with what was currently happening in their lives proved fairly fruitful, according to their accounts. A number of participants felt that they had changed in beneficial ways from the groups. One participant in particular, who had in the past been in therapy for depression, found it very liberating simply to let go of the past. I came to see however that although I had enjoyed doing the groups, I had created a number of problems for myself without providing the sort of answers I had come to realise were the ones I was interested in.

Firstly the sort of mixed bag of techniques I had used, including repertory grids to uncover individual patterns of stress in relationships; relaxation exercises as a way of coping with stress symptoms; and discussion groups with peers sharing problems and strategies; made it difficult, if not impossible, to identify which of the elements were most therapeutic. This is a common problem in therapy outcome research, (Smith and Glass (1980), even those with control groups. In addition a major factor in the success of therapy is the influence of the therapist. Ultimately what is often measured is whether **participants feel that they have benefited** from the therapy. I could demonstrate that participants felt that they had benefited, but what was much more problematical was whether Zen was a vital ingredient in this procedure. Perhaps any technique whereby we met, identified problems relaxed and talked, would have had a similar effect. West (1987) found that demonstrating the benefit of meditation was equally difficult. The physiological changes during meditation were undeniable, but when realistic controls were used, e.g. sitting quietly listening to music, some of the same physiological changes could be observed. However meditators continued to feel that the experience of meditating had a **value** to them greater than that of other quiet activities. I too persisted in feeling that my Zen learning experiences had a value, not only to me, but also to others whom I had met at meetings and weekend retreats, and as such was worthy of further investigation.

In these earlier phases of the research I had tried to pass on in a very diffuse kind of way my knowledge and understanding of Zen (not using that name). This put me in the rather comfortable position of thinking I knew more about Zen than the people I was

interacting with. But I was not testing my own understanding of Zen. I was avoiding the koan implicit in doing the thesis. It was also impossible to say within the context of the research whether this Zen orientation had any more value than any other element. Had my interest been mainly in therapy this might not have mattered, providing I measured outcome on the 'feel good' factor. However, my primary interest had crystallised into understanding my Zen experience.

Conversing with a fellow postgraduate at CSHL who participated in a later stage of the research, **D** commented that he thought that researchers often had a "secret" question embedded within the research, which they had to find and address. It was then that I realised that not only did I have a koan, but that it was not going to go away. I had not articulated it to myself because I could see no clear way of answering it. However in spite of my initial evasions the question arose and claimed me. I cannot really say that I claimed it, although this thesis as it now stands is my attempt to address it, even if indirectly

The secret question was "**what is enlightenment**"? And the secret objective of course was am I more likely to become enlightened by understanding it better? Perhaps one reason that I had been unwilling to address this question was that I was well aware that a fundamental tenet of Zen is that enlightenment cannot be understood by the rational mind, and a PhD thesis is certainly supposed to be rational. Even if I chose to look at the relationship of a Zen master to his students I knew that I would be conversing with those who did not regard themselves as enlightened. The question 'what is

enlightenment' was unlikely to be answered in any informed manner apart from the opinion of the Zen master himself.

However I decided that even if I could not answer this question from experience, nonetheless it had a relationship to issues I could address. As I have already stated I was interested in understanding my own and others experience of Zen. Enlightenment was a goal of that experience, albeit a rather uneasy and submerged one. Another paradox often articulated in Zen literature is that if you aim or concentrate on enlightenment, the experience will elude you. This gave me a rationale for not pursuing it directly. I was interested in the epistemology of knowledge, as it pertained to my Zen journey. I felt that this was a reasonable purpose from the point of view of a researcher. The Zen perspective on the nature of the self is radically different from many psychological theoretical positions and finding a way to expose these differences would provide a contribution to scientific knowledge. So the general intention of the inquiry at that point was to investigate how Zen affected the lives of some members of the Zen Foundation, and the implications of the Zen perspective for scientific thought.

Chapter 2 – A Methodological Journey

*You shall not take things at second
Or third hand Nor look through
The eyes of the dead Nor feed on
The spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes
either, nor take things from me,
you shall listen to all sides and filter them
from yourself*

Walt Whitman – Song of Myself

2.1 Methodological Development

This chapter lays down a theoretical and methodological framework indicating how this gradually developed throughout the thesis. It indicates where in the main text the issues discussed here are developed. This framework is linked with the text at the beginning of each chapter by a commentary in bold type.

Braud (1998) in a paper entitled **Can Research be Transpersonal?**, calls attention to the difficulties inherent in researching this field. The transpersonal field encompasses a number of areas but is largely concerned with essential questions about the meaning and value of life. In the transpersonal field, as in any other, the aim of research is the acquisition of new knowledge in the field of inquiry. As Braud points out however, while in transpersonal research this goal of information is still present, it is supplemented by additional goals of assimilation, integration and transformation. Braud also points to two meanings attached to the prefix trans in the word transpersonal. One meaning of trans – as ‘through’ emphasises

interconnections – and transpersonal research in this sense might look at the connections between our personal experience and the world as we know it. Another meaning of trans – as ‘beyond’, suggests that there are other ways of knowing or being beyond those normally recognised if we only take a conventional egocentric view of the world. This project started by looking at connections, in the ‘through’ meaning of trans. I planned to look at the connections between theoretical knowledge and experience of the transpersonal by exploring the experiences of a group in contact with a Zen master. I also planned to look at the connections between Western and Zen views of the nature of the self. By treating the inquiry as a koan I created a need for the inquiry to look ‘beyond’ and contact the absolute. But since the absolute cannot be explained, nor even described, this created many difficulties. Thus the thesis by providing a narrative of my journey is not meant as a map of how to get to a particular place. It does however flag issues which might enable those who come after to take shortcuts on their journey.

Braud feels that what he calls ‘faithful matches’ only occur in transpersonal inquiries when research methods and approaches can be enriched and enlivened by the very transpersonal qualities that they are used to explore. During the research process, several major re-orientations took place which necessitated changing my method and my interpretation of the data. These shifts of direction were largely driven by a need to find a method of inquiry which was appropriate to uncovering the transpersonal qualities I was investigating. The main part of this thesis is written as an emerging inquiry, since that is how it happened. I now regard the value of this narrative of my

journey as showing how I first struggled with issues of explanation and understanding and found them unsatisfactory. Then I turned to descriptions of experience, in order to demonstrate many of my concerns. It was only when this too was abandoned that the final breakthrough came. When the absolute is recognised one cannot explain it, or speak **of** it, but one can speak **from** it, and some of the difference between the absolute and relative worlds can be perceived. The struggles with the deep paradoxes of this inquiry showed most obviously in methodology, but this was only the outward manifestation of a much deeper process.

I realised at the outset that it would be inappropriate to conduct this inquiry within a traditional research paradigm. Traditional research is an objective process which looks at and is done **on** people. I started out with the intention that the research should be within an action research paradigm. I was attracted to an action research methodology because it is participatory, and research is done **with** people. I wanted to undertake an inquiry in the real world, and I was concerned that the outcomes should be valued by all participants, not just the researcher. As my inquiry progressed it became both a personal journey of discovery about Zen, and an examination of what is involved in trying to be a conscious transpersonal researcher. Ultimately, it involved a journey of re-vision, of re-aligning myself to the sources of my knowing. The project overall became the journey of my own experience, and the thesis is a narrative of **experiencing my own experiencing**. During the inquiry I shifted perspective and changed my methods many times. Because of that process the

overall thesis cannot be categorised as being within an action research paradigm, unless I am regarded as the only participant.

At times it appeared to me that I was just being stubborn and making life difficult for myself, by the twists and turns that I took on my journey, because I was well aware that the research process would have been easier to explain, and less 'messy' if I had carried out my original plans. Had I defined my objectives, decided on an appropriate methodology and carried out that methodology, I may have been able to demonstrate my understanding of the research process more easily, but the outcome, i.e. my new relationship to my knowing, would not have happened. It was in the abandonment of method that the transpersonal eventually was uncovered, and so the changes of direction within the inquiry were part of the process. Because of these changes this chapter is designed to provide both a meta commentary on that process and a guide to the organisation of the thesis.

In chapter 1, I have indicated the general intentionality which precipitated my research journey. My purposes appeared to change direction as a result of my ongoing reflections, and also seemed to co-exist very uneasily at times. Thus reviewing the relationship between them and setting priorities within them became an integral part of my research. Ultimately this fragmentation of purpose became cohesive once more, and culminated in a convergence of purposes.

Thus during this inquiry there were several significant personal discoveries which resulted in major shifts in my methodology, and an overview of this process is given below. The two most dramatic shifts in my attitude came about when I thought the

thesis was more or less finished. The first was an insight into the methodology, and the second was an insight into myself. This insight into myself came not just at the eleventh hour, but at five minutes to midnight. Since it was a final outcome, rather than a factor which had affected the main part of the inquiry, I recount it in chapter 16, before my final conclusions. The insight which gave me an overview of methodology took place before that final personal insight, and this chapter provides an account of that.

2.2 Everything contains Method

During the inquiry I looked upon certain classes of events as ‘methodology and data’ when trying to understand my researcher role, and others as ‘experience’, or ‘intuition’ or ‘knowledge’ when trying to deepen my Zen understanding. With hindsight I feel that this is not a distinction I would now wish to make. **I have come to see every event of my inquiry as containing method.** All events in my life were possible sources of data, since I was exploring the sources of my knowing. Thus figure 1 at the end of this chapter, shows the larger events on my journey, but in fact other interactions I had with my family, meetings and conversations with John, doing my normal job, writing fiction, talking to others in the Zen Foundation, running into fellow researchers at Brunel, all contributed to my evolving understanding. In any research inquiry the choice of methods both generate data and select data, and the overall methodology is a pattern of methods. If the method is not appropriate it will not approach the area of interest. Any methodology has a paradigm implicit within it, e.g. the assumptions of action research are different to

that of participant observation. The choice of methodology is designed to be appropriate in focusing upon a particular issue or issues, and to reveal outcomes related to the purpose of the inquiry. But in this inquiry my purposes shifted as I attempted to come to grips with some of the deep paradoxes within it. I mixed a number of methodologies coming from quite different perspectives, e.g. Learning Conversations, participant observation, analysis of zen haiku and pictures, writing fiction etc. But at each stage of the inquiry I was struggling to find an appropriate way to express the transpersonal nature of that part of my inquiry.

My first planned methodology derived from the paradigm of conversational science, (Thomas & Harri Augstein 1999) discussed in section 2.8. As I shall relate I did not complete this part of the inquiry as I thought that it was not addressing holistically the issues I wanted to explore. I therefore embedded this part of the research within a more inclusive inquiry, in which I used data from events in which I had been a participant observer. I looked back over a time frame which started before the formal undertaking of this research, in order to give a richer, thicker description of the issues which interested me, by reporting upon events which I thought important to my quest. I tried to show that a central concern of mine, i.e. that the nature of the self in Zen is different from that of psychology, was an important ingredient of what I wanted to understand even if my initial methodology had not showed this as clearly as I had hoped. The paradigm informing this part of the inquiry is not that of dialogue between the researcher and others on a chosen issue, but of description by a participant observer, an informed insider, who was present at, but did not initiate the

events. Out of both these sources of data I then tried to interpret and describe those events which had most meaning for me in a transpersonal sense. I reflected deeply on the overall pattern of the data I had, and provided a number of chapters outlining the development of what I thought of as my own Zen understanding. This culminated in my interpretation and analysis of those experiences in my life which had most meaning for me (see chapter 12). Now I see that the total experience was my attempts to impose order on the inquiry as a researcher. Often this did not turn out as planned, indeed it was the unforeseen events which led me to look again and come to recognise that I was learning to rely upon myself as the central measuring instrument.

2.3 The Koan as Method

I have said earlier that I felt that I was set this inquiry as a sort of koan. When I started the inquiry I was far from clear how I could resolve the various paradoxes I had set myself. How to resolve the question of enlightenment, I couldn't even begin to think, that almost seemed like a joke. At the time I thought that a systematic effort to look at examples of Zen experience was worth while, even if it was a failure in terms of solving the inner koan.

In my first experience of trying to resolve koans, prior even to meeting John, I found that if one attacks one's question with sufficient intensity **one becomes the question**. The process of questioning becomes so thoroughly internalised that, combined with the often deliberately baffling nature of the question, e.g. '*everything returns to the one - where does the one return*', causes the mind to abandon normal tracks and

triggers a shift in relation to the knowledge one has. There is the sudden realisation that all expressions of experience become the answer. That is why when demonstrating your understanding of a koan to a master, anything can be the answer providing the master feels that you have experienced the answer and are not intellectualising.

An example of the shorter term working of this process is discussed in Chapter 14. I recount (14.3) how I worked on the koan *who am I?* for 5 days in a Western Zen Retreat organised by Dr. John Crook. When I reached the insight that I could not **tell** anyone who I was, **I also experienced a heightened sense of who I was.** This insight was accompanied by very positive affect, the world had a numinous quality, it felt more alive and real, as Austin describes in chapter 1. I had a sense of the interconnectedness of all things, and a sense of **personal wholeness** – I was who I was – there was nothing I needed or could do to be more me. The world was perfect, just as it was, and I was a part of that. Reflecting on this I realised that all koans are interconnected, they are all asking about wholeness, leading to a realisation that *all is one*. Any answer which conveys this experience is appropriate. A famous koan is *what is Buddha*, and two famous answers of those who becomes self realised are ‘*a pound of flax*’ or ‘*the cypress tree in the courtyard*’. When your being has changed, then a spontaneous expression of whatever is in your mind at the time is a valid answer, although this often does not involve words at all. I saw that resolving *who am I* allowed me to resolve other classic koans such as *where does the one return*, or *what is the sound of one hand clapping*. One arrives at a place where

there is a sense of the unity of all things, not as an intellectual exercise, but as an intuitive and emotional experience. At the time that I experienced my insight I felt wonderful. But in spite of this and other experiences the heightened sensitivity I felt on those occasions always wore off. And in subsequent retreats I did not solve other koans on day one because I had a method, one cannot practise a heightened sense of being. On the other hand I had a remembrance of that experience and a faith that if I worked hard enough then some sort of change or shift would take place. It took me some time to learn not to try to recreate the emotional high of that first experience but to accept other shifts and changes as they happened. When the 'method' is to delve as deeply as possible into the question and **experience the answer**, you have to engage with the question until the experience comes. The moment when one is struggling with the question, eating it, sleeping it, and sometimes dreaming it, and the point when one suddenly jumps to another place, comes like an act of grace. When asked by a master to show understanding of their koan, each person then responds in a different way. The master can tell by demeanour and body language and the content of the response whether this expression is purely intellectual or whether the student has reached a different plane of understanding.

It is not possible to 'prove' that such kensho experiences are not delusional. This is why the tradition of presenting one's understanding to a master was regarded in the Zen tradition as a necessary validation. One way a Zen master judges the quality of the experience is by its results. If the emotional experience causes the student to withdraw or avoid others lest this wonderful feeling is lost, this is not true Zen. If

speaking of it causes it to dissipate, it is not truth. To test this the master will often challenge the basis of this new perspective.

It was in treating this inquiry as a koan that the transpersonal was approached, otherwise the thesis is a narrative account of the results of my struggle to use my mind to understand my experience. It was only when I faced the fact that I had reached the end of my research inquiry without being any nearer to resolving my question, that the true answer came.

I have resolved my koan. I have now experienced the answer. But I did not reach this position until I had abandoned all thoughts of the thesis, all thoughts of Zen, and all thoughts of enlightenment. I had submitted the thesis and been asked to amend it, incorporating an overview of my methodology, which is basically what is contained in this chapter. While engaged on this I took a weekend out to attend a silent retreat. I went almost reluctantly, indeed I would not have gone at all, if I had not trusted the opinion of a friend, Lynn Goswell, whose contribution to the thesis as a 'peer expert' is shown in chapter 11. She told me that Satyananda, who was conducting the retreat, sounded a lot like John, so I went and finally recognised what I had been seeking.

This of course gave me a final dilemma of how to present this understanding in a way which did not involve abandoning all that had gone before. My solution to this is expressed below.

2.4 Myself as a Measuring Instrument

The full power of the insight, that ultimately I had trusted my own perceptions and judgement, remained tacit throughout most of the inquiry, and only emerged towards the end of the writing of the thesis. But implicitly I had allowed my deep central feelings about what felt right, and what made me uneasy or doubtful, to

precipitate halts and changes of direction. It became the nature of this inquiry that outcomes emerged, and were tacitly appreciated before they were fully consciously understood. Because of the way the inquiry changed and regrouped from time to time, I became the primary referent through which data, experience and intuitions were reflected. I involved others at various points in the inquiry and offered my interpretations to others for feedback and comments. Thus understanding and explaining my own experience became an active process, in which my own role as transpersonal researcher gradually developed.

I have already said that the purposes and aims of the thesis changed as a response to conducting certain aspects of the inquiry. As I reflected before my final insight, on the ways that regarding myself as a measuring instrument had affected the research inquiry, I realised that I could further reconcile the Zen seeker and the researcher, by understanding that the research process required me to re-align myself to everything I thought I knew, and that this process of change in me was the major outcome of this inquiry. The final step is an outcome I truly did not really expect. A final act of grace which made the pattern of my research difficulties clear to me.

I had set out inquiring into Zen trying to understand it sympathetically, subjectively, but also look at it objectively. As a researcher I was a sieve which had a mesh, through which experience flowed. Some aspects of experience the mesh held back as not pertaining to my quest. Other aspects dropped through my sieve and were pursued further. Some of these aspects related to my quest as a seeker of the meaning of Zen, and some aspects related to my search for a way to look at such

things in an objectively subjective way. I started out trying to look at Zen in terms of how it fitted with some Western psychological and philosophical knowledge about the nature of the self. The whole thrust of the initial research tried to look at Zen in a way which would be explicable in Western scientific terms. But as a background to that I already had seven years of experience of trying to understand Zen, which was a second, tacit sieve. As I proceeded, the way that my personal quest influenced the process was to change the shape of the holes in my sieve, so that those items which dropped through and were explored were those which I felt were relevant to Zen as I was coming to understand it. In other words my researcher sieve started to demonstrate some, at least, of those transpersonal qualities I felt were part of the Zen experience. This was largely tacit, but I knew when I was going nowhere, and then I changed direction. But most research methods concern themselves only with the **contents** of what is passing through the sieve. **I was the sieve and so the relationship of me to my knowledge was the methodology.** Methodology is the description of a pattern of methods, and overall my method was experiencing my own experiencing.

As I have already said, during most of the inquiry this awareness was tacit. There were points throughout the research when issues came alive and I was deeply involved in the process, and others when the vitality that I felt at those times drained away. Post hoc, I realised that some events or experiences had greater meaning for me, and that when this appeared to be so, some qualities were present that I could define. The definitions below were arrived at before the final resolution of the koan.

They are my ultimate explanation of the main part of the thesis and my struggle to interpret my koan. I decided that the criteria which seemed to me to operate when I felt that I reached something meaningful were **wholeness, authenticity, and openness**. Where some or all of these qualities operated there was also **emergence**, some new element coming into play. But what do I mean by wholeness, openness and authenticity? Wholeness in me was when I felt that my intuition was flowing, when it wasn't impeded by my intellect, when something felt right. Wholeness also describes a process of seeing hitherto unrealised interconnections that cause one to transcend previous boundaries. Capri (1998) describing Ilea Prigogine's concept of dissipative structures says

“A dissipative structure is an open system that maintains itself in a state far from equilibrium. The dynamics of these dissipative structures specifically includes the spontaneous emergence of new forms of order at points of instability. This phenomenon of emergence has been recognised as the dynamic origin of growth, development and evolution.”

The name dissipative structures comes from the fact that any such structure must dissipate entropy so it won't build up inside the organism and kill it with stasis. Thus dissipative structures contain a paradox, they flow, yet they are relatively stable. The structure can only survive by remaining open to a flowing matter and energy exchange with the environment. It establishes a relative stability, e.g. a warm blooded mammal maintains a stable temperature and chemical balance despite wide external variations in temperature, but this relationship is constantly in flux. This means that resistance to change (e.g. keeping a stable temperature) is itself a kind of

flowing. The very balance maintained by the organism is paradoxically also an instability because of its dependence on its environment.

Prigogine and Stengers (1984) explore how the concept of dissipative structures discovered in chemistry can be applied to a person, or a society. The laws of dissipative structures can apply at the atomic, the molecular, the personal or societal levels. I regarded myself as a dissipative structure whose own personal points of instability as I carried out the inquiry produced unexpected bifurcation points. All dissipative structures have the potential to evolve, and perturbations from the environment trigger structural changes in the system. Capra (1998), explaining how cognition has been related to this process says

“The system specifies its own structural changes, and it also specifies which perturbations from the environment trigger them. In this way, the system ‘brings forth a world’, each structural change being an act of cognition.”

Thus the person as system re-interprets their relationship to the environment. Sometimes large external events break through our defences, e.g. the death of a significant other, then a reorganisation of a dissipative structure takes place. Sometimes this causes the system to create a subsidiary compensating structure, and sometimes, in Prigogine’s words, the system may ‘escape into a higher order’. When I first read of the work of Prigogine I thought that ‘escaping to a higher order’ was a possible analogy helpful in understanding enlightenment. At that time I conceptualised it as the system jumping to a new synthesis which accounts for more elements, but reorders those elements in a different way.

One of the qualities which seemed to me to trigger re-organisation was wholeness, and complementing that was **openness** to as many elements of the situation as possible, thus allowing some previously tacit elements to 'break through'. The more openness in being willing to surrender concepts and the greater the degree of re-organisation. This intuitive process in me manifested itself as tolerance for ambiguity. I slowly learned not to push for a premature closure to the re-ordering process. So for me wholeness and openness are mutually reinforcing, and lead to **emergence**, where new possibilities occur. Emergence contributes a new and evolving perspective.

The other element, **authenticity** is a feeling of 'rightness' about the experience. This is not an intellectual process but an emotional and intuitive one, one suddenly realises that a situation or experience feels real, feels right, feels authentic. Of course since it is an aspect of each person's inner being that triggers the feeling (I deliberately don't say causes that feeling) and may be different for each person, and this can pose problems of validity,(see section 2.8)

Austin (1998) describing his kensho experience reported in Chapter 1, refers to Absolute Reality, Intrinsic Rightness and Ultimate Perfection. Clearly there is an overlap to our criteria. My definition of authenticity is a feeling of rightness, and intrinsic rightness is one of Austin's qualities. However I do not want to dwell too much on any similarities throughout the progress of the inquiry, as the occasions within the research where I felt that the qualities of wholeness, openness, and authenticity operated were not kensho experiences. My own experience of

transcendence came after the thesis was written. The value of the inquiry is to show the path which led there. A description of my experience has no value in the sense of being representative of a route. But by showing the stumbling steps by which I gradually dropped all my most cherished concepts it is possible to show what prevents actualisation of kensho. The map is not the territory, but my map can show dangers and hazards by flagging some of my misconceptions on the way, thus future explorers can avoid some of my errors.

As the Zen understanding aspect of my quest strengthened it was as though the thrust of my inquiry changed. I identified with aspects of Zen and looked at certain Western theories and methods from a Zen perspective. It was as though I had been looking at Zen as the 'figure', and the research methodology and the psychology of self, as the 'ground'. But as the inquiry progressed a reversal took place and my understanding and interpretation of Zen, became the ground through which I examined all my beliefs and my understanding of methodology and the psychology of self. I had been looking through a lens in one direction, and suddenly I found myself looking back through the lens from the other side.

I had started out realising that an intellectual knowledge of Zen was not enough, and my struggle to understand changed my being. The realisation that I myself had been the measure led me to try to plot the influence which regarding myself as a measuring instrument had had on my thesis. Before turning to this I first give an account of two crisis points in the inquiry where I abandoned the use of a particular methodology. These turning points arose because of the perturbation caused by trying to reconcile

the roles of Zen seeker and researcher. These two specific examples are presented here to show how I relied upon my own intuitive process in deciding what felt authentic. Both are major points of instability on my quest, and the re-alignments that I made were in the direction of wholeness and openness.

2.5 Conversational Repertory Grid Methodology

After carrying out the group activities briefly reported on in the last chapter I had planned to use repertory grid exercises with an extended talkback of the grid analysis in the next phase of that research. I felt that this methodology had succeeded in uncovering core constructs of the participants in the stress groups, and that the talkback in group sessions had proved valuable in giving examples of experience which added richness to the constructs which had been uncovered. It was also a neat way to look at elicited personal knowledge in the form of constructs, and relate these to other, more implicit, ways of knowing in the extended talkback of the repertory grids.

In the earlier research, participants had reported that their awareness of the issues that caused them to become stressed had been raised by the use of repertory grids. They were often surprised by the underlying constructs they brought to light and sometimes shocked by the relatively small number of constructs by which they judge many life situations. The more I reflected on this the more I felt that a repertory grid methodology suited my needs. I was attracted by the idea of comparing Zen as a way of learning with that of Self Organised Learning. I planned to carry out some form of grid procedure with 'experts' in both Zen and SOL, i.e. with John and with

Laurie Thomas, one of the Directors of the Centre for the Study of Human Learning, and with their students. The initial conversations with John or Laurie could establish the elements or items of experience that each thought was relevant to Zen or SOL, according to these experts. The elements would then be 'construed' within the repertory grid procedure, Thomas and Harri-Augstein (1985) and 'talked back' several times to tease out all the possible levels of construing. This conversational approach has the potential for the identification of explicit but deeply personal meanings which can then form a basis for a comparison both within and between pairs (e.g. expert/student) and groups (Zen/SOL).

I then planned to carry out a similar repertory grid procedure for the students negotiating with each person, the elements relevant to them. I could then compare the grids of Zen/SOL learners both to each other and the experts, using SOL Socio-grid and Socio-net procedures. This technique is useful where a group of people have explored a topic and have sufficient shared experience that a set of shared elements may be identified. Using these shared elements, they each produce a grid using their own repertoire of constructs that can then be compared to each other member of the group. This Pairs technique yields measures of similarity and difference, and the results can be mapped on to a Socio-Net grid showing the comparison constructs between and within participants in each group. I could then go back to participants and discuss my overall findings, i.e. who thinks like whom and about what. This approach is systematic, scientific, and yet allows a flexible conversational action research methodology (Thomas and Harri-Augstein 1985)

where the initial elements are negotiated with each individual. Such an intensive personal exploration would, I felt sure, raise the awareness of all participants to their own construct systems and allow a joint exploration of the relationships between constructs. This conversational paradigm thus allows a systematic comparison between Zen and SOL.

However appropriate and scientific a programme this seemed, I soon found out that researching Zen is not like that. My first participant was the Zen master. It quickly became clear that even such a person centred methodology was quite irrelevant to him. He perfectly understood what was being asked of him. He also understood the psychological reasons for the form the grid procedure took, but said that such a method of analysis, synthesis and comparison **was totally alien to his current way of being**. Eliciting elements and making triadic comparisons of elements, assigning relative importance or value to constructs, and treating people as personal scientists **involved dialectic thinking** which was no longer within his current paradigm. He pointed out that his mode of being was beyond duality.

This setback gave me an immediate jolt. I had known John for 9 years when we had this conversation. How could it happen that I had contemplated a dialectic method for studying Zen? The person construing is making sense of their world, and giving meaning to it, by judging and comparing. I had been devising a methodology trying to understand how an individual's structures of meaning created their concept of enlightenment, and how this helped or hindered their progress. Such an approach simply had no meaning for John. This was a prime example of when I thought I

understood intellectually that the transpersonal was not amenable to scientific rules, but I nonetheless attempted to apply some anyway.

At that stage what I had learned was that if you are asking people whether something is more like this or more like that, even if the constructs being examined come from the participants, then you are not on a Zen track. John could have attempted to complete a grid by remembering how he used to feel before he 'attained Zen', or by giving answers which he thought were what most people would think, and actually offered to do so. However this seemed not only to do violence to Zen, but also to the phenomenological principles that Kelly espoused, and from which SOL partly derives. This impasse challenged the direction of my planned methodology and highlighted some of the problems I was likely to encounter, should I continue in this way. At the time I felt that my methodology **required that it was appropriate to both the Zen and SOL cultures** that I was exploring. I would add to that, that I had a tacit understanding that the methodology should try to display some of the qualities that it is investigating (Braud 1998).

I had elected to use a SOL methodology, and a SOL measure for examining Zen. I reflected on whether I should carry on and compare grids of Zen/SOL learners as the Zen sample were unlikely to have the same difficulty as John in completing repertory grids. But if I did that perhaps I risked missing out on the more subtle Zen aspects of their being. As I considered this I came to realise that reasons for proceeding down such an avenue were for me all about **appearing** to be systematic and scientific in my investigations. **This was giving predominance to my researcher role over that**

of Zen seeker. I had to find some other method which was more sensitive to all aspects of Zen.

2.6 The Learning Conversation Methodology

Conversational talkback procedures using Focused Repertory Grids is one of the central tools used within the conversational science paradigm devised by Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991). It was agreed with my tutor that it was more appropriate not to use this tool but rather develop a more free form procedure true to the dynamics of 'Learning Conversation' (LC) framework, (the attributes of a Learning Conversation are discussed more fully in Chapter 3). At least in that way I could allow all participants to express their beliefs, values and understanding without constraining them to a particular 2-dimensional grid elicitation. So at that stage I tried to introduce greater **openness** into the method. Although I felt it highly unlikely that I would encounter any Zen novice who did not still *'judge and choose'* dialectically, I felt I had to allow the opportunity for a creative encounter without pushing for a particular format that might constrain the emerging information.

I had intended to carry out more than one Learning Conversation with each participant in my Zen/SOL groups in order to explore issues intensively. Once again however I found that my researcher responses came into conflict with my desires to understand Zen and caused perturbations in my cognitive system. The Zen master offered to carry out Learning Conversations with the same Zen participants that I had, and I was happy to agree since I felt this would provide an interesting counterpoint to the data. I had completed six LCs and John three before his ill

health intervened. Reflecting upon where my first round of LC's had reached, and comparing the results with those of the LC's with John, I decided that it was in interactions with him that true Zen emerged. I had taken a reflective role in the conversations, treating questions like koans, and allowing participants to interpret them as they chose. John had been more confrontational, and there were interesting differences between the two sets of conversations that are discussed in chapter 10.

An important part of a Learning Conversation is that people understand the structure sufficiently to be able to enter into, and if they wish, change the direction of the conversation. In the Learning Conversations with SOL participants all were aware of the underlying assumptions and structure of LCs and were using them in their own research. Zen participants had no such understanding. From seeing many interactions with John however I knew that they were well versed in attempting to answer simple seeming, yet difficult questions, and to answer them only out of their own experience. Simply by announcing as I did, that I wanted their input on some aspects of Zen, and that after seeing me they would also see John, made them take the encounter seriously. The reason I say that the questions were like koans is that one of the great classical koans is *what is Buddha*, or in other words *what is Zen*. The questions which I devised asked variations of that, i.e. what participants needed to do to attain Zen, or what impact Zen had on their lives, indeed the questions viewed collectively were asking *what is Zen and how has it manifested in your life?* But if I were treating the questions I asked as koans, how should the responses be evaluated? As I have already said, when resolving a koan anything can be an

answer, if it demonstrates understanding of some deeper aspect of experience. I was not expecting anyone to resolve the underlying question *what is enlightenment* during the conversation. **But I was alert to any attempt to deepen the level of the conversation.** In a normal Learning Conversation it is usually the initiator of the conversation who encourages the changes of meaning level. In the spirit of a koan I waited for some shift to emerge from participants. I did not want to jointly explore what it meant to both of us at that stage. I planned to let the initial answers emerge, and then explore joint meanings in a further conversation.

When I became reluctant to proceed to the next planned stage of research, it was because although I had an understanding of Zen, which was refined and developed as I carried out this project, I knew that this understanding was not as developed as John's. Indeed I felt that assuming similar skills in this area was a form of hubris. Since I was looking at the effects of John's Zen on Zen participants, he was undoubtedly the 'expert' in this area. I thought deeply about the sorts of information that further conversations with me were likely to yield. A collaborative inquiry between me and other non-enlightened participants would only yield our negotiated concepts of enlightenment. I thought it unlikely that further Zen conversations with me would reveal deeper levels of meaning than those examples I already had of John's conversations. In addition, I felt that I knew these participants in a way that my conversations had not adequately revealed. My dilemma was in fact similar to that already raised in the Repertory Grid example – how could I reconcile the demands of methodological soundness with my investigation into Zen. And if I

called a halt to further Learning Conversations what could I do which would both throw greater light on the experiences I wanted to uncover, and do so in a way appropriate to a research inquiry? There was a hiatus at this point where I attempted to explore the issues raised in the LC's with both the experts (John and Laurie), and with interested peers. After which I wrote the first version of the thesis. I was not happy but I did not see a way forward.

Then I realised that I already had data that got to the heart of the Zen experience. Right at the outset of the project John had given me free access to all transcripts of his meetings and workshops, in which I had often been a participant, so why had I ignored this wealth of possible resources? I realised that I had not incorporated it because I had interpreted my role as researcher as meaning that I had to generate the data myself. I had ignored my secret question, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say I abandoned it, in the search to be scientific about my inquiry. When one resolves a koan one reaches a different relationship to the knowledge one has. Plunging into a koan means accessing everything one knows in a different way, not trying to re-create or re-express situations to order. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) point out, not all insider accounts are produced by participants responding to an ethnographer's questions. As a result of the influence of naturalism it is not uncommon for ethnographers to regard solicited accounts as **less valid** than those produced spontaneously, since participants may be affected by reactivity and the questions asked by the researcher. In such cases the strength of the method is the **relative** objectivity gained when the participant observer only

describes. Clearly that description is also an interpretation, but the observer, the describer, does not set up the events. I had access to material from meetings and workshops, where I had been present as a participant, and this data was of a sort unlikely to become accessible to an outside researcher. By using it I could create a mixture of solicited and unsolicited data, in order that one might illuminate the other.

I had access to correspondence, and transcripts of meetings and workshops that showed examples of Zen interactions in all their immediacy in a way that a planned research inquiry was unlikely to do. By accessing correspondence of those who wrote of out of pressing need, and recounting examples of some of the more intense interactions that I was aware of, I could begin to show the more subtle issues which concerned Zen novices, even if they could not resolve these issues to their satisfaction, or explain them in conversation.

Instead of doing a second round of LC's I then incorporated a variety of different kinds of data which I thought gave a much more rounded and complete picture of the kind of experience I and other Zen participants had undergone. This included excerpts from correspondence, meetings, workshops, dreams, art and fiction. Again the direction of this change was trying to provide a larger, more inclusive, and richer (more complex) picture, exhibiting greater openness.

When I had integrated this material into a revised thesis structure I thought that this was the best I could do in reconciling my dual roles as Zen seeker and researcher. However a further re-organisation of my understanding of methodology came after the inquiry was nearly complete, as I have recounted, when I realised that my

personal changes had affected my researcher role and that I had become my measuring instrument. This chapter is thus an overview of the largely tacit process involved in treating the thesis as a koan. In the following sections I present a commentary of how this affected my purposes, and deal with issues of validity.

2.7 Emerging Purposes

In a traditional research inquiry, it is usual to define objectives, choose a methodology appropriate to uncovering these purposes, and relate outcomes to these aims. The way this inquiry progressed I had a general overall purpose – to understand the value of the Zen experience, and a hidden agenda – what is enlightenment? The other purposes which emerged are questions I asked myself at various stages of the journey, and are simply different expressions of what I saw as the underlying problem, that of reconciling my Zen journey with my research one. When I reviewed the numerous questions I had asked myself throughout the inquiry they seemed to me to fall into three main categories. Questions regarding the nature of Zen, questions about the appropriateness of particular methods, and questions about the nature of knowledge. These are not discrete categories and sometimes the purposes overlapped.

Zen Purposes

- To understand my own self nature – who am I?
- To gain a better understanding of my own and others' Zen experience
- To examine critically my own beliefs about Zen
- To accept the thesis as a koan

- What is enlightenment

Methodological Purposes

- How to find a scientific way to study the transpersonal?
- What is the value for science in raising questions if you can't answer them?
- Why didn't reflection 'work' as a way to enlightenment?
- Can any reflective tool provide sufficient depth to look at transpersonal issues?

Purpose of Knowledge

- What is the difference between intellectual and intuitive knowledge?
- Can you know less that you appear to know?
- How did grief affect my knowing?
- Do deeper or higher levels of knowing involve intuitive resources few have access to?

I originally intended to analyse these purposes and show how they related to outcomes in the thesis. But this would be to lovingly delineate the trees and ignore the wood. These purposes were a device on my journey as I was trying to find a direction, they were different expressions of a similar purpose. They did not have a separate outcome equivalent, as might be expected in a normal research inquiry.

What I came belatedly to realise was that the three types of purpose described above gradually converged, and that the key to understanding this lay in my own personal change. By regarding myself as the central measuring instrument I was simultaneously combining the source of my being as Zen seeker, myself as

transpersonal researcher, and my relationship to my knowing, as one convergent whole.

But this process was tacit as it was taking place, so I appeared to have no conscious knowledge of why I was doing what I was doing. Yet I did have strong feelings of what was authentic to me. What I came to accept is that my intuitional responses were very much alive, and that I depended upon them a great deal. I may have thought that my tacit knowledge of Zen was not affecting my life as it should, but I accept that my personal development profoundly affected everything I did, and that this was so throughout the inquiry. My initial perceived problem outlined in chapter 1, i.e. my inability to become enlightened, was a consequence of expectation. I had been paying lip service to the Zen injunction not to over value the intellect, but I had not really allowed myself to confront that because I was carrying out a research inquiry. Now I see the effect of gradually abandoning that stance, in the development of the thesis.

2.8 Criteria of Validity

Before contemplating issues of validity, the question to be asked first is what would constitute success in a research project about enlightenment? The enlightenment of the researcher, the resolution of the koan? I have resolved my koan, and realised my true nature, and an account of that process is given in section 16.1. In Zen traditions this experience is authenticated by the master. That too happened in this case, but from a scientific point of view this merely displaces the problem. Who verifies the master? In all accepted scientific ideas of verification my resolution of

my koan cannot be verified or explained. I cannot speak of the experience and expect it to be understood. I can and do, describe the events leading up to the experience, and these are the events described in the thesis up till chapter 15. And I can describe what my experience felt like to me, and this is recounted in chapter 16. Afterwards I can speak **from** the experience, and relate it to my Zen journey and this is done in section 16.2, and from this a qualitative difference can be seen. And thus this contrast between my perspective before and after the resolution can be demonstrated. I contend that this a unique but nonetheless valid way of assessing my research experience. But this is not validation as this is normally understood. Verification of my ultimate insight is a special issue, which needs elaborated upon and discussed further, but I have chosen to do this in Conclusions (chapter 17), after I have given an account of my total journey.

The present discussion of validity pertains to the earlier part of the inquiry when my attempts to understand Zen were intellectual. Traditional views of validity arising from models based on the physical sciences and positivism, have tended to be concerned with whether an inquiry actually measures what it purports to measure. It is also concerned with how generalisable results are, and whether some other researcher could get similar results by using the same measure. The positivists apply four standard criteria to inquiry: internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Denzin 1997). While validity in these forms are generally felt to be inappropriate to much of new paradigm research (Reason and Rowan 1981), a concern about validity of interpretation remains. In a post-modern paradigm, there is

no privileged position from which an interpreter can speak, and this leads some to the conclusion that all interpretations have the same epistemological validity. But such a stance ignores the possibility that there is a real world potentially indifferent to the bias of the observer. During much of the inquiry, like many qualitative researchers I was concerned throughout to provide some evidence that my interpretation or view of the domain of the research was grounded in events which seem 'lifelike' as a description to others, even if no absolute truth can be established. Denzin (1997) defines this position as a concern for verisimilitude, where the production of a text 'feels' truthful and real for the reader. Certain actions are felt to lack verisimilitude if they seem unable to occur in reality. However in a post-modern world the question must be asked, whose verisimilitude? Sometimes it is the researcher's goal both to achieve a lifelike text, and to examine whether there are other versions of reality. Thus a researcher might produce multiple versions of the real, and explore in the text how each version impinges on the other. Such a text attempts to persuade that a particular version of events best demonstrates verisimilitude. My text produces different versions of experience but the final experience does not impinge upon previous versions of experience, in the sense that they can be contrasted from the same epistemological base.

Huberman and Miles (1994) in their discussion of the difficulties of qualitative data management state that

"It is still unlikely that a researcher carrying out qualitative research could write a case study from a colleague's fieldnotes, which would be plausibly similar to the original".

In this case that would be virtually impossible. This inability to interpret in the same way is undoubtedly a weakness if what one is looking for is invariance in the data. As Huberman and Miles point out however, if the researcher is looking at an intricately nested range of activities the quest is not for conventional representativeness but rather understanding the conditions under which a particular finding operates. That too is impossible in this case. One of the great problems of this inquiry in scientific terms, is that there is no cause and effect, demonstrable or otherwise, between a particular procedure or type of event, and a valid transpersonal outcome. Many different methods might produce an experience of the transpersonal, including those I used, but applying a particular method will not necessarily produce such an outcome. This depends primarily on the capacity of the researcher to experience the transpersonal sufficiently to recognise its expression in other participants, or vice versa. But such a paradigm overturns all normal concepts of validity, since it assumes that the researcher cannot draw valid inferences from the data (e.g. an enlightenment experience), unless they have first experienced it themselves.

Psychologists who assume a Rogerian stance accept that the only valid data or useful explanation of another's experience is that offered by the person concerned. The initial phase of the research was conducted within such a paradigm, Thomas and Harri-Augstein (1993). Thomas and Harri-Augstein assume that each person must accept full responsibility as the unique observer of their own experience and that the principal method by which shared meaning is negotiated is through conversation.

They call this a personal science paradigm. Another important element of a personal and conversational science comes from cybernetics. They use the concept of self regulating feedback loops whereby the Self Organised Learner validates his/her own construing system. The criteria for validation necessarily emerges from the person 'bringing forth their world'. Thus the person is responsible for identifying the criteria for validating their own process. This personal self referencing process underpins SOL philosophy, but further validation can be added by referring to another person or a group when shared experience is involved.

One of the initial attractions of using SOL methodology in my own research was because a personal science paradigm is concerned to evaluate change. It assumes that change is an integral part of living. With repertory grid technique it is possible to demonstrate systematically the degree of change in a construct system over several sessions. However in this case I slowly came to realise I was charting a change in my being, which was more difficult to demonstrate. In SOL methodological investigations, whether or not one uses the tool of the repertory grid, one looks first to oneself as primary referent before looking at further sources of verification. Because the inner conversation with oneself is a primary tool, experiencing one's own experiencing is always an outcome, whether or not this is shown explicitly as part of the research. In this inquiry this process emerged as both a major element in the inquiry, and the ultimate outcome. The inquiry was within a conversational paradigm for much of the time, but it would not be accurate to describe the final resolution of my koan as an inner conversation.

In SOL methodology one looks first to one's own experience, but also checks any interpretation by using either another person as referent, or using a group as referent. At different stages of the inquiry I sought feedback from the Zen and SOL participants, from John and Laurie, as well as the three peers who agreed to involve themselves as commentators in my research. I involved each of the latter with my own theory building and entered into extended conversation with them in order to refine and feed into the thesis the results of our collaboration. And I referred back specific points and problems to 'experts' in order to further test my assumptions. Later in the inquiry when I gave examples from Zen meetings and workshops, and recounted my conversations with myself in the form of Zen mondos or writing fiction, these inner conversations are also a central component of a conversational science paradigm, in which I sought to make clear my changing opinions and concerns.

Before I finally resolved my koan, but towards the end of the inquiry I had been considering Heron's (1998) suggestion of 'coherence' as a basis for validity. Heron discusses this within the context of co-operative inquiry. He suggests that some types of inquiry may produce inconclusive results because there may be too few people construing this world. Nonetheless in a co-operative inquiry some degree of coherent experience of it may be possible. As Heron (1988) states

"So we must allow that there can be provisionally valid inquiries, resting simply on the central criterion of coherence with experience, where this does not include coherent concerted action. And where such action awaits further development of the researched world in question."

However, as Heron makes clear coherence as a claim to validity for him rests upon two major criteria. First, that the research conclusions must be coherent with each other, that is they must be consistent, inter-dependent and mutually illuminating. And second, that the collaborative inquirers are in agreement about conclusions.

This is to assume however that collaborators are less likely to errors of interpretation than an individual, and that all collaborators have similar levels of insight. I do not mean here that there is no room in collaborative inquiry for diversity of opinion. One outcome of such an inquiry can be that some participants are agreed upon an interpretation, and other minority viewpoints are also represented. However a minimum requirement for the collaborative inquiry to be coherent is that all participants were involved in the entire process.

In this case there are no collaborators and there can be no collective agreement on what happened. However the concept of 'coherence with experience' is a useful one, which can be traced through the thesis in three ways, ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically. Ontologically, my own personal development as the result of my grieving process for John and Viv, and my conversations with S before her death, led me to work with the koan *who am I?* This experience has coherence in experience with my final insight involving my experience of self realisation. Epistemologically, the accounts of my own experiences are coherent with accounts in Zen literature, and with my accounts of John's interactions, and the evidence for this is discussed in section 16.2. Finally as regards methodology, my account has coherence in that throughout I have tried to be

authentic to myself as a personal scientist, as an observer of my own process, and as an interpreter of it.

The problem of verification of an inner experience is not unique to transpersonal research, and Denzin (1997) discusses the many problems of an ethnography which cannot grant legitimacy to any interpretative stance. As discussed above many texts deal with this by exploring through multiple viewpoints, how each shapes the phenomenon being studied. This approach is consonant with that of a conversational science in that the researcher's interpretation is given primacy, but that where possible this interpretation is explored with others. In such a paradigm all interpretations are relative, but through negotiation and social agreement some form of agreed meaning can be shown. From the point of view of the relative all interpretations are epistemologically equal, but some interpretations appear to have more 'truth' to participants. In this inquiry I recount my skirmishes with the relative world until I finally recognise the nature of the absolute. From the perspective of the absolute, no negotiation of its nature is possible.

When writing this chapter from the point of view of giving a methodological overview of the inquiry I identified three qualities which I thought intermittently came into play. These were wholeness, openness and authenticity. I felt that these were displayed overall in the thesis when the direction of the inquiry changed, and the new direction allowed emergence of some new aspect of the inquiry. It seemed to me that the new direction was always to introduce a richer, more complex, more open, and often more ambiguous, picture.

2.9 The Organisation of the Thesis

Figure 1 overleaf shows the main events on my journey, and how these happened on a time continuum. This is the outer structure through which the inner experience took place. This chapter raises and develops issues, and Figure 1 shows where in the text these issues are to be found.

I then linked this overview to the text by inserting paragraphs (in bold) at the beginning of each chapter, in order to make the connections clearer.

The final phase came when I had solved my koan. I then wrote an account of that experience (chapter 16) and re-wrote conclusions in the light of my new re-vision. I then inserted text boxes in places where I now feel that my position has changed, in order to show the contrast between thinking of the transpersonal and knowing from experience. I have not attempted to do so at every point, as this would confuse rather than illuminate. But I have addressed some key issues in this way.

Figure 1 – Structure and Timing of the Inquiry

1984 Met John	Started my Zen inquiry
1985 Cardiff Conference Chapter 15	
1991 Commenced research inquiry - Chapter 1	My initial perceived problem
1992 Fieldwork Stress Groups- Chapter 1	Explored SOL techniques and action research Conversational methodology
1993 Being and Becoming Seminar on Zen/SOL Chapter 14	

1993 Learning Conversations – Chapters 9/10	<i>This precipitated a crisis in confidence in uncovering the transpersonal aspect of Zen</i>
1994 John's conversations	<i>These caused me to discard having further conversations of my own, see chapter 2</i>
1995 Workshop with John on Creativity and Stress – chapter 14	
1995 John's death –Chapter 13	
1996 Viv's death – Chapter 13	The seeds of my future direction started here and the fruits can be seen in chapter 16
1997 Referral to Participants – Chapter 10	
1997 Conversations with Peers Chapter 11 Conversations with Laurie Chapter 11	
1998 – 1st version of the thesis	Oral examination
1998 – Re-vision Adding Zen material – chapters 4/7/12/13/14/15	Added data from other sources e.g. Zen meetings, recounted important experiences explored fiction and art as interpretative devices
2nd Version of the thesis	
1999 Methodological Analysis of of Thesis –Chapter 2	Myself as a Measuring instrument and issues of validation
1999 Met Satyananda Chapter 16	Resolved my koan
1999 Wrote a Description of Self Realisation –Chapter 16 Wrote final Conclusions Inserted text boxes	
April 1999 - Final version of the Thesis	

Chapter 3 - Setting the Scene for This Research Inquiry

*Out of necessity man acquired organs
So necessitous one – increase thy need
Rumi (1207 – 1273)*

This chapter gives a brief discussion of why I thought the transpersonal, in the form of enlightenment, and Zen experience was worth pursuing even though I could not see how to deal with my koan. It articulates my concern that the nature of the inquiry should shape the methodology, and discusses why I was interested in SOL as a paradigm and as a methodology. I have not gone intensively into the finer details of SOL methodology, as ultimately I did not use conversational methodology in an orthodox way. The outline given here serves to explain the background to the research discussed in Chapters 9 and 10. Chapter 5 develops a wider view of methodology and discusses more fully how my ideas about the nature of science affected some of my decisions

Although I was interested in enlightenment I felt that I could not look at directly, as I could not think of how to approach it scientifically. Yet it is undoubtedly of wide general interest. Professor Charles Tart (1995) points out, that although enlightenment is a goal of hundreds of thousands of people from a variety of spiritual orientations it is almost totally ignored in mainstream Western psychology. Tart coins the word 'endarkenment' for many of the concerns of Western psychology. He comments that most psychological textbooks could be read as manuals of the barriers to enlightenment. There have always been exceptions to this. Rogers, Jung and Maslow were interested in 'self actualisation' and 'peak experiences' and broke ground in what has come to be called humanistic psychology. Professor Tart himself has a lifelong interest in altered states of consciousness (ASC's) and has written several seminal texts in this area.

Since 1978, the existential-phenomenological approach has also gained much ground and has become an increasingly significant and accepted force in psychology (Valle and Halling 1989). This movement is interested in the study of experience (although not to the exclusion of behaviour). What is very different about the phenomenological perspective is that each individual and his or her world are said to *coconstitute* one another. In existential-phenomenological thought, existence always implies that being is actually *being in the world*, and people cannot be studied outside of their context. People are seen as being in dialogue with their world. The philosopher Edmund Husserl was an important influence in phenomenological thought. Husserl was interested in the world of everyday experience as it is expressed in everyday language. Phenomenological psychology makes two important contributions to research inquiry. First, it insists that it is the demands of the subject matter that should shape the inquiry, rather than that a particular type of method derived from the natural sciences should be applied in every situation. Secondly it begins any investigation of human action *as it is lived* rather than approaching it with an assumed attitude of value freedom. In this inquiry I too was concerned with the world of everyday experience, as it is lived in the world, and as it is expressed in everyday language. And I found as I proceeded that the subject matter shaped how I conducted my inquiry.

Humanistic psychology is often referred to as the third force in psychology following the first – behavioural/experimental; and the second – the psychoanalytic movement (Valle and Halling 1989). But there is now a fourth force, **transpersonal** psychology. This concerns itself with a dimension of experience beyond the personal, and is interested in

self transformation. In the UK interest in this area has grown steadily and culminated in the formation of a Transpersonal Psychology section within the British Psychological Association. All of these things led me to believe that there was indeed some wider value to researching the nature of the transpersonal experience that one encounters trying to come to grips with Zen. And that a phenomenological perspective was a suitable way of investigating such an issue.

In White (1984) there are 33 essays on enlightenment. These range from Bucke's classic "From Self to Cosmic Consciousness" first published in 1901, to selections from the writings of major figures like Krishnamurti or Sri Aurobindo, to modern theorists like Ken Wilbur. All give descriptions of enlightenment from different cultural perspectives. Many people have such experiences and they arise in a variety of different religious and cultural contexts. Some of these experiences are temporary and some seem to wear off. I had been told in Zen that real change was irreversible, so I did not want to look at experiences that went away no matter how extraordinary. Since I had a secret question I wanted to do something which I thought gave me an opportunity to solve it. In any case mini enlightenment experiences can be a source of pain and bewilderment to those with no inkling of what has happened to them. Segal (1996) gives an account of her enlightenment experience that led to her being treated for 'depersonalisation disorder' for 12 years. Clearly experiences which have dramatic shifts of perception are not always indicative of the permanent state of enlightenment. I did not wish to investigate the physical experience of alterations of perception, that many people (including myself) have experienced on a temporary basis.

But if I did not wish to pursue the ‘peak experiences’ route, and I wanted to look at everyday experience, what was it that I could investigate? Torbert (1991) talks of the importance of **everyday knowing** which informs life experience and it is with this practical knowing that I was particularly concerned. How was it that some of the theoretical knowledge, acquired during my Zen experiences, did not seem to be translated into life experience? In Torbert’s view what we need is an action inquiry useful to participants as they live their lives and not a reflective science about action. He is concerned with a number of issues relating to such ‘action inquiry’. In an action inquiry the practitioner integrates study and action, taking the role of an observing participant **and making this dual role public**. The intention is to create liberating structures which challenge practitioners to widen their attention, and feed back their perceptions to participants who also widen their own perceptions and strategies.

This thesis could be categorised as action research of that type only in regard to my own action. While I attempted some forms of feedback I would not describe any of the methods I eventually used as action research when they pertained to others, but it is action research where it concerns only myself, since the thesis now makes public how my actions transformed my being.

My aim when starting the project was to look at my own Zen experience critically and investigate what was important to myself and others involved in the Zen Foundation by pooling accounts and comparing experiences. From a scientific point of view it seemed to me that the subject had a value in and of itself, since Zen presented a very different

perspective to that of first force mainstream psychology, second force psychoanalytic perspectives, and third force humanistic psychology. Within transpersonal psychology, different languages are used to describe experience, and Zen is but one of these languages. I was looking at Zen, because that is what attracted me.

I wanted to continue in a systematic way to test the limits of my own knowing. But in itself however valuable it might be to me, could this sort of quest be considered of value in any general sense? My solution to this problem was to combine my own personal quest, which could be seen as a single case study of my own learning, with that of looking also at the learning of others, both within the Zen Foundation and the Centre for the Study of Human Learning. My own experience as a participant would then form one strand of learning which is given contrast by comparing it with both Zen and SOL participants. I had used repertory grids, relaxation exercises and extended discussion in my earlier discarded phases of research, and found that participants were enlivened in the process, so using repertory grids with a different purpose was a natural choice.

I had 'Learning Conversations' (defined in section 3.2) with other members of the Zen Foundation, and also with postgraduate students at the Centre For the Study of Human Learning (CSHL) at Brunel University, who were all using some facet of Self Organised Learning in their own research. Thus I planned to widen the focus of the research to encompass other participants who were concerned with issues of learning in a different but nonetheless experiential sense. I chose to compare Zen with Self Organised Learning because by virtue of their own research SOL students were interested in action research and reflective forms of learning.

At this stage I had no thoughts on how I was to attack my koan. I planned to start out doing action research, and hoped that the contents of the research would suggest some way to do that.

Later as I came to be disheartened by the difficulties of adequately reflecting how the Zen experience had indeed changed the lives of Zen participants I came to question the value of much reflective methodology as a means of uncovering the sorts of issues that concerned me. I was trying to understand Zen and I was trying to be scientific. But what can be regarded as scientific inquiry within the context of understanding personal experience? Can there be a science of self knowledge? And what assumptions is it possible to make about the intensely personal experiences of others, which can still be regarded as within the domain of science? Definitions of science have changed radically in the social sciences over the last 20 years. It is possible for Eisner to write in 1997 as follows;

“Yet, increasingly, researchers are recognising that scientific inquiry is a species of research. Research is not merely a species of social science. Virtually any careful, reflective, systematic study of phenomena undertaken to advance human understanding can count as a form of research. It all depends on how the work is pursued.”

While Eisner’s definition appears to give a carte blanche to potential researchers to do as they like, the overall theme of Eisner’s paper is that because of the proliferation of new arts based methods in ethnographic practice, it is up to each researcher to demonstrate that their methodology is presented in a way which combines analysis and commentary and goes beyond what might be achieved by, for example, a journalist. In

most chapters of this thesis I was trying to tread the fine line of allowing some kinds of data to speak for itself, (e.g. the transcripts in chapter 4 are presented without interpretation) and in others providing an analysis of how events on my journey seemed to me.

What I thought I really wanted to understand were the implicit differences that I had encountered in the Zen experience from a psychological point of view, or what could be regarded as the parameters of a Zen paradigm. Clearly such a paradigm would be incomplete since it could not encompass the enlightened state. But I knew that Zen had a quite different orientation to the nature of the self than is found in psychology textbooks, and I wanted uncover what effect, if any, that had on Zen students. I could then perhaps raise questions important for understanding the relationship, or lack of it, between experience and knowledge.

The definition of a paradigm given in the Shorter Oxford dictionary is that of a pattern, an exemplar or an example. Since Kuhn's (1962) influential account of **scientific paradigms**, the word tends to be used within the philosophy of science as meaning a theoretical framework that is so endemic to a culture that it infuses our whole approach to everything we see. Kuhn argued that hypotheses or theories were not products of induction from sense experience. He proposed that theories gave meaning to facts rather than arising out of them, and that such meaning was heavily dependent on the cultural assumptions of the scientist. Kuhn's conception of paradigm-bound science has been criticised as too vague since the term can be used to describe both the entire theoretical framework of science and also individual concepts within them. Since I was

at the Centre for the Study of Human Learning, I became conversant with the personal, conversational science paradigm propounded by Professors Laurie Thomas, and Sheila Harri-Augstein.

3.1 The Self Organised Learning Paradigm

The roots of the Self Organised Learning (SOL) theoretical paradigm come from several sources of which the main are Carl Rogers, the originator of client-centred therapy and George Kelly's psychology of personal constructs. Other important elements include cybernetics; with its stress on purposefulness, feedback, and knowledge of results, and Zen. Thomas and Harri-Augstein (1985) rejected a physical science paradigm since they wished to approach the study of human learning in its 'natural habitat'. They shifted to a 'personal' and specifically 'conversational' science. In a personal science paradigm the only valid starting point to discover personal meaning is to ask the person concerned to explain that meaning. This does not mean accepting uncritically whatever the person chooses to say. Rather it is to accept that this is the most relevant starting point of any conversational inquiry. Thus the methodology of a Learning Conversation is an important element of SOL.

Rogers' client-centred therapy was developed within the context of psychotherapy, and he identified conditions that he felt necessary for the therapist to provide in order to maximise personal growth and change. These were 'unconditional positive regard', 'empathy' and 'congruence'. These qualities are important in Thomas and Harri-Augstein's conversational methodology that stresses that conversations are 'symmetrical' i.e. that the researcher is not in some superior position over the participant

within conversational research. The aim of any Learning Conversation is to raise awareness levels above that of the **content** of the conversation to that of the **process** underlying it, and as such it is within the tradition of action research which stresses that research should lead to an increase of awareness of all participants and some form of life learning. Much Learning Conversation methodology was developed within research into educational practice and learning within a work environment and included both conversation and practice. Thus the aim of action research, that the process of learning has a practical value in life to all participants, was an important part of the methodology. This process oriented approach is a main strand of SOL. Learners have their attention directed at the reflective mechanisms which affect learning and once embarked as Self Organised Learners, see this as a lifelong process in which as Rogers (1967) puts it,

"there is psychological freedom to move in any direction"

These characteristics are taken further within the SOL paradigm into a specifically 'conversational' as well as 'personal' science. Given that only human beings have the ability to converse they have a unique advantage in any learning process. But as people learn by reflecting on their interactions with others, SOL states that no-one can know themselves unaided. For Thomas and Harri Augstein however Rogers' three interpersonal conditions for growth were not sufficient. By conversational interaction and the use of awareness raising tools derived from personal construct theory, Self Organised Learners can pool their knowledge in order to understand themselves and the people with whom they interact.

Thus the conversational science paradigm recognises that people can uniquely observe and report on their own experience. SOL has also developed conversational technologies for systematically identifying and comparing concepts in a coherent and comprehensive way. This approach, pioneered by George Kelly (1955) and outlined in his psychology of personal constructs, has been developed and extended by Harri-Augstein and Thomas to include a variety of individual and group learning methodologies and technologies, including conversational uses of the repertory grid, structures of meaning, and reflective talkback of records of behaviour. What is particularly fruitful in those methodologies is that while not precisely content free, the conversational science paradigm propounded here is content-independent and can therefore be used as a tool to look at any subject. The emphasis throughout is not only on the constructs themselves i.e. the content of any conversation, but also on the relationship between constructs, or the context and process in which the constructs are embedded.

Distinctions are made between types of knowing and meaning, and range from rote, which is taking in knowledge from another without critical appraisal, through coherent, explanatory and constructive, which improve the quality of understanding by relating it to experience. Their final category is creative knowing which involves a high degree of provisionality and a willingness to investigate that. However their model of person as scientist testing and reflecting on purposes and strategies is how they see these different levels of meaning change. In SOL the focus is on **structures of meaning**. To compensate for the limitations of repertory grid technology a richer and more flexible

approach was developed which not only elicited items of meaning (which are the elements of the conversation) but addressed the relationship between such items (the constructs pertaining to these elements) by the display of a final pattern showing such relationships. However they are at pains to point out that this elicited pattern is only a map, it is not the territory. The raising of awareness will still contain many tacit elements, and the final pattern is not the conversational experience.

Thus an important element of conversational science methodology is that **personal meaning is constructed internally from items of experience**. Items of experience acquire meaning as they are compared and contrasted over time and acquire a meaning structure within a larger pattern of relationships. Thus the conversation has structures of meaning which contribute to an overall understanding of the conversational interaction. These structures can be analysed and compared both between members of groups and across groups.

In order to enlarge the understanding of participants, they are encouraged to reflect and become more aware of their experience, and much conversational science methodology involves repeat process based conversations in order to encourage such reflection. This is denoted in SOL terminology as a MARS type reflective conversation in that participants are encouraged to reflect and raise their awareness by Monitoring, Analysing, Reconstructing, Reviewing, and Reflecting in an onward spiral. Learning Conversations stress this process, as well noting the content of the conversation. It is thus an appropriate method to map personal needs and life learning. Whilst any given Learning Conversation may start asymmetrically in that it is more in the control of the

researcher, in both process and content terms the aim is to enable the learner to take over control of the conversation so that they can self-organise it for themselves in both content and process terms.

3.2 Attributes of a Learning Conversation

In a LC the conversation may be with oneself or another. There may or may not be an agenda but if an agenda is set the conversation should not be constrained by it. Some at least of what is being expressed is tacit. This lack of direct awareness may be for three reasons. The first is that knowledge has become habituated and there is no longer a perceived need for conscious expression of it. Just as driving a car has to be thought of at first and then becomes automatic, so other kinds of knowledge can become habituated. The second kind of tacit knowledge is that which may affect behaviour but is not yet articulated or reflected upon clearly enough for the person concerned to see the connection between what they do and what their underlying constructs are. Their practical knowing contains elements which they have not yet reflected upon sufficiently to be altogether clear about why they do what they do. The third is the position I expected of most Zen novices, that **intellectual understanding of Zen had not been matched by their practical experience**. In spite of reflecting and pondering and questioning they have no direct experience of the Zen state, although they may at times have flashes of insight or intimations of what might be required to reach it.

Within the parameters of a LC the participant(s) try to become aware of the entire process in which they are engaged. In conversational research the researcher is

usually the initiator of the conversation, and will not only attempt to help make explicit as many of the tacit elements as possible, but also encourage the other participant to take an active role in the process. Thus skill at conversing in this way is seen as an important attribute in SOL.

It is thus incumbent on the researcher to demonstrate this skill by encouraging the uncovering of the meta levels of process underpinning the conversation. This is normally done during the conversation by the type of question asked, the following up of new issues and pushing for resolution of difficult points at issue, by challenge if need be. The procedure has become formalised in SOL within the MARS heuristic mentioned above - reflect by monitoring, analysing, reconstructing, reflecting, and reviewing in an onward spiral.

The anatomy of a Learning Conversation has three phases of dialogue. The process dialogue is concerned with how to move from action to reflection by bootstrapping from one to the other in an ongoing way. The support dialogue is the concern with Rogerian values – how can I support myself or another through the peaks and troughs of learning. The referent dialogue is establishing a method for valuing competence – how do I know if I am getting better? Thus the overall process can be either task focused, or learning focused, and the dialogue structure is established by the learner in an inner directed way.

While I was in sympathy with and saw the merit of such conversational methodology and started out with the intention of following it closely, I found that I had to adapt to circumstances when carrying out the research.

In my experience of conversations with John it seemed to me that he placed most value on getting people to realise things for themselves without a process or a content framework. Sometimes the implications of what he said reverberated through my mind for weeks before I had a sudden shift of thought or flash of insight. I would contend that is fully within the **intent** of a LC although perhaps not defined or articulated in quite that way. The MARS heuristic was developed by Thomas and Harri-Augstein after analysing and listening to hundreds of conversations. Just as Rogers felt that the crucial elements for him when therapy seemed to work best were unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence, so the MARS cycle seemed to them to reflect the process of what happened when deeper levels of meaning were reached. However a LC does not have to use the MARS heuristic to be a Learning Conversation. What a Learning Conversation is really concerned with is accessing deeper levels of meaning, and it was this aspect of it that interested me.

I approached the initial phase of the research from a SOL paradigm, but within that process I was also reflecting on events from a Zen perspective. In order to give some flavour of that perspective the next chapter looks at examples of playing the 'Zen game'. I have placed this chapter here deliberately, before turning to a general discussion of methodological issues so that Zen in action is shown before further inquiry methodology is discussed.

PART 2

Chapter 4 - The Challenges of The Zen Experience

*Those who speak do not know
Those who know do not speak*

This chapter provides a background to Zen and places John within a Zen context, and outlines the 'Zen game.' By choosing examples of the Zen game from transcripts taken from a single weekend workshop, I try to show the variety of topics which could arise in a short space of time.

I could have attempted to trace themes of interest to me, culled from different meetings, but this would immediately have involved me in selecting themes. Clearly choosing these sessions still involved a selection process, but the examples are not meant as research themes but as an indication of John's presentational style.

This is why I have not provided an analysis of the transcripts. The overall theme on which I chose to concentrate throughout the inquiry – the illusory nature of the self – is a major theme in Zen, and cropped up regularly at meetings.

This chapter also discusses one example of how enlightenment might be validated, drawing from Fenwick et al's psychological and physiological testing of John.

4.1 The Quest for Enlightenment

Since a major aspect of this research is the impact of one Zen master on those around him, and since, as already noted, this master is unorthodox, this chapter attempts to place both him and those he worked with, in some overall context. Through extracts from his writings, meetings and weekend workshops, I try to convey what it was like to

know him, and why I and others in the Zen Foundation felt he was so important. The issue of whether he was or wasn't enlightened, while an important one, is in a sense irrelevant to this research project. Those Zen participants who took part **thought that he was and this affected their relationship with him.**

John's particular orientation was greatly influenced by the writings of Professor D.T. Suzuki and by personal interaction with Jiddu Krishnamurti. In general terms however his overall orientation could be described as more in sympathy with the Southern (Rinzai) school of Zen outlined by Suzuki (1969) in 'The Zen Doctrine of No Mind.' In this volume Suzuki describes the process of self realisation or enlightenment as an abrupt psychological leap.

"That the process of enlightenment is abrupt means there is a leap, logical and psychological, in the Buddhist experience. The logical leap is that the ordinary process of reasoning stops short, and what has been considered irrational is perceived to be perfectly natural, while the psychological leap is that the borders of consciousness are overstepped and one is plunged into the Unconscious which is not, after all, unconscious. This process is discrete, abrupt, and altogether beyond calculation; this is 'Seeing into one's Self-nature.'

Suzuki's description sees the process as an abrupt breakthrough, and this is typical of the approach of the Rinzai school, where koans are often used to create a psychological impasse and exhaust the logical mind. Historical accounts of the use of koans make it clear that a koan question is usually worked on for many years before this leap is made. A profound change takes place after enlightenment which cannot be described adequately to those who have not experienced it. Not only is this state irreversible it is

a radically different state to anything previously experienced. After his own experience of enlightenment Hey (1984) described it in the following way,

“Enlightenment involves a profound and permanent change in one's way of thinking about oneself and the world. In essence the structure of the personality alters such that the mind is no longer dominated by an abstract sense of 'I'. This is not to say the enlightened mind is no longer aware of its own existence, or that it is gripped by some obsessional self-effacing altruistic fervour. Enlightenment expresses itself in a vibrant spontaneity and total freedom of being in which human consciousness achieves an apotheosis.”

John's description raises an issue that is often misunderstood. Although in Zen one is exhorted to drop the 'self', this is the conditioned self discussed earlier. There is still a sense of self after enlightenment, but this self is qualitatively different from the sense of self previously experienced.

Two things now strike me about the above descriptions of enlightenment by Suzuki and John. The first is that my analysis is essentially correct, so that it is difficult to convey the difference between what I understood and what I now understand.

I think my major difficulty was that I envisaged from these descriptions (because of the words radical and abrupt perhaps), that the process involved some dramatic shift, in the sense of it being a drama.

My experience was gentle, but it was nonetheless radical and profound so I have no dispute with either of the descriptions above. As Suzuki suggests the experience is indeed a psychological leap, but leap suggested violent movement to me. Movement occurred, but I only detected it after the event. What I actually experienced was refraining from movement, in the sense of following the thoughts in my mind. When this stillness occurred my perspective shifted.

This abrupt realisation described by Suzuki does not conform to the Northern or Soto Zen philosophy which uses mainly meditative techniques and teaches a gentle and gradual path to enlightenment. The aims of Soto Zen are similar to that of Rinzai Zen, what has been different traditionally is the method of realisation. The culmination of using the more attacking Rinzai style can be to experience a radical, abrupt and permanent change in orientation, which is called 'satori' in Japanese Zen. In Soto Zen novices often have enlightenment experiences during meditation which are regarded as important stages of development, but are not irreversible.

Like traditional Rinzai masters, John did not encourage cultivating such peak experiences and did not regard them as a sign that one is on the right track. Indeed being caught up in trying to create or re-create such experiences for oneself he regarded as a subtle manifestation of ego mind. During the experience the mind is not abandoned sufficiently for the full experience to be irreversible. Ego mind thus creates a new mental model of the experience. Or as John put it to me once, '*ego is just letting itself out to play at spiritual games for a little while.*'

Nor did John advocate any particular methodology. Asked once whether he ever meditated he replied, '*not unless I have nothing better to do.*' In other words, never. He also did not make a regular practice of setting koans although he did occasionally use them. For some years at his instigation I worked intensively on the koan "*who am I*", and indeed as this thesis shows I was still working on it for most of the time. However, in both his public meetings and weekend workshops John was prepared to use

a variety of psychological devices to provoke individual transformation. He was not however in favour of elevating any formal methodology (including zazen meditation favoured by the Soto Zen school, or the koans favoured by the Rinzai Zen school) to become habitual. In this rejection of all method, he was in agreement with his own master, Krishnamurti.

4.2 The Zen Game

Perhaps the attraction of John for me personally, was the blend of knowledge in depth about Zen allied with a friendly and informal style. John felt that much of what was taught in modern Zen was too derivative of a particular time and culture and not suited to a western mind set. As he observes;

“Zen, the argument runs, is above culture and beyond time; hence to acquire Zen is to adopt many of the personal characteristics of its greatest exponents of the past. There is no better way than this to prevent that spontaneity wherein Zen truly lies. It should always be remembered that, like a portrait by Holbein or a piano sonata by Beethoven, the nature of Zen in those times was an expression, or, if you like, a product, of the period. Thus, whilst we can make very real use - in our ‘present’ - of the legacy of the past, it would be utterly futile to try to recreate it by emulation.”

Hey (1984)

In my experience with John there was no subject out of bounds, and the clarity of attention he brought to any conversation was often daunting. Over years of meeting with a variety of people, John evolved and wrote down a way of looking at interactions with him. He entitled this ‘The Zen Game’ (1995). This is played between an ‘expert’ (a Zen master) and a ‘novice’. As he states, the impulse to play the Zen Game often has a negative trigger, in that it arises out of a dissatisfaction with life, and one’s attitude to it.

In principle, since the game has no rules, everyone is a potential player, but in practice very few ever attempt to play the game seriously.

The paradox of the Game is that since there are no rules to be followed there is no way to practise playing. In a sense, as Hey points out, until the Game is transcended **everything is practice.** But it is the novice's persistence in thinking that there are secret rules to be uncovered and understood, which often preclude making progress. As Hey (1995) says,

“For the novice it is dangerously tempting to see the final goal as the culmination of his attempts at play: the more proficient he becomes, the more likely he is to become an expert. This is not so: it is the fixation on this notion which prevents immediate mastery of the Game.”

At every level the expert is trying to point out to the novice that **one cannot practice in order to be.** Thus much of the contact takes place at non verbal levels. This is seen by the expert as it happens, but with a novice it is often only in retrospect that the novice recognises, if indeed he or she ever does, that the quality of the interchange was not apparent on the surface. Simply being with an expert quickens the novice's sense of awareness, which Hey calls “the movement of spirit”.

One of my own favourite passages in the Zen Game is the following description of the interplay of such movement of spirit between the expert and the novice;

“The power and wisdom of the expert's spirit infuses everything he does. This is true of the novice too, although he is largely unaware of it while his consciousness remains enmeshed in the framework of ego. Like eagles soaring effortlessly on the wind, both are supremely unmindful of their mastery. The novice senses this at a deep level of

being, but at the level of his conscious mind this is displaced by ego which constructs a different scenario. Filled with thoughts of muscle control, wind velocity, time and purpose, he distorts reality into a gross caricature of itself: the eagle is no longer an eagle, but an image; the wind a hostile element to be battled against; flight a struggle to achieve its desires.

The expert mirrors to the novice the ways in which his or her ego are distorting this natural process of being. There is therefore no pre planned or set course of events or practice. This awareness that the expert brings to everything he does is different from what is normally regarded within action research as reflection in action. There is no reflection involved, thought and action are one. I remember once on a week long retreat in the New Forest, John appeared unexpectedly and asked me “*what have you been doing in a Zen sense today?*” Knowing perfectly well that in Zen one does not aim at doing I answered that I had not been **doing** anything in particular I had simply been trying to be **aware** of what I was doing. “*That won't work*” he said. When I asked why not he said “*who is trying to be aware of what?*”

Of course when I then reflected on this I could see that if, as is a central tenet of Zen, the ego mind is illusory, then the mechanism I had been invoking in trying to be self aware was simply a mental construction. And a mental construction can not be aware of an underlying reality, that can only be apprehended in a holistic and intuitive way. What I had been practising was becoming self consciously aware, when what is needed is to be unselfconsciously aware. **Trying to cultivate greater awareness is a theme of reflective practice, and in this process the question of who is trying to be aware of what is rarely asked.** It is however a central preoccupation at Zen Foundation gatherings as is shown in section 2.4 below. This is a theme to which I will return

again, as it was realisation of the inadequacy of a reflective method to illustrate Zen experience, which precipitated my later crisis of confidence in what I was doing in the Learning Conversations phase of the project.

4.3 Zen Validation

One question which appears very basic to this enterprise is the issue of how I knew John was enlightened. Whether he was or was not does not basically affect the validity of this project but it does affect how myself and other Zen participants are seen. Are we well meaning but deluded, or are we people who are critical of what they experience? This question of authenticity was often raised by braver beginners to John's talks. The answer is as short as it is unsatisfactory. The only way to be sure whether someone is enlightened is to be enlightened yourself. In Japan, China and Korea where Zen institutions have flourished for many centuries the difficulty of determining who was enlightened led to the practice of authentication by a master. Enlightenment could thus only be 'authenticated' by one who was himself/herself accepted as a master. This authentication was therefore passed down through the monastic system. Since long term study of Zen, even in a monastic setting, does not necessarily lead to success, there has always been a shortage of masters. This led to a broadening of the process of authentication, with those who have reached a certain level of knowledge or proficiency teaching those below them. Within the current hierarchical monastic system teachers who reach a certain proficiency in techniques or understanding of Zen may therefore guide others without themselves being enlightened.

Austin (1998), a neurologist who trains in the Soto Zen tradition appears to view his Zen teachers as those who have undergone many kensho or enlightenment experiences and who have matured in mindfulness. He distinguishes between such teachers and the great masters who have achieved satori, the ultimate stage of enlightenment. To Austin consideration of whether teachers have reached the ultimate satori experience is hardly relevant, since to all intents and purposes accredited teachers are beyond their pupils in experience and can therefore guide them appropriately. The Soto Zen model of gradual progress, with plateaux which can be reached, is thus different from John's Zen. In a recent Soto Zen workshop I attended conducted by Daishin Morgan, Abbot of a leading Soto Zen monastery in Northumbria, he advised that it was inappropriate to think of trying to become enlightened. The Soto Zen method is to practice zazen with no thought of results. Nonetheless accounts by Soto Zen practitioners of their peak experiences tends to suggest that such moments are greatly valued, leading one to believe that really sitting with no expectation is difficult to achieve, in other words expectations may be suppressed but they are still there. In traditional Rinzai Zen it is felt that it is impossible to approach Zen without expectations, so the koan system was devised in order to divert and exhaust the mind.

Although not trained within a monastic system, John did however have a master. Jiddu Krishnamurti, with whom he met regularly over a period of 13 years, helped to provoke his own enlightenment. Krishnamurti did not authenticate anyone and did not teach within any accepted tradition. He is certainly not normally regarded as being within the Zen tradition. John regarded him however as exemplifying the **essence** of Zen in the late

20th century. Throughout his long life Krishnamurti was an advocate of inner directed learning, advising those interested in his approach to seek their own personal way. This encouragement to accept nothing but what you can determine for yourself is very much within the Zen tradition. So although he was a friend of Krishnamurti (I have deliberately not used the word disciple or follower as neither would have approved) John chose to pass on his knowledge using the terminology of Zen.

I became convinced through interaction with him that John was indeed enlightened, and my impression is that all those Zen participants in this inquiry also thought so. What contributed most to my own decision that John was enlightened was the vibrancy, spontaneity and speed of understanding which he always displayed in every situation. Since he was at one with himself he always knew not only who, but where he was. This doesn't mean he had an answer to everything. Sometimes he was asked something he didn't know and he said so. But if you are touch with your inner being then all interactions with others have a different quality.

Since this inquiry is attempting to approach Zen scientifically there is additional data in the form of detailed psychological and psychophysiological testing in which John participated, see 4.5 below. Before turning to this, the next section attempts to capture both the atmosphere and John's presentational style in interaction with others.

4.4 Examples of Zen Play

In this section through excerpts from meetings I try to give some flavour of how the Zen Game was played between John and his friends. I have tried to illustrate some of the issues which are fundamental to any attempt at understanding Zen in John's terms, e.g.

enlightenment and the nature of self consciousness, and the emphasis on experience and not on intellect or reason.

4.4.1 Effort and Enlightenment

Rereading many of these pages I am still struck by the sophistication of much of this discussion which (alas as John would say) sounds at times like an academic discussion. These initial examples are taken from a 5 day retreat, held in 1984 in Oxfordshire. It was in fact at this retreat that I met John for the first time. I was overwhelmed by the number of ideas it generated, many of them new to me. Having lived with them now for 14 years some seem very clear and others still as difficult.

The first example, entitled Effort and Enlightenment, comes from a large group session. It illustrates the central and fundamental issue of enlightenment and what precludes novices from making the right kind of effort. An analogy often used in discussion concerns 'the wall', which is the imaginary barrier which apparently stops people taking the step forward into enlightenment. References to the wall tend to refer to a state where Zen novices are sufficiently focused on fundamental questions of **being** and less distracted by problems of day to day living. This state tends to come and go, and cannot be aimed for. Trying to hold on to the feeling of being at the wall was seen by John as a sure recipe for failure.

Effort and Enlightenment

A.B. When you say "the centre of consciousness is free", what does that mean?

J. The very core of that which knows itself as you is empty in its essential nature; it is not pegged to that abstract stamp collection of things/events it has experienced. It is a dynamic, fluid, awareness which has no existence from moment to moment other than what it is from moment to moment.

A.B. I am creating an idea of what it is?

J. That's right.

A.B. Which is what I do at that moment?

J. Right. Whereas it is not that. It is, from the first, free in its basic nature. It cannot be, in that sense, empty, but it is empty of attachment. By not trying to direct your thoughts, in the etiolated state of self awareness at the 'wall', you could notice that a shift in the centre of gravity of your consciousness is happening, that the sense of 'I' is no longer pegged in the same way to this or that attachment: things are simply coming and going like reflections in a mirror and are not held on to. If you feel that, you are swimming!

A.B. Yes, such an unusual feeling one wouldn't trust it!

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J. [laughing] If you felt it you certainly wouldn't trust it. [***] This is the ineffable and very subtle thing that people mean when they say that, from the beginning, man's nature is empty and void.

C.M. Are thought and consciousness the same?

J. How can thought and consciousness not be the same?
There is a semantic use that takes 'thought' to mean the content of 'consciousness' but that illustrates exactly the spurious separation we have been talking about. You cannot have consciousness without content. Content is consciousness.

C.M. After the change in consciousness, you might be without thought, but you needn't be?

J. You are still conscious after the change....

C.M. Yes.

J. So you have thought. Consciousness is thought. [pause]
The only qualitative difference being that you are no longer filling that consciousness with second-order thoughts about itself, nor with thoughts of directing its activities.

C.M. Is this how you describe attachment to thought?

J. Yes. - which, the more we look at it, I am sure you are beginning to think increasingly, is absolutely impossible.

[*** Explanatory note: because the need to trust would have disappeared.]

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It can't really be doing what you all feel it to be doing inside your minds. It is actually impossible, isn't it, for a thought to take another thought as its object?

A.B. The idea of the thinker being separate from the thought is merely another thought.

J. Well, is it?

A.B. With a particular connotation?

C.M. Is that a thought?

J. No. I mean it can't be in the sense that it really is impossible for a thought to have a thought within a thought as its object. Like a nest of Chinese boxes. It just won't work.

A.B. It's just one thing following another, which thinks about the previous one. I think this is an unnecessary -

J. I think it is a vital point. To underline the impossibility of what you think to be happening, in the way that you have concluded it to be impossible, is something you could well note! You have shown neatly, if I may say so, the impossibility of thinking of yourself as an abstract entity having thoughts.

A.B. Yes, yes.

J. You are those thoughts, and thoughts can't have thoughts within them - though logically you feel they must in order to

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try to build a model of how you think yourself to be.

A.B. - Because the identity we see is merely one kind of thought following another kind.

J. Yes.

A.B. All related in the same way to consciousness.

J. They are consciousness -

A.B. - Yes, yes. [wry laughter]

J. The sense of self is just thought followed by thought followed by thought. There is nothing having those thoughts. Our whole language, and the dualistic approach, is predicated on the idea that there is some abstract consciousness which has thoughts, some of which can be about itself. "What am I?" "How do I feel?" - "Would that I were not as I am!" That sounds as though there is something that is having those things as thoughts within itself. But it's not. It cannot be - can it?

A.B. That ought to be enough, J.

C.G. Yes, it ought to be enough.

C.M. Yes, but what are we doing with ...

J. [whispering] Don't ask me!

C.G. Then why don't we stop - why don't we just stop in our tracks if we really, really feel that?

V

Effort and Enlightenment

J. You are answering it in your own question.

[pause]

J. Enough?

C.M. I am just trying to catch hold of the way it is really going.

J. [laughing] Well held! [pause] The concomitants of attachment to "Where am I going?" "What am I going to be?" "What am I going to do?" are despair, hopelessness, frustration. All those crude qualities are down here somewhere. Now I am not saying that you cannot launch off into zen from there at any time. But in a sense they are "down there", whereas 'at the wall' is really "up here". Up here the atmosphere is getting very thin, one isn't as driven by despair, unhappiness, desire. One's will is almost totally harnessed to the desire to transcend. It is felt, in a phrase I've used before, as a naked existential imperative, shorn of any "so that ..." or "because I wish to escape from ...". [pause] The last etiolated attachment to anything at all is seen as illusory and falls away. The only thing in your consciousness, in your thought, is - what is in your thought! The sense of freedom that one has, that one doesn't have to worry about one's thoughts but simply allow them to come and go like the whispering of leaves stirred by the wind, is a release and a freedom of a fundamental kind.

[long pause]

Is that the wind? It was quiet earlier.

4.4.2 Coming Closer

In this small group discussion a number of things are illustrated. Firstly the atmosphere generated is tense and both A.M. and E.H. comment on this. Y.S. a participant in my own research makes an attempt at a non verbal response, but this is seen by John as no more successful than an intellectual response, since when challenged Y played word games. It is the most evocative account I can find of the difficulty of finding responses to John's questions.

VII. small group discussion: coming closer? come in!

[J. was with A.M., E.H., K.G. and Y.S. for the following exchanges that took place in the same solar room during an interlude between the general discussion of (6) and (8). They had begun seated in somewhat less than a circle; J. responds to a comment from K.G.:]

J. Do you want to come closer than that? I see! You meant your chair!

E.H. I thought there was neither a closer nor a further.

J. Perhaps there is a choice of two positions: either distant from me, or close to me. I was suggesting that K.G. came closer to me, not that he moved his chair. [Pause. Turning to Y.S.:] Come closer. [pause] How close do you feel?

Y.S. Not too close, thank you.

J. Would you like to be closer?

Y.S. It is not an issue in my mind.

J. How can you say that? [Pause. Turning to A.M.:] Would you like to be closer?

A.M. I have got that "brink" feeling. [pause] Whatever I say won't be quite the feeling that I have.

J. Then simply come closer. [Turning to E.H.:] Would you like to come closer?

Coming closer? Come in!

E.H. I think I feel that I am close, but ...

J. Close to what? [pause]

E.H. Close to looking at life the way you do. But for some reason I am always just missing the point.

J. You feel movement though, don't you? As if you are close to that point, but then retreat a bit?

E.H. I do not see it as movement, -no. [pause] I just seem to become aware of it sometimes. At other times I am not aware of it, or I am so absorbed in distractions that I am not aware of it.

J. You are moving away.

E.H. M'm. I can feel it [laughs]

J. What?

E.H. Movement. Then.

J. But you have just said there is none!

E.H. No, I said that I did not feel it as movement.

J. So, come closer!

K.G. But that implies that there is further away and closer to it.

J. If you accept it in that sense, yes. The invitation is not to "come closer" from one spot to another in the place

Coming closer? Come in!

that you are in, but to leave that place and come closer to me. [pause] Wouldn't you like to do that?

Y.S. - Coming closer to you wouldn't help me to be.

J. - Oh, but it will! When you come close to me you will be you!

Y.S. How close to you?

J. That close.

Y.S. Literally?

J. No, further away than that. [pause] You see, your minds are all full of the sense of movement; and yet are not moving. [long pause] Come a little closer?

A.M. You spoke before of the defocussing that one may feel...
[pause] Could that be -

J. That is moving away. [J. makes a sweep of his hand in the air between himself and Y.S..] There is a barrier here separating you from me. Cross it!

[Y.S. raises a foot and kicks forward as though to break the imaginary barrier.]

J. He crossed it with his foot but not with his mind!

Y.S. - My mind was in my foot.

J. Cross it! [long pause] If your mind had really been in your foot, what would you have done?

[Y.S. laughs. A further long pause.]

K.G. Always trying to find ways of crossing it, and then trying to find ways to stop myself finding ways.

J. All tragically, comically, predicated on the misunderstanding that assumes there is a barrier there at all. He tried to cross that barrier with his foot. No-one can cross it with a foot, or with any other part of the body, if there is no barrier to cross. So how would you cross it?
[pause] Or you? Or you?

K.G. I keep thinking that maybe a brilliant idea will suddenly crop up from somewhere.

J. [to the others in turn:] The barrier gets higher with every thought like that. There is now a bruise on your foot; and a bigger one on your mind.

A.M. Does there have to be movement? Does there have to be movement? [pause]

J. Barriers in the mind. [pause] Too slow! Barriers in the mind. That proposition could, if you would let it, echo through an empty, alert, present mind. And your response could be.... what it would, but wasn't. [Turning to K.G.:] You are an artist. What about the black and white pictures we mentioned earlier? [*] All that is required is a shift

[* An analogy introduced by J. in the preceding general discussion, see p. 216 (000)]

Coming closer? Come in!

of your consciousness to see the picture from a different angle, and you see the picture totally afresh. [pause] How can you produce that movement?

K.G. Is there movement, some movement?

J. None at all. The picture is there to be perceived directly. But you thought that, you didn't experience it. Why did you have to work it out? It should be as intuitively obvious as everything else that comes your way. No questioning, no doubt: "Shall I do this?"; "If I look at it this way..."; "What am I doing?". There it is, right in front of you! And you are seeing it, and yet seem not to be seeing it. [long pause]

A.M. You say the door is open?

Y.S. What door?

[An extremely loud and sudden shout from J., then:]

J. That door!

[End of discussion]

4.4.3 The 'Third World' Problem

John always spoke from a position of sureness even when discussing difficult points of understanding of the nature of conscious experience. In this discussion which also highlights the difference of the kind of effort needed in Zen and the nature of will, John talks of the connection between the self, consciousness and thought.

The analogy of a swimming pool was used here and what is being discussed is the difficulty of 'letting go'.

V. small group discussion: the 'third world' problem

[As for the previous discussion. J. now sits with P.F., S.A. and S.O.. The 'third world' theme refers to a challenge given by J. earlier that day in several individual interviews when he had invited replies to the question: "What do you think about poverty in the third world?" and, by implication, whether any of our concerns are ever less remote - or less pressing - than this paradigm for them.]

J. I would like to ask whether you are entirely clear about one of the questions I have just been asked. It is how to "jump into the swimming pool" by an act of will.

S.O. I think you have made a distinction before between will as we know it and another kind.

J. Yes, I have tried to, but I think P.E. was a bit confused. She thought that will stayed as you went, that you ended up in the 'pool' swimming in zen, as it were, having got there by act of will. Now, that's the subtlety: it's the will which starts the movement but, once started, the movement continues and will gets left behind. The movement outstrips the impulse that set it going and - splosh! Perhaps this is a digression that doesn't necessarily accord with your needs of the moment - bed, bath, hot drink, enlightenment? But enlightenment couldn't be a need, could it?

S.O. Only in our minds! [laughter]

The 'Third World' Problem

- J. Which precludes it happening in your mind [laughing].
I feel an immense sense of poise. I think most people here
are 'J. connoisseurs', and fairly experienced in terms of
what we are talking about. And I very much sense that,
although we are going over things again and again from
different and not so different viewpoints, most people are
really set on a hair trigger, and it wouldn't take much to
fire the gun.
- S.O. I feel nearer that point than I ever have before, as a
sustained thing.
- P.F. Yes. I don't think there is any pressure; it is just
a question of realisation, really. The whole problem of
realisation goes back to the question I want to ask you: are
we all just having 'third world' zen discussions?
- J. Inevitably.
- P.F. - Yes, it had to be that, but then....
- J. May I ask you a question? Let's tackle it from a
different point: what about consciousness, thought and the
'I'? Could you relate those in a structural sense in terms
of how how you feel it to be in your mind? Is there a sense
of 'I' which is conscious and, if so, who is conscious of
that thought? How do you see it?
- P.F. [laughing] I'm not sure whether you are just giving me
another 'third world' question!

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J. [laughing] Everything could be seen in that light, of course - everything!

P.F. The answer is that initially everything was 'I' related. I did this, I did that, I did everything else. Now that has gone completely and the ground consciousness is there independent of the 'I' and, except for those moments when the passions arise and the attachments are strong, the 'I' can come and go as it will. We talked before about writing lectures; the astonishing realisation that you have never actually written a lecture in your life but for some reason, somehow or other, you and the slides and everything else get together at the point in question and the lecture happens.

J. M'm. The reason I asked about the sense of 'I', consciousness and thought was that the mystery of the relative state was resolved in talking to somebody else when she suddenly, intellectually, tumbled to the understanding that the sense of 'I' was just that - spurious - because thought and consciousness were the same thing. The 'I' and consciousness are the thoughts as they come and go. So, how does one thought apparently think about itself?

P.F. It's impossible.

J. Yes, that's right. It is not possible. But that was an intellectual realisation rather than a zen realisation. Had it been a zen realisation it would immediately have given you the freedom to see immediately that your thoughts, which are

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all that you have in terms of the sense of 'I', come and go like clouds in the sky.

P.F. What is the mechanism for giving up this spurious sense of 'I', on the understanding that there is no mechanism for giving it up?

J. [laughing] Even more so on the understanding that there is nothing to be given up.

P.F. Yet there is, from the relative. [pause] You see -

J. It would seem so.

P.F. You see, one thing that I have seen this time is the endless 'third world' discussions. The whole thing is just one long 'third world' discussion.

S.A. I am confused because I am unsure about how you used the word consciousness: whether it is the cosmic consciousness or whether it is the spurious consciousness of the 'I'. But is not all discussion the mind looking at itself?

J. Absolutely.

S.A. Can it then arrive anywhere except in the relative?

J. Not by thinking of itself in that way, no. If it goes on doing that, it will go on doing that. If it realises that it does not need to go on doing that, it can stop doing that.

S.A. When you speak of will, are you meaning sudden choice?

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J. It is a sort of will without movement. It is a pure will, a naked will; an impulsive force which seems to have nothing behind it and no target. It is a force which can launch but do no more than launch.

S.A. Can it be triggered by a total fed-upness with how I am in the relative?

J. It depends on the kind of fed-upness. There is fed-up angry, fed-up despairing, and so on.

S.A. These are all attached forms of fed-upness?

J. Yes, and will thus usually end up with the mind chasing its own tail very fruitlessly and very destructively. When 'at the wall', it is qualitatively still attached, but quantitatively the attachments are fewer; the sense of 'I' seems to have more space. There, if there is an element of despair, one could as it were see that as a component of this will that we are talking about. But if that element is very strong, one is pulled back from the wall and is monopolised by that strong attachment. Instead of moving 'over the wall' you are back where you started. In zen, there is no attached will in that sense. There is: "I will get up this morning" but the will is no longer 'attached'. The will is inside the situation in which it operates, rather than the mechanistic outside will operating on something separate from itself.

P.F. It seems to me that all that's required is just a simple giving up. Why then does it not work?

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J. Because you feel that it doesn't, and approach that moment, that point of departure, with an anchor or two that is still pulling you back: too much of a seeking for what is beyond it: too much intellectual curiosity perhaps; or all the things you are going to do when you have become enlightened. If you are, in a zen sense, pure of those - that is it!

P.F. And that is when, in any particular moment of time, you make one of your huge number of successive jumps into the zen state and you give up. But it happens at just that moment because the quality of the giving up is 'pure'.

J. Yes. Earlier, when I made the suggestion that people should play at imagining that they were "in the pool, swimming" there was a bit more to it than just playing-acting. It was just possible that, by making that almost pure act of will to play that role, that that could have been the movement

P.F. Which would push you through. [pause] So then it comes to the question again of the purity of the moment and how to make the moment pure.

J. What attachments are in your thought at that moment as you approach that point?

P.F. No more going into third world countries!

[J. laughs]

[End of discussion]

4.4.4 A Master's Account of a Zen Interaction

The following account was written by John, after an encounter with S.O. S.O. is also a participant in my research conversations. She insists that the encounter did not go quite as described, although when we discussed this she agreed that all the central facts are correct. So this can be taken as a narrative account, based on a real incident. As Denzin(1997) points out many ethnographers have turned to analysis of fiction as presenting a recognisable picture of behaviour which it would be difficult if not impossible to capture in any other way. This story expresses an essential truth about the inability of novices to act spontaneously, until in the case described, temper allowed her to finally express something spontaneous. It also expresses something more than that. When I first read this example I was not told who the novice was but I knew immediately who was being described.

Stir in a Tea-cup

She entered the room hesitantly. The Master's words about impulse were still reverberating in her mind; their meaning was tantalisingly, irritatingly, unclear. Surely he could not mean that she should say, or do, the first thing that entered her conscious mind?

Torn between a sense of relief at such uncensored freedom and the inevitable afterthought that her spontaneity would not be genuine, she was even more flustered than usual.

The Master was sitting in an armchair holding a fresh cup of hot water and honey, his favourite drink. He smiled, but said nothing as she settled herself in the armchair facing him. It was a golden afternoon in late September: autumn sunlight, birdsong and the buzzing of industrious bees filled the room, which looked across a wide sweep of lawn to the dense woods beyond.

Still smiling, he took the teaspoon from the saucer and began to stir the contents of his cup. He said nothing, but looked intently, questioningly, at her.

"What a performance it all is!" she said.

He still made no reply, but continued stirring his tea-cup.

"Are you expecting me to say something 'appropriate' before you will answer?"

His smile widened, but he said nothing. The tempo of his stirring increased: the room now echoed to the strident sound of metal on china.

"I suppose you are going to continue stirring your drink until I make a 'zen' statement?"

CLINK, CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

"Please stop."

CLINK, CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

"This is making me very angry; please stop!"

CLINK, CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

"I suppose you want me to make you stop?"

CLINK, CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

She picked up the cushion from her chair and made as though to throw it at him. "No, it would make a dreadful mess!"

CLINK CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

She stood up, reached out to take the cup and saucer from him, but hesitated and stood irresolutely before him.

CLINK, CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

"What must I do to make you stop?"

CLINK, CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

She reached forward, half expecting to be stopped in her tracks by one of his tremendous eponymous shouts or to have the contents of the cup dashed in her face. She took hold of the cup and tugged tentatively.

He held on and continued stirring, more noisily than ever:

CLINK, CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

She pulled steadily but could not bring herself to use sufficient force to wrest the cup and saucer from the Master's firm grip.

She rejected the idea of a sudden jerk as this might spill the contents and burn him. Smiling, he continued stirring:

CLINK, CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

She let go and stood undecided as to what to do next. He continued stirring:

CLINK, CHINK: CLINK, CHINK.

She sat down almost in tears, yet almost in a towering rage. The pressure was becoming intolerable.

"I can't do it!"

Immediately, the Master stopped, stood up, bowed deeply to her - and left the room still carrying the cup and saucer.

The above examples show some of the emotional flavour conveyed by interactions with John. They also raise some of the issues which became central pre occupations for me. John had a profound effect on those with whom he interacted, and he was undoubtedly a most unusual person. However all of these psychological interactions are highly subjective, and as such could be interpreted as collective delusion on the part of those who knew and worked with John. However there is clear physiological evidence that John was quite different in other ways, and ways in which it would be impossible to fake.

4.5 Zen and the Brain

Austin (1997) reviews the latest in brain research, and interweaves this with his own Soto Zen experience. Taking evidence from neurophysiology, dreams, animal studies and altered states of consciousness he postulates that the sustained habit of meditation and mindfulness, have important effects on brain waves and the chemistry of the brain. The depth and breadth of the types of evidence Austin brings to his argument are impressive. However the very fact that he has to range so widely in order to connect up various types of evidence points to the lack of direct evidence, because so little research has been done on advanced practitioners of Zen. Even where research has taken place it tends to explore the effects of long term meditative practice. The research described below is therefore one of the few direct pieces of evidence that show not only that it seems likely that brain function becomes changed after enlightenment, but that the direction of the change is to a more global form of information processing.

In 1984, Fenwick et al. administered a number of psychological and physiological tests to John in weekly sessions over a period of six weeks. **The results of this testing cannot be regarded as proof of enlightenment since testing all took place after enlightenment**, and we have no way of knowing absolutely that the differences which they observed were not present prior to John's enlightenment. Their results do however tell us of interesting differences in John's brain functioning, which Peter Fenwick, a distinguished neurophysiologist had not encountered before, or indeed since. A copy of this paper, which has never been published can be found in Appendix A.

As Fenwick points out even amnesiac and brain damaged subjects display good discrimination conditioning in his experience. In discrimination tests John appears not to have been influenced by the sequence of events contingent in the environment. There was also no reliable GSR to the various stimuli. **In other words John responded to the present moment, and was not conditioned to predict what would happen next.**

The discrimination test used was rather more sophisticated than the famous habituation study by Kasamatsu and Hirai (1966). They tested 48 disciples and priests of Zen sects before, during and after Zen meditation. Depending upon length of training, subjects were less likely to habituate to a repeated click stimulus than were control groups. However, the findings from that study and those of Fenwick et al. seem to lead in the same direction, i.e. both John and more experienced Zen monks do not habituate to repeated stimuli.

However, it is in the brain lateralisation results that the most suggestive differences are found. During John's verbal tasks there was no left hemispheric activation, normal in a

right-handed subject, and **the right hemisphere was activated equally by both verbal and non-verbal tasks.** Fenwick makes clear that the results are in his considerable experience unique and are not due to left temporal lobe damage. However given that the right hemisphere is associated in most people with global and spatial tasks, it raises the interesting possibility that **enlightenment involves a more global form of consciousness and is accompanied by a change in hemispheric functioning.**

It is worth noting that Roger Penrose (1989) remarks on the apparently global nature of innovative/inspirational thought or insight, and points out that the brain, far from being the hard-wired model often conceptualised in artificial intelligence, should actually be more noted for its plasticity, since it is capable of changing its neural connections via the shrinking and growing of dendritic spines. Robertson (1995) summarising important issues related to the recovery of brain function in brain damaged patients makes a number of interesting points. First he points out that although brain neurones do not regenerate, even with quite severe brain damage significant recovery of function takes place.

Previous theories assumed that recovery happened by functional reorganisation, that is the surviving brain circuits reorganise to achieve the same behavioural goal in a different way. But this latest research suggests that may not be the whole story. Every day, the normal brain loses large numbers of neurones without suffering any obvious lack of function. This loss implies that the brain has considerable adaptability in the synaptic connections between cells. Research appears to show that in both normal and brain damaged patients a continuous process of remodelling takes place. There is

strengthening and weakening of various synaptic connections corresponding to changes of input and **as a result of arousal and experience.**

Robertson gives as an example that the cortical area representing the tip of the right forefinger is considerably enlarged in Braille readers, compared to normal non-Braille readers. This suggests that synaptic remodelling has given more space to the area of the brain representing the right fingertip. As Robertson observes, that implies that **experience** and stimulation may influence synaptic change.

This theoretical approach would certainly leave open the possibility that the importance of the awareness of the self and its relationship to the world, emphasised in Zen leads to the reorganisation of brain functioning via synaptic remodelling. Austin (1998) demonstrates that brain waves and brain chemistry change dependent on the type of consciousness experienced, e.g. dream states, drug induced states and meditation experiences, indeed it seems likely that our brain functioning is affected by everything we do. This leaves open the possibility that other systems of inner directed learning and reflection than Zen could have similar consequences. Unfortunately, testing such a proposition was beyond the scope of this research.

John himself believed that some profound change took place on his enlightenment and that his brain was not previously hardwired in some fashion different from that of other people.

Fenwick et al. also administered the WAIS intelligence test, and even here encountered some difficulties. As they explain

“..... The verbal comprehension sub-test requires the examinee to answer a series of questions regarding hypothetical situations and to

state the reasons behind a number of social conventions and laws. The subject was loath to predict his likely behaviour under such circumstances, and equally loathe to recount social conventions. Correct answers were forthcoming only through the non-standard approach of allowing the subject to give the answers the examiner would like to hear, rather than through giving his own personal held views."

This non-standard response, as Fenwick admits, may have led to an underestimate of the subject's intelligence (which was in the bright normal range at 115). As they state,

"In conclusion, the Zen master certainly showed some differences in his neurophysiological responses in test situations. He appears to have tackled the tests using non-verbal or visio-spatial strategies. This is clearly seen on the hemisphere lateralisation test, and it is also apparent to his disadvantage on the Stroop. He also clearly shows differences in habituation and conditioning. These facts, taken together with his unusual responses on the WAIS, give support to his claim that at the moment of enlightenment the psychological structures supporting his personal sense of 'I' collapsed, and he is left continually present in each passing moment of time, responding to what is."

The above tests do not 'prove' that John is enlightened, although they do suggest that he is highly unusual. But it is the type of change that is suggestive. John states that he no longer identifies with his ego self, the structure of organisation of his mind. And Fenwick's results suggest that may be correlated with a reduction of left brain activity.

Chapter 5 - Theoretical Issues Affecting Methodology

Is there anything to be done?

Who is the doer?

And what is it that is being done?

Krishnamurti

Chapter 3 was written to demonstrate a rationale for starting with a SOL methodology. This chapter was written when I added in material from participant observation of Zen, and used art and fiction to display certain kinds of understanding. Because I expanded my methodological approach to include arts based methods, this chapter also discusses how definitions of science and social science have changed. It also shows that much recent research and theorising suggests that investigating personal experience creates the need for new methods. I would say that to investigate the transpersonal what is needed is a new perspective on methods, not necessarily a change in forms of data collection. Given the subject matter of this research, this chapter also discusses the stance from which the researcher interprets.

5.1 Scientific Paradigms

Asking whether there can be a science of self knowledge, is to inquire into the nature of science, and whether **personal experience can be looked at in a way which conforms to scientific standards.** When we think of scientific knowledge many people still tend to think in terms of the values of logical positivism. However the history of science shows that notions of what constitute science have always been subject to change. In spite of this, the models of science which informed early **social**

research tend to have been inherited from the positivist model of the natural sciences (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

Scientific paradigms exert a hegemony which implicitly define what science is, although as Kuhn (1962) showed, such paradigms shift greatly from time to time. Extending Kuhn's arguments, Feyerabend (1975) asserts that the most successful scientific inquiries have never proceeded according to rational method at all. In his overtly polemical but brilliantly argued book, he asserts that in a modern philosophy of science stress has shifted from the scientific method to that of scientific practice. Nowadays especially in the social sciences, areas of study and techniques vary so much that it has led many to assert that science is what scientists do, and cannot be defined as a particular field of interest or set of techniques. Deese (1972), agreeing that psychology is fluid, asserts that psychology is both a science and an art. Some psychological knowledge comes from verifiable facts or experience, but some comes from uncodified, intuitive experience, and that part is art. He forecast that in the future, psychology as a discipline would gradually redefine its subject matter, methods and practice, to make it broader in scope and less inhibited by tradition. In other words he foresaw an integration of science and art.

Wilber (1998) is interested in the integration of science and religion. He identifies 5 main positions vis-a-vis the two. His remarks apply to transpersonal issues in general and not just formal religions. The first two, which cancel one another out, are that science denies any validity to religion, and religion denies any validity to

science. As Wilber observes, if science and religion deny each other completely then no integration will occur.

The third stance, which he calls epistemological pluralism, assumes that science is but one of several valid modes of knowing, and can therefore co-exist with spiritual modes. Epistemological pluralism in the past has envisaged a hierarchy of being and knowing, reaching from matter, to body, to mind to soul to spirit, (known as the Great Chain in philosophy). Thus matter and bodies are known by sensory empiricism, the mind and its contents are known by rationalism, and the soul and spirit by *gnosis*, *prajna*, *satori* etc. Wilber believes that, despite its attractions, this model also fails because it cannot stand up to much of modern knowledge. As he puts it,

For example we have abundant evidence that mental consciousness is, in some sense, connected with the biomaterial brain. It is not simply hovering over matter, completely transcending it. And yet this simple fact completely escaped the perennial philosophy. What if all the so-called higher realms, including soul and spirit, are also nothing but various brain states? The entire Great Chain completely collapses into matter (or biomatter), and there goes your Great Chain with it.”

Wilber 1998

Wilber goes on to argue that epistemological pluralism needs to be compatible with scientific knowledge if it is to rehabilitate itself. Before discussing briefly his view of how that might be done, the two remaining stances should be mentioned. The fourth stance is that science can offer ‘plausibility’ arguments for the existence of Spirit. Examples of this sort of stance are *The Tao of Physics* by Fritjof Capra, which tries to demonstrate that the worldview of modern physics is similar to that of Eastern mysticism. Wilber has sympathy for this view but feels that ultimately the greatest

exponents of Western philosophy, such as Emmanuel Kant, and Ngarjuna (and I would include D.Suzuki here) in Buddhist thought have demonstrated the limits of rationality in the face of the Divine. Rational explanations, while useful for orienting the mind towards spirit, are explanation and do not deliver direct spiritual experience, and thus are not really integrative.

The final stance is that of postmodernism. If everything in the world is interpretation, then science has no privileged view, it is merely one way of looking at the world, and other stances such as art, history, fiction and myth all have the same epistemological footing. Wilber also dismisses this stance as of limited use in **integrating** science and religion. Of course such a stance also supposes that cannot know reality, and that we construct our world, therefore all is relative. The extreme relativist position is that of deconstructive postmodernism, which eschews theory, seeing this as the dominant ideology of those who hold power at a particular time.

Wilber's own view is there can be an integration of science and religion through a reworking of epistemological pluralism. He suggests that modernity rejected interiors per se rather than Spirit. Thus the rehabilitation of the subjective, also rehabilitates spirit, since he sees this as a subset of the interior world. He describes two objections of physical science to the real existence of spiritual experience. First that higher modes of consciousness are simply different types of biomaterial events in the biomaterial brain, and secondly that there is no way to validate other ways of knowing.

Wilber argues that science would also have to reject its own validity, if it rejects interior apprehension, e.g. maths rests on consciousness itself. If however science recognises interior dimensions it cannot then object to interior knowledge per se. However his final position suggests that science must approach all experience in the same way. Direct experiences should be confirmable by others who have tried the same experiment, and this direct experience must be submitted to the direct test of injunction (experiment) apprehension (data) and confirmation/rejection (fallibilism). Thus eventually he comes down on the side of a science which through epistemological pluralism, takes both a subjective and objective stance.

Feyerabend argues that science as a stance cannot be defined since it is always changing. He demonstrates examples from the history of science showing that dominant ideologies and political considerations, as well as the self serving interests of some scientists have produced some of the greatest breakthroughs, and that such breakthroughs are often not from mainstream scientific opinion. Some scientists have always ignored some or all of the prevailing facts or ideologies current in order to pursue their own special interests. He examines in detail the arguments that Galileo used to defend the Copernican revolution in physics and comes to the conclusion that Galileo manipulated much of his data to make particular points, or put more bluntly Galileo cheated. Using this and other closely argued examples Feyerabend asserts that a science which insists on possessing the only correct methods and the only acceptable results is ideology and not science. Regardless of whether his arguments about Galileo are accepted, any creative science should surely be interested in areas where accepted rules appear not to apply.

Feyerabend also argues that questions about the superiority of science as a particular set of methods can only be valid if one assumes that the results of science have arisen without help from non-scientific elements. He points out that it is often the **combination** of scientific method and other sources of knowledge e.g. herbal lore, acupuncture etc. in medicine which are derived more from practical observations than from *a priori* theories, which in conjunction with more formal scientific inquiry, can help to make significant progress.

Wherever we look, whatever examples we consider, we see that the principles of critical rationalism (take falsifications seriously; increase content; avoid ad hoc hypotheses; 'be honest' whatever that means; and so on) and, a fortiori, the principles of logical empiricism (be precise; base your theories on measurements; avoid vague and unstable ideas; and so on) give an inadequate account of the past development of science and are liable to hinder science in the future.

Feyerabend (1975)

Both Kuhn and Feyerabend therefore assert that the history of science shows that science has always had to adapt to the needs of the moment and the problems being studied. And that the prevailing ideologies are always subject to change. This changing perspective of what science is, has also been mirrored in the social sciences.

5.2 Social Science Paradigms

In the social sciences many challenges have now been made to a logical positivist view of science. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out when positivism was rejected, naturalism took its place. Central to positivism was the tenet that scientific theories should be subject to test. They should be able to be confirmed by evidence, or if impossible to confirm, it should be possible to prove them false (Miller 1983).

This often involved manipulation of variables within a situation in order to assess the results of such manipulation. With the rejection of positivism came the values of naturalism. Emphasis shifted to studying events in the world as they occurred naturally without any manipulation. Procedures employed to observe situations should be appropriate to the phenomena under study, and should not be enshrined as a rigid set of methodological principles. Both the naturalist and positivist positions however came to be criticised for their lack of reflexivity.

Neither paid attention to **the effect of the observer on the system nor located the position of the researcher within the environment being studied.** From this perspective a social scientist acknowledges that any analysis made is an **interpretation** of the data. Such an interpretation has implicit within it, assumptions of which the researcher may not be completely aware. While researchers might like to think that they are looking without prejudice at social situations, what they choose to highlight or downgrade is affected by their own cultural heritage. In an effort to counteract this effect there arose an emphasis on multi levelled sources of data, to accounts presented from different viewpoints, to democratisation of the research process to engage 'subjects' as participants, and to the practice of 'triangulation', or trying to understand the situation under study from a variety of different perspectives. However multiple methods in themselves do not guarantee validity, rather they are aimed at reducing the likelihood of an idiosyncratic interpretation in a socially constructed world.

In the sense that a paradigm is regarded as a theoretical framework implicit within all approaches to science at a particular time, Heron and Reason (1997) argue that a paradigm, far from being beyond definition and the grasp of the human mind as it is sometimes described, is capable of being comprehended by mind. They argue that mind by its very nature is more extensive than any particular cognitive paradigm which obtains at any particular time, and call for consideration of a **participatory paradigm which is self reflective.**

5.3 The Participatory Paradigm

Heron and Reason (1997) outline the three fundamental factors of a constructivist inquiry paradigm detailed by Guba and Lincoln, and extend this to a fourth factor which is of particular interest in the study of Zen. The three fundamental questions outlined by Guba and Lincoln are the ontological, the epistemological and the methodological. In the constructivist view of Guba and Lincoln, reality is composed of the mental constructs of individuals. Zen also regards most people as proceeding in the light of their own constructed reality, but teaches that **there is an underlying reality to be known.** Most people act in the world according to certain underlying realities. If I say to another person in my own culture that I see a bus coming towards us then I am fairly confident that the other person knows what I mean. We may know intellectually that we could also describe the bus as a collection of particular kinds of atoms and electrons whirling through space, but we do not challenge our bus assumptions by stepping in front of it as it comes at some speed towards us. A bus is a working definition of reality that most can share. Heron and Reason also have difficulty with the notion that reality is

only a construction within the individual mind. The fact that we do not walk in front of buses acknowledges that as Heron and Reason put it

“ the mind is also meeting given reality by participating in its being, and that the mind makes its world by meeting the given.”

Heron and Reason 1997

In a participatory paradigm we experience the world by meeting and interacting with it, through experience, and this experience is at once both subjective, because we give meaning to our experience, and objective, in that there are realities to be experienced, whether we comprehend them perfectly or not. In such a participatory paradigm knowing presupposes participation through shared language, values and beliefs, and in this respect is consonant with the approach of S-O-L.

The participatory paradigm outlined by Heron and Reason involves an extended epistemology. A person knows and gives accounts of his knowing in at least four **interdependent** ways. These are experiential knowing, presentational knowing, propositional knowing and practical knowing. Experiential knowing is gained in direct encounters, involving a wide variety of sense impressions, through participative interaction with people, objects, places, processes etc. It is knowing through empathy and resonance and is difficult to express in words. Presentational knowing is grounded in experiential knowing, but is how we use language and symbols to clothe and present that knowledge. Propositional knowing adds a further dimension to knowing and is expressed in statements, theories and descriptions of practice. Practical knowing is a summation of other forms of knowing in that it is knowledge translated into action. The

basis of practical action may be implicit or explicit but informs our way of interaction with the world. Thus the epistemology of the participatory paradigm distinguishes between different types of knowing. It also allows through experiential knowing that we may apprehend things about our world which we cannot really explain. We may clothe experiential knowing in presentational knowing, but not necessarily in the form of explanation. We may only be able to express some qualities or values through imagery or art.

There is a further dimension of Heron and Reason's analysis that has particular relevance to Zen. Beyond the three fundamental questions posed in Guba and Lincoln's inquiry paradigm, they add a fourth. **The axiological question asks what it is about the human condition that is valuable in and of itself.** Axiological issues are about values of **being**. And, as they point out the first value question to be raised is about the value of knowledge itself. The participatory world view proposes an action perspective, with emphasis on the human ability to change. Certain kinds of knowledge thus become valuable because they have a life-enhancing value. I was personally convinced of the value of Zen in and of itself in my own life, but this was experiential knowledge, and I knew that what I was able to express or explain was not all there was to know. I saw my research quest as demonstrating and elaborating my Zen knowledge, and hoped that this would result in some sort of change or transformation in me.

5.4 The Challenge From Alienated Groups

The challenges mounted by the new emphasis on multi levelled sources of data are now considerable. Many groups wishing to look at underprivileged (or just unusual) groups

within society have stressed the need for new methods. Such feelings have been expressed in **post colonial, anti-racist and feminist research**. Feminism in particular has been at the forefront of a sustained attack not only on the **methods of analysis**, which were claimed to be based on patriarchal, white and often Eurocentric assumptions; but also on the **inadequacies of the very language** used to analyse and explain data, which was itself seen as male dominated.

The relevance of these developments for the study of Zen experience is that here too, although for different reasons, language can be very misleading. The unthinking use of the word 'I' and 'self' is so embedded in our everyday use of language, as I shall make clear, that it is difficult to find a way to adequately expose the difference in meaning in Zen, without leading participants by calling attention to, and thus distorting, the very experience of self one wants to look at. Yet since I was concerned with the inner life of Zen novices it seemed necessary to talk to them, and talk to them in terms which they understood. Thus in seeking an appropriate methodology to look at knowledge of the nature of the self, I was concerned to reflect not only the opinions of the group involved but the relationship of the group to Zen values.

5.5 The Interview Society

Many other researchers have expressed concerns about the validity of personal knowledge. Atkinson and Silverman (1997) point out that the emphasis on personal narrative has become a major preoccupation for many contemporary social scientists, especially those espousing qualitative research methods. They describe our current culture as an 'interview society', one which relies pervasively on face-to-face interviews

to reveal the personal and private self of the subject. They further analyse what they describe as a trend towards the elevation of the in-depth interview as a device for the **reconstruction of the self**. From this perspective the interviewer and the interviewee collaborate in exposing different layers of the self. Reflexively the self that is revealed during the interview is deemed to be authenticated by the stripping away of the surface personality to reveal the identity below. Such values, Atkinson and Silverman believe, are also endemic to the research interview. Here too they see **the elevation of the experiential as proof of the authentic**. Thus in social science there is a tradition of the personal interview as a means of providing narrative data which is deemed as valid in itself, since it is obtained by accounts of experience. Atkinson and Silverman warn researchers however not to uncritically recapitulate features of revealed experience as facts. So the task for the modern social researcher is to be aware when conducting qualitative research, especially that which incorporates personal interviews, of the context in which these are embedded. Set against a background of Zen there is of course a further difficulty. Since the 'self' which is being revealed may well be seen by participants as false consciousness and not their 'real' self, this provides further problems for any reflexive methodology. But it was not just with research methodology but also with theory that I expected to find problems.

5.6 The Role of Theory

When one is trying to allow participants a voice to express their own set of values what is the role of theory? Theory has no tradition of being subjective. Difficulties in this area have led many researchers to consider grounded theory as a methodology.

Grounded theory methodology is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. Theory therefore evolves during actual research, by an interplay between analysis and data collection (Strauss & Corbin 1994). In this methodology theory may be generated initially from the data, or if existing grounded theories seem appropriate to the area of investigation, then these may be elaborated and modified against incoming data. Grounded theory methodology has some similarities with other qualitative methods in that sources of data tend to be the same, e.g. interviews, conversations, field notes, case studies, documents of many kinds and other media materials. Those who use grounded theory procedures also accept responsibility for their interpretative roles. Thus they do not only report other viewpoints, they assume further responsibility for what is observed, heard or read. Researchers can aim for different levels of theory building, but grounded theory builders tend more to substantive or local theories, rather than general theory. As Strauss & Corbin point out this tends to be because of the interests of grounded theory researchers rather than their methodology. There is nothing in grounded theory methodology to suggest that general theories are not also sometimes appropriate. In true grounded theory methodology the conceptual ideas are developed throughout the research, and validation is not seen as a separate process which is added post hoc to the data collection.

I have said earlier that I foresaw difficulties in this area. I was initially attracted to grounded theory methodology since I planned to talk to two sets of people who might be expected to subscribe to differing theoretical orientations. I thought that their

conversations might reveal the extent to which action in the world was connected to their theories about Zen or SOL. SOL conversational methodology is concerned to reveal and get participants to elaborate on their own structures of meaning, i.e. their own theory building, and as such is consonant with grounded theory methodology. However Zen participants would, I thought, be very wary of theory, since a central tenet of Zen is that theorising prevents the understanding of Zen. However I hoped to piece together the theoretical orientation implicit in their answers.

SOL also articulates clearly the connection between theory and practice, which is also an important part of grounded theory methodology. As Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991) express this,

“It is in the nature of a Learning Conversation that the theory which drives it and the methodology by which it is sustained are symbiotically related. They are two perspectives on the one activity, and as such are both intrinsic to it. Any 'personal theory' of the learning process must be experiential and therefore, in the final analysis, private. The theory expressed as public knowledge may only be personally appreciated through firsthand experience. The method is only practised effectively when informed (that is, given personal meaning) by the theory. Thus personal understanding of, and competence in Learning Conversations is only achieved by 'having a go,' reflecting on the experience, informing the experience with the theory' and then 'having another go' revising one's personal theory to do better each time. ”

Daly (1997) argues that from an interpretative perspective theories might be best conceived of as “stories”, by which is meant “the frames that facilitate the interpretation of experience”. By looking at theory as what is called second-order stories, the aim is to unite the subjective and the objective. First-order stories are the accounts given by

participants of their experience in the world. Such accounts are themselves interpretative and therefore subjective, Daly 1997.

“To call theories second-order stories is to suggest that they operate on essentially the same principles. That is, theoretical stories are a frame for interpretation and meaning making that allows the theorist to make sense of the stories of the research participants (first-order stories) and the theorist’s own experience of living in, and being part of, those stories. That is to say that theory, like any other form of narrative, is a structure that shapes meanings and determines effects.”

In Daly’s view, the researcher therefore has a responsibility to show the relationship between the ‘stories’ of the participants within the context of the **researcher’s personal experience** of that same situation. At the commencement of the LC research I planned to use the content analysis of the first conversations as a means of developing an interpretation, which could then be further developed in the second conversations. Thus I hoped that my own evolving understanding could be shared, and then elaborated upon in further conversations. I also saw the proposed series of conversations overall as part of an action science paradigm, since I was hoping to reach levels of meaning which would lead to change.

5.7 Action science

Schon (1983) observes that an ‘action science’ would concern itself with situations which do not lend themselves to techniques derived from science in the mode of technical rationality. Such an action science would concern itself with situations of uniqueness, uncertainty and instability. Change would be seen as part of, and intrinsic to the results of the project, and not something which should be filtered out.

What has come to be known as **action research** can be traced back to the work of Kurt Lewin. In the late 1930s Lewin and his students conducted experimental tests in factories designed to show that greater gains in productivity could be made through democratic participation in management decisions, rather than autocratic coercion. The methods and concerns of action research have broadened, but the basic qualities of such research remain essentially unchanged. These concern the practical uses of the research which are rooted in behaviour in the real world and not in a laboratory. Action research is concerned to generate change which is of benefit to the participants. It is concerned with what people do in the world. The data generated has utility for all participants in the research, both the researcher and those involved in the situation under study. An aim of action science is to develop greater awareness for all those participating, and dissolve the boundaries between scientist and subject. As I said at the outset, my intentions were initially to carry out some form of action science, but the events on my journey made me change my mind. What I turned to instead is what Eisner has called non traditional methods of inquiry.

5.8 Non Traditional Methods of Inquiry

Eisner (1997) points to the emergence of a 'new frontier' in qualitative research methodology. He views this change as an increased interest in pluralism of method, and the inclusion of non-traditional methods (i.e. arts based methods) in the social sciences. Eisner cites his debate with Howard Gardner over whether a novel might be an acceptable form for a doctoral dissertation. Many would regard his advocacy of this as somewhat extreme, but he nonetheless points to the need for narrative methods in the

explication of experience. He feels that narrative, through a mixture of imagination and experience help us to illuminate and elaborate our world, and that this process helps us better understand our actual worlds. His analysis suggests that the growth of narrative methods arose out of a desire to provide more authentic and practical information about the people and situations studied. But arts based methods also raise certain difficulties. Does the increase in density of description also decrease the veridicality of the text. One difficulty is that of interpretation if arts based methods are used. He points out that nowadays ethnographic practices range widely and include the use of narrative, works of art or film. Such techniques may give a more vivid picture of the situation being studied, and can thus provide a quality not conveyed by more traditional techniques. But can such methods be regarded as scientific? As Eisner points out, one could argue that works of art or fiction stand alone. After all, the artist who paints a picture does not provide a theoretical explanation of it to those who see it. Art forms carry their own multi layered meanings and the audience extracts such meanings as are relevant to them. However the question arises whether such unorthodox data can be regarded as scientific inquiry? Eisner gives qualified approval to the wider use of non-traditional arts based techniques, such as art and fiction, but points to the fact that most ethnographers would feel the need to also provide **some analysis or assessment of the outcome of the research.** But from where does the researcher derive the authority to provide a definitive overview? As already discussed researchers are now under pressure to provide some evidence that they are not unthinkingly or uncritically deriving their authority from the values of the culture to which they belong.

However I was not expecting the issue of unthinkingly accepting cultural norms to be a problem in this particular piece of research, although as discussed above I did anticipate problems in theory building when it came to Zen. In effect to become interested in Zen is to become exposed to values which are not usual in our society. What I wanted to investigate is what happens when a person is exposed to a radically different way of looking at the world. In a sense I wanted to ask of everyone taking part in the Zen research what the impact of Zen values was on their 'normal' psychological attitudes. However although the research might reveal differences attributable to the Zen experience, the problem of the authority of the researcher in providing a theoretical analysis remains.

Van Maanen (1988) points to the fact that **accounts** of ethnography colour and define the subject under study, not only in an obvious way by the selection of what material to include and what is 'left on the cutting room floor', but also in the tone and style of the narrative account. One could argue, and many ethnographers do, that by referral to participants, that is involving those who helped in the study, and going back, if necessary many times, to allow participants to reflect on their experience, that any individual bias of a researcher can be countered. That the worst excesses of individualism can be curbed in this way is undeniable. However my own experience in doing this, as will be made plain later, raises the question of how many participants faced with an account of research will challenge a 'good story'. **Referral back to the participants is an important check on theory building but it is not necessarily a definitive one.**

Another point that Eisner makes is that **ambiguity** is often a component in narrative and other non-traditional forms of research. And one thing I found in researching Zen is that ambiguity and paradox abound. In fiction ambiguity has a positive contribution to make to overall appreciation and understanding of the story. At the same time ambiguity appears to weaken any analysis of what the story is about. Too great an attempt at analysis can therefore do violence to understanding what has happened in a particular situation, and too great an ambiguity can cast doubt upon the status of the phenomena under study. As Eisner suggests, and I agree, a researcher must take responsibility for an interpretation, and explain where the evidence for this interpretation comes from.

Chapter 6 - Concepts of Self

This chapter contrasts the Zen view of self with that of other disciplines as they are reflected in literature of psychological and philosophical discussions of self. The Zen view of self is radically different from that of Western psychology and philosophy. This is a recurring theme in this inquiry. I assumed it would underpin many of the assumptions of the Zen participants in the research, and that it was important to make the theoretical differences clear before turning to the research.

6.1 Definitions of Self

As has been made clear from the previous chapters, a central tenet of Zen is that the ego mind forms a secondary filter through which we experience the world. This conditioned structure is what we are accustomed to referring to as 'I'. I was interested in how this preoccupation with the ego, and how to change from ego based behaviour, had affected the lives of Zen novices. This viewpoint, while not unique to Zen, nevertheless is of central concern within it. I expected that there would be a difference between Zen novices and other participants regarding the way they experienced a sense of self.

Unless used in the context of psychiatric or psychotherapeutic research where the self is assumed to be disturbed in some way, normally self and person can be used synonymously. In other words 'self' is used as meaning an individual. Zen, on the other hand uses the term self or ego in an interchangeable way, both being psychological constructions which exist as concepts but are not real in any true sense, since the ego is seen as a mental construction that is 'dropped' upon reaching enlightenment. In Zen,

the mental model of the ego self we carry around is heavily conditioned by previous experience. In a sense it could be looked at as a stereotype of who we think we are. This model prevents us from experiencing and perceiving the totality of what is going on in the now. In other words we carry around a lot of mental baggage which prevents us from experiencing the present. Or as Hey (1988) puts it,

“... at the moment of enlightenment the cognitive structures that maintain our individual egos collapse. The mind is no longer dominated by an abstract sense of ' I' or by goal seeking or time dependent constructs of self. His awareness is centred in the present, attending only to what is, and responding to his perception of what is in a way that makes no mechanistic distinction between self and not-self, cause and effect, social values and personal wishes.”

Enlightenment involves the dropping of all mental models of self. This loss of self, which as will become evident, is a central part of the psychology of Zen is perceived very differently in concepts of self in western psychology. Exploring the psychological and philosophical issues related to the dropping of the ‘normal’ models of self, Taylor (1977) states,

“The agent of radical choice would at the moment of choice have ex hypothesi no horizon of evaluation. He would be utterly without identity. He would be a kind of extensionless point, a pure leap into the void. But such a thing is an impossibility, and rather could only be the description of the most terrible mental alienation. The subject of rational choice is another avatar of that recurrent figure which our civilisation aspires to realise, the disembodied ego, the subject who can objectify all being, including his own, and choose in radical freedom. But this promised total self-possession would in fact be the most total self-loss.” Taylor in Mischel (1977)

Taylor's 'pure leap into the void' appears to be precisely what the Zen master tries to invoke. Taylor's assertion that such a thing is impossible is the point at issue. It may be however that several things are being connected here. Consciousness has to be consciousness of something, it cannot exist just by itself as an object-less state of mind. And this may be one point that Taylor is making here. Furthermore we find that we are never able to distinguish *in experience* between states of consciousness and objects of consciousness. Conceptually we can draw the distinction, but in our actual experience, however attentive, they are indistinguishable. In Zen that fact is recognised. As John comments in Chapter 4 how can consciousness be other than the contents of consciousness? Moreover in Zen there can be no aim to differentiate between states of consciousness and objects of consciousness because defining a state of consciousness implies someone who is having that state. It is this issue of *who* is experiencing *what* that is the crucial issue. It is the Zen insistence on dropping the *self* that creates the apparent confusion. The transcendence of the self in Zen does not imply the total vacuum envisaged by Taylor above.

Taylor (1989) in '*Sources of the Self*' has written extensively about the history of modern identity. He spells out the often largely unarticulated understanding of what it is to be a human agent. He points to the sense of inwardness, freedom and individuality that has come to be accepted as comprising modern identity, and traces the rise of belief about the nature of the self from Augustine, through Descartes, to the present day. Zen would not disagree with much of his analysis as being how many people view themselves. What Zen is asking is whether this view is desirable or indeed necessary.

Loss of 'self' in this context is loss of the conditioned self not loss of the true self. Perhaps what is seen as 'enlightenment' in Zen is seen as 'mental alienation' in philosophy because dropping of self is confused with total lack of awareness.

The opening sentence of Theodore Mischel's paper on *Conceptual Issues in The Psychology of the Self* which also asks whether the 'self' can be looked at in a scientific manner starts:

"There is one point on which philosophers and psychologists, or at least those who contribute to this volume, can easily agree: the self is not some entity other than the person."

Would that it were so simple. Contributors to that volume might agree, but there seem exceptions to every rule. In discussing the nature of 'persons' Parfit (1987) explains the difference between 'ego theory' and 'bundle theory.' In ego theory a person's continued existence cannot be explained except as the continued existence of a particular 'ego' or subject of experiences. In other words ego theories assume that self and person can be used synonymously, and that is indeed the way that self is used by Mischel and is used by the average person in everyday life.

The deficiencies of this theoretical position have been explored extensively by the existential movement in philosophy. It's most famous exponent is no doubt Sartre, who in his 'Transcendence of the Ego' (1972) made it clear that we impute continued existence of a sense of self when logically there is no evidence of continuity. For example, if we say 'I hate Paul' what we mean is that we feel a deep repugnance for Paul at this particular time. We haven't in fact hated Paul for our entire past history, and may or may not continue to hate Paul, depending upon Paul's future behaviour. This

feeling is a temporary state. If the 'I' who hates Paul actually changes over time why do we then attribute a continuous 'I' who is in charge rather than a series of changing 'I's'? Of course many theories in psychology attribute a collection of sub personalities or alternate selves which are regarded as jointly composing the total self. The point at issue here is not whether sub personalities exist, but whether these have an 'I' or organiser in overall charge. Some may feel that this is just semantic quibbling. Even if 'I' change, 'I' still exist, all that happens is that my personality and opinions change over time. But what philosophers like Parfit are querying is the nature of the 'I' that exists. According to bundle theory we cannot explain either consciousness at any point in time, or over a lifetime, in reference to a person. **In a sense for the bundle theorist the person does not exist.** Parfit suggests the first bundle theorist was Buddha, so this viewpoint has obvious relevance to Zen.

As bundle theorists point out, if the 'ego' or subject of experience is synonymous with the person, then it is possible to have subjects of experiences that are not persons, most notably in split brain personalities. In 'blindsight' research it has been shown that some split brain subjects can 'see' things they are not aware of seeing. Since surgery has separated the two hemispheres of the brain the subject has two separate streams of consciousness, each unaware of the other's field of perception. Likewise in Multiple Personality Disorders (MPD) a number of discrete personalities apparently unaware of each other's existence can inhabit one body.

Bundle theorists take the position that ordinary people, at any time, are aware of having several different experiences at once (including being aware of being aware). Thus the

separate states of consciousness of the split brain or MPD personality are simply multiple states of awareness, and not separate egos. If that is so, they argue, there are a lot of sub-systems to which we give an 'I' tag when they are in consciousness, hence we are a bundle of I's, but there is no continuous big 'I' in charge. There is a danger here however in thinking that the Zen position would mean that there is no central 'I' at all as Parfit implies. Zen agrees with bundle theory that **what people are accustomed to think of as 'I' does not exist.** But this 'I' is the conditioned consciousness which in Zen is the illusory self with which we identify. However if this mechanism of identification is seen completely (and not just intellectually) then this is 'seeing into one's own self nature. This self nature, according to the accounts of Zen masters, is not illusory, but it is qualitatively different from that previously experienced, and outside the domain of bundle theory.

Awareness of a multiplicity of I's is implicit in many psychological and sociological theories. But as Dennett (1983) points out, **even when the theoretical problems of possessing a multiplicity of 'I's' is seen, in practice most people operate in the world as though there were one continuous 'I' in charge at all times.** In this, according to Zen, they are correct, but for totally the wrong reasons. And while they cling to those reasons to all intents and purposes they are largely unaware of the true source of their being.

Many psychological and sociological theories have developed which suppose that the self is not unified but has a number of different components. It seems likely that the pervasiveness of the idea of a conflicted or 'divided self' articulated most notably by R. D.

Laing (1960) in the book of that name is an implicit understanding of the lack of continuity pointed out by bundle theorists. Certainly, these and other models accord with our personal experience of being torn by conflicting aspects of personality. We often seem to be different people at different times depending upon our social roles or personality traits. Such models assume however that our different sub-personalities are continuous and coexist. The difference between that situation and MPD is that we are aware, at least part of the time, of the different parts of ourselves that, however uneasily, make up our total self.

Goffman (1959) in his 'Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' likens the various little I's to actors with different roles, whose performances vary depending upon whether they are on or off stage. The Freudian position also sees the person as fragmented, having an id, an ego and a superego. Most psychoanalytic models assume a fragmented self which needs to be understood and integrated into a more harmonious whole. This model has been carried forward in Psychosynthesis by Assageoli (1975) with his concepts of sub-personalities and higher and lower selves. Both Freud and Assageoli, in different ways, thought that the healthy person had to integrate their various sub-systems by putting the 'best' fragment in charge of the others.

A similar view is taken in personal construct psychology by Miller Mair (1977) who sees the person as "*a community of selves.*" Within this paradigm one can converse internally with such selves in order to integrate, harmonise or change them and use such knowledge to enhance personal growth and understanding, and it is just such a viewpoint which informs much of SOL research.

As Lancaster (1991) observes however, in paradigms of enlightenment, self knowledge is of a different kind,

".....the importance of self observation in this scheme is not only to gain information about what may be observed, but also to change the centre of gravity of consciousness. Self-knowledge, beloved of the ancients, is not simply a question of one from the multiplicity of 'I's' gaining greater understanding of its fellow actors. It is a state of being which, by comparison, is all-knowing; the view as given from the top of the mountain"

The paradigm of self realisation or enlightenment common to many eastern religions, as Lancaster makes clear, is of a much more radical and discontinuous change than the gradual pursuit of greater understanding of one's 'self'.

Ego theorists have an alternative view to that of bundle theorists which Dennett (1983) while not agreeing with it, puts with his usual admirable clarity,

"There's a strong inclination, when one starts developing models of this sort always to exempt the self and say: 'Maybe I do have all of these little sub-systems in me, but then there's the king sub-system, the boss, there's the one at the centre who knows it all and controls all the others and that's the really wonderful and mysterious one. That's the seat of the soul."

As he goes on to point out however such a 'king homunculus' would produce the sort of infinite regress abhorred quite rightly by radical behaviourists such as Skinner (1974).

How could we be sure that there wasn't another 'I' standing behind the 'I' etc. etc. Even where we think we see that the ego is fragmented and/or illusory, as Dennett points out, **we continue to act as though it was real.** In other words we may see the theoretical danger, but we do not change our attribution of meaning in our life experience. In effect,

regardless of our theoretical orientation we act in accordance with ego theory, as though 'I' take decisions and 'I' act upon them. In Zen it is only when we cease to act through the mediation of such an 'I' concept that radical change is possible.

But it is not only laymen who make this attribution. In some psychological theories 'I' is regarded as a leader in charge of a troop of sub personalities. If Dennett and Zen are right and the leader role is a mental construction which does not really exist, then much of western psychology would appear to be testing psychological constructions e.g. self-control, purpose and intentionality, etc. which are illusory. Small wonder that the predictive power of many theoretical positions (including that of Freud) are so difficult to validate. Dennett (1991) would not disagree,

"...many of the results of social psychology now strongly suggest that our own access to what's going on in our minds is very impoverished. We often confabulate, we tell unwitting lies and we are often simply in the dark....It begins to appear that we have, in Keith Gunderson's phrase 'underprivileged access' to the goings-on in our own minds."

Thomas and Harri-Augstein (1985) as already noted, also believe that most people have very little knowledge of how they attribute personal meanings within their own life experiences. This position assumes however that it is possible by having 'Learning Conversations' with oneself to become much more aware of the mental processes going on in our minds, which contribute to our sense of 'I'. The SOL technique of MARS in which through a constant process of monitoring, analysing, reconstruing, reflecting and reviewing, and spiralling forward it is possible to refine self awareness, would appear to address the apparent problem. **However, this viewpoint appears to me (though not**

to SOL) to assume that there is a central controlling self who is organising such a process. Whenever there is '*judging and choosing*' then implicitly there is a self outside of the process of perception who is doing this.

Dennett (1991) argues that such evidence as there is suggests that the continuity we attribute to 'I' and the continuity of consciousness implied by that is totally fallacious. He points to a number of experiments, involving changing computer screens in synchrony with eyeblinks where the changes cannot be detected by the participant although the computer screen appears to be rippling to an observer. Such experiments show that there are gaps in consciousness analogous to the 'blind spots' well known in perception experiments. As he points out, if we are unaware of the gaps in our consciousness, and experience consciousness as continuous when it is full of discontinuities we are similarly unaware that there is no single self in charge of things.

In both cases we attribute a continuity that does not exist. The reason why we do not detect such existing discontinuities is that **there are no sentinels in the system for such a purpose.** Similar discontinuities in processing caused by accident or injury are noticed because there is a difference from what was previously perceived. Whereas the gaps Dennett is talking about have no cognitive mechanism to bring them into awareness. By ascribing control to a mental construct derived from what we believe is continuous memory, we are in fact reinforcing a kind of false consciousness.

Hobson (1994) also subscribes to the idea that there are no sentinels in our cognitive system which alert us to the fragility and lack of continuity of what is regarded as the self. As a neurophysiologist Hobson has come to this conclusion through comparison of

the waking and sleeping states. He had the idea of comparing the content of dreams with the content of day dreams to compare the similarities and differences between the two states. To his surprise there wasn't that much difference in content. If we keep a conscientious record of our daydreams, our waking dreams, they are very similar in content to our dreams during sleep. When accounts of night dreams and day dreams were cut into segments a panel was asked to match them and say which were which. It proved difficult to distinguish accounts of dreams from that of daydreams.

In the waking and sleeping states the brain is in a constant search for meaning. During sleep the brain monitors memories in order to attribute meaning and widen the associations to the events it is processing. Memories are stored in different places under different headings or associations to facilitate retrieval. The theory that the function of dreaming is that of processing information is not new. He argues however that this function of filtering and assigning meaning to incoming information goes on **at all times** waking or sleeping. While the brain is doing its filing into memory storage, whether awake or asleep, the systems which attribute meaning continue. The brain is therefore forever compiling 'plots' to account for events. And one of its major plots according to Hobson is **the illusion of continuity** we supply to interpretations of events. In Hobson's view the *self* is always changing and there is no evidence of a continuous central 'I'.

Parfit (1984) demonstrates in a number of arguments of great complexity that **we are not what we believe**, and that most of us have false beliefs about our own nature, and about our identity over time. Some of those arguments involving 'bundle theory' are

discussed above. However, he also asks the difficult question **does psychological continuity presuppose personal identity?** As he points out we tend to assume that evidence of a continuous personal identity is provided by memory. Parfit's book precedes much of the discussion in psychology about false memory syndrome. It is now abundantly plain however that not only does the average person not have complete recall from memory, i.e. memory is not continuous, but also that false or quasi memories are not uncommon.

I personally am most subject to memory problems when trying to find something I have mislaid, like keys. When trying to reconstruct in my mind what I might have done with my keys I produce images which are to me indistinguishable from memory traces, that is I start to 'remember' doing a number of different things with my keys. It would appear that I could verify which of my memories was real and which false when I do eventually find my keys. But how can I be sure that what I remembered was simply invention, or whether it was a memory trace of some past time when I had also lost my keys?

We tend to point to the fact that we have access only to our own memories and no-one else's as presupposing proof of personal identity. However, as Parfit points out, the continuity of memory cannot be, even in part, what makes a series of experiences the experiences of a single person, **since this person's memory presupposes his continued identity. The argument in fact is circular.**

However what none of these theories take into account is the Zen assertion that appreciation of one's true nature cannot be approached analytically, since our self nature is not to be uncovered by the use of logic. The answer to such paradoxes and

contradictions can be resolved through direct experience of who we really are. This is a spiritual experience, although not necessarily a mystical one in the way that term is normally used.

6.2 Discursive Psychology

One further strand of thought relevant to any discussion of self, is the discursive psychology outlined by Harre and Gillett (1994). In this model mental life is seen as a dynamic activity, undertaken by rule following intentional agents. Psychological constructions such as desires, beliefs, moral attitudes and intentions are seen as fighting it out against the general background of mental activity. This paradigm has many similarities to SOL in its 'ethogenic' approach and the primacy given to conversation or 'speech acts' in making sense of the world and in communicating with ourselves and one another.

However, Harre and Gillett also believe that the idea of a sense of self that comes from a string of co-ordinated memories is insufficient as an explanation for a **self as a separate entity** from the body/brain. The most fruitful way for psychology to study the sense of identity, in their view is to study how **selfhood is produced discursively**. Looked at in this way one's sense of a **personal identity is constructed as an explanation of who we are when conversing with others**. In this model the self is thus a mental construction. The sense we have that we are an agent of our actions and responsible to others for them is something that we acquire through learning language and the cultural conventions of learning moral responsibility. In effect this paradigm, like that of bundle theory, sees no central co-ordinating self, and 'I' is simply a linguistic convenience.

Both Harre and Gillett and SOL are agreed however that it is in their ability to converse that human beings are distinctive. Thus both see conversation and analysis of discourse as providing a way forward in the new research paradigms emerging in psychology.

6.3 Can there be No Self?

Blackmore (1990) in a paper entitled 'The Revelation of No Self' discusses the illusory nature of many generally accepted representations of self. In her view when any information processing system constructs representations of anything then there is consciousness. **Consciousness is therefore the contents of consciousness.** For Susan Blackmore being conscious is the consequence of a self that is able to construct abstract representations. This view neatly accounts for self consciousness since self consciousness simply means constructing a model of self. Thus in this model altered states of consciousness (including enlightenment) can be understood as changes in a person's model of reality. As Blackmore (1994) points out however many scientists who regard this as a theoretical possibility seem to ignore the implications of this position for their everyday life. If they had really taken on board the full consequences of such a position, they would regard the self as an illusion.

"We assume that the self receives sensations, initiates actions, directs attention and takes decisions - in other words that "I" sit inside my head and control things. This in spite of the fact that if the self is only a socially and linguistically constructed mental model then this cannot be so. Mental models cannot be said to make decisions and take actions, rather the self is represented by the cognitive system as though it does those things. In this view the self is an illusion".

According to some of the psychological and sociological theories discussed above we have a number of sub personalities or roles. The concept of this sort of sub personality is

seen as a useful tool in uncovering our self identity . It seems likely that the sort of clusters of constructs that are referred to as sub personalities are mental models that have proved useful in everyday life.

But if we converse with our sub personalities who is conversing with whom? Blackmore, seeing the reflexive trap says no-one is, everything in consciousness is a mental model, including our concept of a central 'I.' So that in her view one mental model is conversing with another.

Until self realisation, or enlightenment, takes place people cannot explain themselves except as a series of mental models. After enlightenment however the shift in consciousness is reported as changing from the ego framework to a different source of being, and thus would presumably be **beyond both ego and bundle theories**.

Although the differences between ego and bundle theory point to possible theoretical differences between Zen and other systems, Velmans (1990) points out that some explanations provide examples from different levels of discourse which cannot be readily compared. Although complex correlates of experience exist within the brain in the form of mental models, Velmans also feels that there is a real world to experience. Rejecting a reductionist view of the mind body problem seems to lead to Cartesian dualism. In an elegant demolition of both reductionism and dualism Velmans argues for a **reflexive model of consciousness which enables one to steer a very fine line between idealism and realism**. Such a reflective model however is still within the realms of consciousness as most people experience it. Zen tantalises with the assertion that it is possible to go beyond this state.

6.4 The Role of Thought

However, all scientific methodologies not only use thought, but pride themselves on logical thought. Before discussing methodology it is as well to remember that the subject of this research is a system which distrusts thought as a means of uncovering certain kinds of experience. Bohm (1994) in his book *'Thought as a System'* sees thought as a systemic fault which is rarely questioned. Since a major part of his life as a physicist required great reliance on thought, his rejection of it as a solution to self understanding is remarkable. Bohm rejects the idea that our thinking processes simply reflect what is out there in the real world. He points to the role of thought in affecting our bodies, our emotions, our intellect and knowledge. He suggests that this is such an automatic process that we are controlled by it to an extent we do not realise. Since we explain the world to ourselves by using thought, we are as Zen makes repeatedly clear, relying on thought as a solution, when it is also the faulty instrument which created the problem in the first place. Bohm was of course a long term friend of Krishnamurti, who was also John's mentor. In their separate ways they are pointing to the futility of using thought to reach a different level of discourse. Since thought and the reproduction of thought are the main vehicles for the dissemination of information in both everyday and academic life, it takes a great deal of effort to keep that in mind in every area of experience.

But if one is looking at this process, what kind of methodology does justice to such a subject? I decided to start with a conversational research paradigm. I hoped that my own personal quest for self knowledge would also benefit those who participated in the

study, in the sense that jointly we might arrive at some sort of consensus about the nature and value of our experience. By comparing accounts of self knowledge derived from the Zen participants, with those of SOL participants I also hoped to try to place Zen learning in perspective with another form of learning.

Before turning to Part Three in which this phase of the research is addressed I summarise those issues which have emerged as important both from a personal and a research point of view. This summary is in the form of a Zen Mondo which are questions asked and answered. This is intended to demonstrate how I viewed those issues with which I was concerned at the time. It also shows my own consciousness at work and how my interests changed and progressed.

Chapter 7 - First Zen Mondo

In Zen a mondo is a question asked and answered. In classical Zen it was often an exchange between a master and his student. The answers are meant to display understanding, rather than giving an explanation, and the answers may be quite unexpected. The master is looking for signs that the pupil is working on the problem (the question) and that he is not caught up in trying to answer the question by intellect alone. To write down a mondo is to lose the element of non verbal response which adds to the unexpectedness and spontaneity a master is looking for.

Suzuki (1973) observes although mondo were originally verbal, over time some of the more famous exchanges between Zen master and pupil were written down. One major function of using written mondo was to check on the functioning of the intellect, or rather to let the intellect see by itself how far it could go; and also demonstrate that there were realms into which intellect alone could never enter. It is in this spirit that I have undertaken these Mondo, since they are reflections, and therefore thoughts. Suzuki states that a psychological impasse is the necessary antecedent of enlightenment. The following exchanges demonstrate the psychological impasses I reached.

These are the issues that pre-occupied me. I have used the format to force myself to pinpoint those areas where my intellect was unsure. When answering the question I have posed to myself, I make no attempt to provide a full and logical answer, or refer to literature, or recapitulate an explanation of what has already been discussed. If I don't know, I say so.

What is Zen?

The essence of Zen for me is freedom. Freedom to be who I really am, to respond swiftly and sensitively to what is happening around me, to be in tune with myself and with life. This is what I discerned in John and what gave me the impetus to attack my koan.

Don't other transpersonal psychological systems also aim at this?

Many do. I have met many people over the years who I thought had become better adjusted, nicer or wiser through pursuing one or other of them, but I did not feel that they were enlightened in the way I feel John was.

What is intuitive knowing?

Intuitive knowing involves knowing at a different level from ordinary consciousness, a level where the whole person is engaged. When I concentrate on an issue to the exclusion of all else I fragment my attention. When I allow my attention to become fragmented then my knowing is incomplete. While I accept that I and other people are sometimes wiser than we know, and tacitly respond in ways appropriate to a situation, this explanation is unsatisfying. Zen offers 'seeing into one's Nature' where this tacit and unconscious element becomes conscious. Where I start to become unsure is when I try to discern the relationship, if any, to becoming more aware as I am doing things, which seems to me what **reflection in action** is about, and this deeper intuitive knowing.

What is Reflection In Action?

What it means to me is to be aware of different kinds or levels of knowing at the time of action, but what continues to puzzle me is whether this is a conscious process in the normal meaning of that term. When I try to think of an example of when I do practice reflection in action of the sort reported in the literature pertaining to professional practice, this would be when moderating group discussions. An example of my own experience is a commercial brand strategy project, which I completed in 1997. I have been working for the client who commissioned this research for over 10 years and my recommendations are required to produce actionable results. (Lest the impression gained is that commercial research is not rigorous I should point out that that when one recommends a course of action to change a brand's development, the sales figures which come along a year later are a powerful check on one's conclusions. Get it wrong and the client doesn't come back.)

During the course of the discussion, while respondents talk about their feelings about a brand and their personal experience, I am attending to

- ❖ the level of interest generated at different points in the discussion
(through eye contact and body language)
- ❖ the relevance of accounts of individual experience to the whole strategy
- ❖ whether reported feelings seem to bear any relationship to buying behaviour (often it doesn't)

- ❖ which feelings and aspirations about the brand are important and are not being fulfilled

It is necessary to bear all these factors and more in mind at the time, so that avenues opened up during discussion can be followed up. In addition there is usually around six clients watching the group through a one way mirror, so being seen to be competent at this process is important. Clearly I have to attend to a number of different things at once, reflect on them, and follow them up in conversation. But does that process incorporate a different kind of awareness, and what relationship does it have to intuitive knowing?

I experience this process as having many tacit elements. I do not try to keep in memory all these different things as I go along. I trust my instincts to know when someone says something significant. I am not afraid of pauses which I use to quickly review where to steer the conversation next. Of course in much action research the topics themselves are part of the discussion, issues are negotiated rather than introduced, but I do not feel that this changes the conscious processes involved here, only the content.

But it does not feel ‘right’ to me that increased awareness is demonstrated by consciousness of the individual elements or levels of the interaction, if what is needed is a holistic response. But if this is the case, and such reflection is **unconscious or tacit** at the time of happening, is it really reflection? At times (though not often) I experience the phenomenon of opening my mouth to say something and having to listen to know what I am saying. It may be that I simply

process at very high speed on those occasions, but if so then that speed outstrips my conscious mind.

Speaking with John once about the necessity of speed in processing so that one can become aware of thoughts as they are arising and not become lost in them, he commented that it was a great mistake to conceptualise the enlightened person as doing **the same thing** but at greater speed. The enlightened person about to take action does not call up a mental array of possible actions and then with lightning speed select one of this array. Rather since his response is rooted in his entire being only one course is possible. In this way **thought is action** and there is no gap between the two. But is this reflective?

Can one reach a state one cannot conceptualise?

I would say yes. This is what **appears** to be the classic Zen dilemma. If I aim for enlightenment, if I try to visualise it in my mind I've missed it. I can't use models, so how do I get there? The error is in the question, because the question presupposes that models are necessary. **Because we look to thought before action as the sensible way to proceed we have great difficulty unlearning this habit.** It isn't the lack of conceptualisation or lack of model that is the problem. The problem is that even when I think I have no preconceptions, they are still there, I haven't **unlearned** the habit of judging, commenting etc. to myself. So long as I think in this way I continue to think in terms of having a problem. **When you can drop the question, there is actually no problem, and when you know that at a non intellectual level, that is enlightenment.**

What is 'standing at the wall'?

When one can stay focused on what is happening around one, a certain 'distance' seems to open up between oneself and normal everyday pre occupations. In this state feelings and thoughts come and go without the power to draw you into them. Although you seem to have the time and space to look at thought processes as they arrive this state is accompanied by a feeling of aliveness. However if you start to hang on to that feeling of distance as a sign that you are getting somewhere you are simply replacing one mental model with another. So 'standing at the wall' as a genuine state of dynamic tension, cannot be aimed at or it isn't standing at the wall. Paradoxically one has to work to create the conditions necessary for it to arise, but it does not arise directly in proportion to the work put in. Often in fact it seems to arise when one relaxes after having concentrated intensively.

In fact this is very close to self realisation. I see now that I reached the wall many times, but each time I missed because I had an expectation that some further step was required, and I had to **do** something further. Although one experiences a distancing from thought on such occasions, the thought that something further needs to be done is what causes one to identify with the thought process. There is no wall apart from expectation.

Can there be a science of self knowledge?

To say that there cannot be a science of self knowledge is to relegate science to only studying that which it is currently equipped to do. It is like saying that science cannot be creative. To understand oneself is such a basic and necessary thing that it should certainly be a major concern of any scientific psychology. This thesis is part of my personal attempt to approach the transpersonal within a scientific framework. And thus it is the working out of my own conception of what science can be, which is articulated in Conclusions.

Chapter 8 - Developing My Methodology

*“Analytically, thought examines itself and its own experiences;
it’s examination is still limited because thought itself is limited.”*

Krishnamurti

This chapter describes how, after failing to engage John in a repertory grid procedure I consulted him as to what he felt the content of my Learning Conversations should cover. I was dimly aware as this was happening that I was being given a demonstration, in our conversation, as to how a Zen conversation might be conducted.

After my conversation with John I created an agenda which was in fact a series of questions which formed the koan *what is Zen?* At that time I did not see myself as actively working on my own koan, I conceived the research as giving me data to help me refine my approach.

8.1 Setting My Agenda as Action Researcher in Conversation with John

After the failure to engage John in a repertory grid conversation I felt that I could not set an appropriate agenda for a looser based Learning Conversation unless I first talked to John. He agreed to see me and I set out for the New Forest with my usual feeling of trepidation. I remember T, one of the Zen participants in this research, telling me that he prepared himself for meetings with John and always set out with several questions in his head to ask him. Somehow though, things never went according to plan, and his questions never got asked, much less answered. I confess that when T told me this I felt slightly superior since I felt I

had long since passed this stage. However on this occasion I was armed with questions and took along a briefcase, a large notepad and a tape recorder, because after all this was research business.

I arrived mid morning to a warm welcome and coffee in the garden. It was a beautiful sunny day and John suggested a walk in the forest. Since I had been invited to lunch and no limit had been set to my time I agreed with pleasure thinking business had been postponed. Ten minutes into the walk, without tape recorder or notepad to hand John asked what I wanted to talk about. Clearly research business was business as usual in Zen terms. So this part of the conversation depends on my reconstruction of that experience.

I explained that I had decided to talk to both Zen novices and SOL research students about how each system had affected their lives. I told him that after our last conversation I had decided not to use a repertory grid procedure but nonetheless wanted to talk to participants about their Zen approach and compare this with students of Self Organised Learning. John asked what I expected the difference to be between the two samples, and I said that surely there would be some difference in how their attitude to 'self' affected their lives. I remember John's innocent look, which I had come with reason to be very wary of, as he invited me to tell him how my changed concept of self had affected my own life. After some stuttering and stammering I said that there had been two main effects, one of which might be regarded as negative by most peoples' standards.

I explained that if I was criticised or challenged nowadays I mostly managed to remember that the part of me which felt threatened was illusory, so I didn't get affected by criticism in the same way as before.

Was that positive or negative inquired John.

Positive, I replied, already beginning to feel on shaky ground.

“And the negative?”

I answered something to the effect that remembering that the ego self was illusory tended to give me a feeling of detachment. I felt like an outsider, distanced from life, as though I was not really taking part in what everyone else seemed to take for granted. Indeed at times I felt as though I were a figment of my own imagination.

I remember his reply very clearly, as it had a profound effect on me.

“**And do you ever doubt the reality of that thought**” he said.

At one stroke he had laid bare the reason for the sterile and static place I had reached. Really dropping the ego, or in other words dropping second order concepts about who or what you think you are has the consequence of freeing you to be more alive and in tune with everything around you. But setting up second order **thoughts** about the illusory nature of the ego simply replaced one set of concepts with another set of concepts and got one to a very different place.

“You mean that is my reality, and I've created it” I said.

John agreed and went on to point out that both the points I had mentioned were really the same process. When something is dropped it stops. There is nothing to

remember. Nothing to do. I was trying consciously to remember that my own reality was constructed, which is a form of **awareness of being aware**. In Zen this is utterly futile. At the time I thought John was taking pity on me when he made no further comments during our walk; with hindsight I suspect that he knew the impact of the emotional experience he had just provoked and was allowing it to take maximum effect.

After lunch I queried whether he thought I should drop all thought of talking to people about their experience. John seemed surprised that I should feel this. He pointed out that although my questions and answers had not got me where I wanted to be, they asked questions which few people asked, and even fewer tried with any degree of persistence to answer and as such was worth doing. He observed that he personally felt that I would be better to cast my net wider and **address my questions indirectly**.

At this point I got my notepad and noted down those points he mentioned. John thought people might be more revealing if asked about their relationships, their image of themselves and how Zen had affected their lives. Had it made them more sensitive or had it I (as appeared to be my experience) cut them off from normal living? He agreed with my judgement that I did not want to encourage people to talk of their mystical or peak experiences. We did not talk of specific questions but of general areas which might be relevant. John also thought most novices were hung up on their relationship with him, and were over reverential, regarding him as having supernatural powers. The other area he suggested was

that of morality or ethics. He felt that a lot of people confused giving up 'judging and choosing' as giving up the capacity to discern right from wrong. His final contribution was throwing in a koan "Why is mouse when it spins?"

I said earlier that I regarded this conversation with John as a LC from my point of view. Certainly in this, as in previous interactions with John, I felt that I had to be as alert as I was capable of being. When talking to him it seemed at times as though my brain went into overdrive, as I examined and discarded several lines of conversation seeing for myself that they were not going to answer his often unanswerable questions. This conversation reverberated through my mind for weeks. I went away and pondered what I planned to ask and constructed the list of questions which became my agenda as a Learning Conversationalist.

I decided in the end that although I wanted to ask about the 'self' that this was perhaps more a pre occupation of mine, and asked a more general question "How much insight do you have into your 'self'?" I found in the first few conversations that because verbally most people heard 'yourself' and not your 'self', they interpreted this as meaning how well do you know yourself. I thought this was an equally difficult question to answer that raised the opportunity to answer in a number of ways. I didn't want to put words into peoples' mouths about the illusory nature of the self if this was not something they reflected upon. And so I came up with the following list of 17 questions.

I see many of the questions as variations on the classic koan *what is Buddha*, or what is Zen. For example questions one, five, six, seven, and fourteen are asking

for their experience of Zen (1), their strategies, if any, for achieving Zen (5) their commitment to Zen (6) and their visualisation of how achieving Zen might be (7), and rather sneakily towards the end why they think they haven't done better (14). Within those non-directive questions there is ample scope to say what Zen means in personal experiential terms. Questions 2, 3, 8 and 9 ask about specific areas of life experience. The topics of the master/novice relationship and morality which John had suggested are also covered.

Zen Conversation Guide

N.B. The word Zen is used both as a system and as a state e.g. 'achieving Zen'. This usage was familiar to all Zen respondents.

- 1 Even if you haven't achieved Zen what impact has it had on your life?
- 2 Has Zen affected how or what you learn ?
- 3 Has Zen helped or hindered your interpersonal relationships?
- 4 How much insight do you feel you have into your self?
- 5 What, if anything, do you think you either have to do, or give up doing, in order to achieve Zen?
- 6 How strongly do you believe that you will achieve Zen?
- 7 If you achieve Zen, what impact will it have on your day to day living?
- 8 Has your Zen made you more or less sensitive to the feelings of others?
- 9 Has the study of Zen changed any of your daily habits or routines?
- 10 Do you think Zen has some form of higher morality? In what way could it change the world?
- 11 Do you think Zen masters can make a difference to the fate of the world? Do they have a duty to do so?
- 12 What particular powers does a Zen master have that others don't?
- 13 What do you see as John's role in your own progress towards Zen? Do you think he is necessary to your progress? Do you think he feels responsible for your progress?
- 14 If Zen is a different way of being how do you dare converse with a Zen master as an equal?
- 15 Why is a mouse when it spins?
- 16 Would you have expected Zen as you have studied it so far to have changed you more than it appears to have done?
- 17 Now that you have some idea of what our conversation is about is there anything I should have asked you but didn't?

8.2 Rationale For an Agenda

In asking respondents how Zen had changed their perspective there were issues which the participants should have addressed within their own experience if they took a Zen perspective seriously. This inquiry was not a test of their knowledge. There wasn't a single question which called for any formal knowledge of Zen. In effect these questions formed a referent dialogue which was designed to inquire what was at the core of their practical knowing about Zen. Many of the questions were designed to get at the same issue in different ways. However respondents were specifically invited to add to the agenda at the end. The fact that few did so is addressed within the analysis of the data.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) would probably categorise the format as nearer a 'qualitative research interview' than a 'conversation' because the initial agenda was set by the researcher. This however is to make a distinction based upon the formality of the fact that there were set questions. In a LC the agenda may be set or negotiated, what is important is the awareness that is brought to the interaction. I contend that the spirit and format in which the interviews were conducted on both sides satisfied the criteria for a "Learning Conversation" as a creative encounter defined by Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991) even though the MARS heuristic was not used. Some Zen participants commented on their own expectations and emotional attitude after the interaction, which they experienced as reminding them of what Zen is all about for them. Their observations are described in section 10.13. The **process** of a Learning Conversation can be

distinguished from its content, and requires that an exchange is developed through a shared understanding of how the conversation is conducted, so that the process remains negotiable. In the case of SOL respondents all were familiar with conversational tools and the purposes of Learning Conversations so that the shared understanding of the process was a natural part of their current cultural perspective, indeed some talked in terms of conversational tools and Personal Learning Contracts. This awareness of the LC process was not true of the Zen respondents in any formal sense. However I am sure from their comments that all the Zen respondents were well aware that they could alter the course of the conversation if they wished. Indeed the insertion of a koan near the end of the conversation should have alerted them to the possibility of stepping outside of the conversation in some way.

8.3 Setting the Scene

It was during my conversation with John, reported above, that he offered to carry out similar conversations with the same Zen respondents that I would see. I agreed immediately because although I could not foresee how his conversations would differ from mine, I felt sure that they would. I expected Zen novices to approach conversations with him with the same mixture of enjoyment and trepidation that I did. It also, I realised, gave prospective respondents a powerful incentive to see me.

One thing which had concerned me was that Zen novices might be reluctant to speak to me. This was based on two main factors. Some I thought would be rather sceptical of the value of **discussing** Zen and might refuse to participate. Secondly I had been in touch with a Japanese student doing a PhD at Cambridge, who was interested in how Zen changed and evolved outside of Japan. She told me that she had been refused permission to speak with many people and was having difficulty gaining access to Zen masters and practitioners. Since her research was from an anthropological perspective she was having difficulty providing a balanced sample. She felt that many people were fearful of expressing opinions which might be regarded as representing Zen.

While I was not really expecting this degree of difficulty, it did occur to me that some novices might not welcome my inquiry. However I suspected that if seeing me was followed by seeing John few would refuse. It was not in fact easy to see John especially after his first bout of serious illness. Casual interactions were never encouraged although he impressed upon everyone he saw on a regular basis that if they felt any Zen imperative they could have access to him at any time. When setting up appointments for the interviews therefore a climate of anticipation was engendered, and Zen participants were in no doubt that we were going to talk about how they experienced Zen both with me and with John.

8.4 The SOL Conversation

I had expected that a different set of questions would be necessary for the SOL sample. However upon consideration the same set of questions with only minor

amendments seemed also to fit the SOL paradigm. By keeping largely to the same questions it allowed the same issues of experience of SOL, concepts of self, and the role of the 'learning manager' or expert to be directly compared with Zen.

The initial impulse and primary purpose of the research was looking at practical knowing within a Zen perspective. The interviews with SOL participants were designed to provide a comparison with another system also concerned with inner directed learning, so that comparisons could be made.

SOL Learning Conversation

- 1) What impact has SOL had on your life?
 - 1) Has SOL affected how or what you learn ?
 - 2) Has SOL helped or hindered your interpersonal relationships?
 - 3) How much insight do you feel you have into your self?
 - 4) What, if anything, do you think you either have to do, or give up doing, in order to become a better self organised learner?
 - 5) How strongly do you believe that you can transform yourself through SOL?
 - 6) As you progress as a SOL learner, what impact will it have on your day to day living?
 - 7) Has your SOL made you more or less sensitive to the feelings of others?
 - 8) Has the study of SOL changed any of your daily habits or routines?
 - 9) Do you think SOL has some form of higher morality? In what way could it change the world?
 - 10) Do you think SOL managers can make a difference to the fate of the world? Do they have a duty to do so?
 - 11) Zen only
 - 12) What do you see as Sheila/Laurie's role in your own progress in SOL? Do you think he is necessary to your progress? Do you think he/ she feels responsible for your progress?
 - 13) Zen only
 - 14) Zen only
 - 15) Do you converse with Sheila/Laurie as an equal, or do you regard them as ahead of you?
 - 16) Now that you have some idea of what our conversation is about is there anything I should have asked you but didn't?

8.5 Theoretical Considerations

I planned a content analysis of the conversations both for any explicit theoretical assumptions offered, and for implicit or tacit concepts which seemed to underpin any examples of practical knowing. In this way some theoretical considerations would be included, as it is in fact impossible to answer questions without disclosing assumptions in the way the question is interpreted. The theory generated would however be grounded in participants' experience.

Grounded theory is now widely cited as a framework for the analysis of qualitative data, Bryman and Burgess (1994). As they point out however, data analysis is a much less discrete process in qualitative research since the derivation of emergent concepts during data collection can affect the ongoing process and make data collection and analysis more of a continuous process than in quantitative research. While grounded theory has alerted researchers to the desirability of extracting concepts and theory out of the data collected this mainly affects their coding of the data. It is quite rare, as Bryman and Burgess observe, to find evidence in the interplay of data collection and analysis that anything other than local theory is being developed. By a process of cutting and pasting the data is used to illustrate conceptual points, but what is often not clear is how issues or ideas emerge in order to end up in the finished written product.

In this inquiry the main themes were part of the agenda, and so I was not expecting to derive new theory from the LC's. That agenda arose from consultation with John and my interpretation of themes important in Zen. I was

hoping for description or elaboration of these themes as the conversations progressed. However given that the Zen participants had been exposed for years to the notion that intellectual analysis of Zen would get them nowhere I was not expecting anyone to offer any obvious theoretical analysis. I was interested in, but not really expecting, to see whether any participant would feel that any aspect of their experience was generalisable.

In this inquiry I was not starting from scratch trying to uncover the elements of their total life experience important to participants. Instead I was inquiring about a specific kind of experience (both Zen and SOL) which each had different perspectives. As I said at the outset I was interested primarily in why it was so difficult to integrate Zen experience intuitively. I did not expect that SOL participants would experience the **same** kind of difficulties, i.e. I knew that the SOL reflective process was more clearly articulated within the SOL paradigm.

By treating the questions as koans, in which participants had to bring up whatever they thought relevant in answer to the questions, I tried to minimise any further theoretical influence of mine by largely confining my part in the conversations to clarifying my understanding of what was said. My intention was to part analyse the interviews and go back to participants with a more critical and challenging attitude. As I have already reported this programme, like much else in this inquiry became modified in response to circumstances.

Chapter 9 – Methodology of the Learning Conversations

This chapter describes the overall methodology of the Learning Conversations with Zen and SOL students, including sample selection and venues, analysis of data, and validation of data.

9.1 Introduction

I spent a minimum of several hours with participants, although only the LC was recorded and transcribed. Before the LC participants talked of their interests and concerns and wanted to know why I was making the inquiry. My explanations varied but included the information that I was interested in how what people learned in Zen or SOL had affected their lives. The reaction of most participants to this was very similar. All thought that they had been affected but might find it difficult to pin down why they felt that way.

9.2.1 The Sample Selection - Zen

The Zen Foundation, which was established in 1984, had regular meetings, usually attended by 30-40 people. However due to the fact that before his retirement due to ill health, John also worked full time, he worked one to one with a smaller number of people. These 'hard core' members (who numbered around 20) and of whom I was one, attended meetings and weekend workshops and also occasionally met John on a one to one basis.

I was not sure at the outset how many conversations I would need. However after six Zen LC's had been completed I found that I had generated a great deal of data in terms of items of experiential knowledge, but that by and large participants were not raising

any major new issues. I decided that in view of the fact that this number was approximately one third of the Zen population that this represented a reasonable cross section of views. Participants were chosen partly in consultation with John to reflect differing personality types and length of study. There was also a practical difficulty in seeing some respondents, and one cancelled our appointment three times before I finally caught up with him. The following is a brief pen portrait of each participant.

S who lived in London, had known John for longer than anyone else, indeed she was the only person in the study to have known John prior to his enlightenment. In her seventies, she was also the oldest person taking part. Formerly a radiotherapist, on her retirement she trained as an Eriksonian hypnotherapist. Since its inception in 1984 she was Secretary of the Zen Foundation. She was very interested in the research and asked whether she could see the entire thesis (which I sent to her). I spent an afternoon with her at her home during the first Learning Conversation and saw her many times thereafter. As I shall recount in Chapter 13 she died in 1998 still struggling with her sense of self.

B is in his late thirties and is an electrical engineer who designs specialist sound systems. His work requires him to travel around the world a great deal, thus making it difficult to pin him down. He met John when in his twenties, and had been seeing him regularly for 15 years. I spent several hours with him at his place of work during the original LC. Our conversation took place in a small boardroom over coffee and biscuits.

T who is in his late fifties had only known John for 4 years. He took early retirement from his position as Creative Director of a large London advertising agency in order to devote himself to writing. He has regular articles in the Guardian and has had a novel published since his retirement. I spent a day with him on the first LC.

C is in her mid fifties and is an artist with an MA in ceramics. Her mother was one of the first members of the Zen Foundation, and introduced **C** to John. She was a close friend of mine when we both lived in Cardiff and instrumental in putting me in touch with John, some 14 years ago. She has three grown up children all of whom knew John and are interested in Zen. Her drawings of a modern interpretation of the Zen Bulls are used as an example of a particular kind of Zen experience in Chapter 13. I spent a weekend with her on the occasion of the LC.

M is in his forties and met John while practising his profession of hairdresser. He has known John since 1983 and he and his wife were regular attendees at John's meetings. I spent a few hours with him at his home for the first LC.

Y was the youngest of the Zen participants and met John when he was very young (14) as his parents went to Zen Foundation meetings. He was 30 at the time of our conversation. He has had many different jobs and is currently training in massage. After meeting John he pursued his interest in Zen by living in Japan for a few years. I knew him least well of all the participants and spent a few hours with him. After our LC he asked me to replay the tape so that he could review what he said. He listened carefully but did not amend any of his answers. After listening he commented that he thought his answers did not really communicate his experience but if he had another go this would

not improve things. He wished me luck in trying to express anything about Zen and clearly thought I needed it.

9.2.2 The Sample Selection of Self Organised Learning

The Centre for the Study of Human Learning contained a number of postgraduates carrying out a variety of research projects, all using conversational methodologies. At the time of commencing this phase of the research the number of current active postgraduates was 18, although this number reduced to 15 during that year. I again selected a mixture of respondents to reflect different personality types, various project types, and those who were at different stages in the completion of their own projects. While SOL respondents were very different from one another in their interests and type of project there was more homogeneity in their understanding of the learning process.

D, is in his forties and trained as a physicist. He is currently a Master Alexander teacher living in Seattle. Much Alexander bodywork is on a one to one basis. **D** was interested in doing group work and getting participants to work in pairs using each other as mirrors. His own research was on the psycho / physics of the mind body interaction, and how Learning Conversations and SOL could further his skills as an Alexander practitioner. We spent a couple of hours together at Brunel for the LC.

L is a manager in the personnel and training department of the London Fire service. He is in his late thirties and his own research project is in aspects of training and selection. He is particularly concerned with transferring assessment centres into learning centres promoting Self Organised Learning on the job. I spent three hours with him at his place of work during our LC.

R is in his early sixties and now retired from a career in sports training. His own research project was in what makes Olympic athletes special, and participants in his research were women who were part of an Olympic medallist rowing team. He used reflective Socio-Grid and Socio-Net Learning Conversations with each member of the team and with the team as a whole to elicit their understanding of expert performance and how they felt they could excel as a team. He invited me to his home and we spent 2-3 hours together after which I had supper with him and his wife.

C was in his forties and a Chief Inspector in the London Metropolitan Police service. His own research was in police training. He used the SOL tool of Personal Learning Contracts (PLCs) to encourage an active transformation of attitudes and skills in Police training. The PLC's gave greater emphasis to genuine creative learning, rather than receptive, non-adaptive instruction. I spent least time with him, around an hour, at his place of work.

R2 was in his forties and like **D** commuted from the U.S. in order to carry out his research as CSHL. He was interested in decision making and concerned at the relatively short term decisions made in most social institutions. His own research therefore explored the parameters of decision making with a view to raising awareness of the processes involved and how personal judgements could become more self organised. I met him at Brunel and we spent an afternoon together.

The sample for Phase I therefore consisted of 11 learners and these comprised of approximately one third of the available pool of respondents. This is a fairly small sample but it should be remembered that both total populations were what might be regarded as small elite groups. Since the purpose of the interviews was to raise issues rather than to make quantitative comparisons, I did not feel that greater numbers would have added significantly to that process.

9.3 Content Analysis

The initial interviews with all learners were transcribed, and are shown in the Appendix. Learning Conversation methodology theory and practice insists that the **analysis categories must emerge from the data**. However the basic structuring of the data had already taken place by the researcher setting the initial agenda, thus setting the larger themes. But how these themes gave rise to sub themes or categories is somewhat harder to explain.

Marshall (1981) expresses this as a personal process when she points out,

"It's my assumption that there is some sort of order in the data that can emerge. My job as a researcher is to be an open and receptive medium through which this order comes out. I'm trying to understand what's there, and to represent what's there in all its complexity and richness."

Immersion in the data was therefore an important and somewhat time consuming first step. At first I tried to be systematic, pulling out constructs, trying to cluster them and create categories. I felt however that I was becoming bogged down and was not seeing

the wood for the trees. The final interpretative process was much more intuitive than that.

I see now that I was highly resistant to analysing by reducing the data to chunks in a formal way. I knew that I was interested in intuitive knowing, in myself as well as in others. I felt that a deeper level analysis was part of an intuitive process, and that being systematic, by numbering and labelling, would actually get in the way.

I allowed categories to emerge through reflective, deep level analysis of the data. By using the initial categorisation set by the questions themselves and using myself as primary referent, I pulled out those issues important to me. I then used this as a basic framework which became added to and deepened as I transcribed the interviews. There was a further level process of analysis when I went through the data trying to pull out examples of where John's interviews had uncovered issues which mine had not. I was aware that such a personal process might well lead to a highly idiosyncratic reading of the data so I thought that referral of the data to others to check on this analysis would be an important part of my methodology.

I shared my analysis both with the initial participants who were free to challenge my interpretation and my choice of issues, Zen and SOL experts, and with peer 'experts'. Participants could check on the accuracy of their part of the conversations and could also judge the face validity of my interpretation. Thus my subjective analysis was open to alternative explanation at several phases of the project.

In the presentation of data I first tried to frame my analysis according to answers to a particular question, but this proved difficult to achieve. Some questions particularly the early ones, generated several sub themes or issues in response to the particular question. Later questions often elicited answers similar to those which had already been raised at earlier questions.

This was because the interview was designed to approach the central issues in a variety of ways. This means that although answers to questions can be grouped together so as to get a feel for the sub issues raised, these issues may be raised in relation to several questions. In order to make that clear in the text, quotes are identified by whether the participant is Zen or SOL and under which question his/her answer can be found in Appendix B.

9.4 John's Conversations

When John offered to carry out similar conversations with Zen participants I had initially thought that these would provide a different perspective on the same questions. Knowing my own difficulties when having conversations with John I was expecting conversations with him to be different because participants would see him differently, even if he was following the same agenda.

As already noted I had intended to carry out repeat conversations with participants after preliminary analysis of the data. That I changed this methodology arose from several reasons of which the foremost influence arose when comparing my conversations with that of John's.

Due to the fact of John's ill health and untimely death he only carried out 3 conversations with the same respondents, using the same discussion guide. His conversations are interesting because they suggest that responses are strongly context dependent. It could be argued that since my conversations came first and respondents reflected on the issues raised, they had an opportunity to amend their answers the second time round. A more likely explanation seems the way the conversations were conducted. I had used a reflective approach, confining any further questioning to simply clarifying what was meant. I did not, at any time during the conversation, state either whether I believed the answers or thought them inappropriate.

As I have already stated, it had been my intention to partly analyse the data and then go back to respondents to discuss the issues which had been raised. My reasons for abandoning this are outlined in chapter 2. Not only did I think that a conversational method would not uncover some of the issues which concerned me, but I also did not feel that a further conversation with me would be as fruitful as I hoped was because of the results of John's interactions.

Unlike me John had used a more challenging stance and often dismissed answers or offered his interpretation of respondents understanding of certain issues for their comment. In effect I came to realise **he had pre-empted what I regarded as the next stage in my inquiry.** I had planned to analyse answers and dig for deeper interpretation. John had done this on the spot. Of course this fact did not mean that I could not go ahead as planned. But it did give me pause. Although John had only carried out three conversations, they showed the type of response that further challenges

evoked. Furthermore they also incorporated a dimension which I thought I could not emulate.

The challenge that he represented may partly have stemmed from the confrontational stance he adopted at times but also very much from the **authority** he commanded as a Zen 'expert'. **I could certainly be more challenging, but there were leaps that John took in his conversations that I knew would never have occurred to me.** For example in the interchange between John and T when the latter was trying to give examples of how he felt his quality of life had improved because of Zen, John suddenly said;

And do you see that you are ducking the issue of the darkness at the core of your being?

I knew that nothing in the previous part of the conversation would have led me to make this sort of conversational leap.

This realisation that it was not just a matter of analysing data and going more deeply into the issues generated was the major influence in my decision not to carry out repeat interviews with participants. I felt that it was in interactions with John that the real examples of Zen play lay. If I wanted to show the value of interactions with him I had other data from a range of situations on which to draw. And this was the major influence which decided me to demonstrate more of John's interactions and less of mine. However if I could not emulate John, **I could bring a more critical stance to bear on what I had done by discussing my analysis of the LC's, both with participants and with a number 'experts'.**

These discussions of the issues raised by the analysis made clearer how the parameters of the Zen and SOL perspectives varied, and thus one of my initial aims was achieved. However, while I felt that treating the issues in this way helped to clarify my mind, the analysis did not convey the immediacy and importance that many respondents gave to their experience. Since my primary objective was to convey the value of the Zen experience to those who participated, and since I had been interacting with Zen participants for many years I decided that providing ethnographic accounts in Chapter 13 of the intensity of other facets of the Zen experience, had greater value than any further research initiative of mine.

9.5 Issues of Validity

In what is often called new paradigm research, questions arise in relation to the validity of the interpretation of the data. Does this interpretation seem 'truthful' to the people taking part in the research? Is there some internal consistency which can be induced from their answers? Is this interpretation what some other researcher would make of the same data? These issues have been discussed earlier in chapter 2, in terms of the validity of the research, and in Conclusions in terms of validating the final outcome. In dealing with validity in the Learning Conversations, I consulted with others in three ways, by referral back to the participants, referral back to Zen and SOL 'experts', and referral to interested peer 'experts'.

9.6 Referral Back to the Participants

Respondent validation is generally used to establish whether those participants in the research process recognise the validity of the account presented by the researcher. It is

also sometimes the beginning of a further stage of research, as after seeing how their own contribution fits into a larger picture, respondents may choose to expand or even amend their original account. But as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) point out this process has certain limitations. They cite two interesting examples of these limitations. In the first case, that of the decision rules used by ear, nose and throat specialists, the researcher had expected the specialists to respond to his account in a critical manner, similar to that of an academic colleague asked to criticise the draft of a paper. To the researcher's surprise the response displayed a detached superficial interest, but no critical interest.

Another example cited was that of a research project within a school. In this piece of research the school teachers displayed a greater interest in the report but tended to respond-

“.... In terms of what it had to say about them or their subject. There was little or no discussion of the general issues I was trying to raise or the overall arguments of the chapter.”

Feedback then can be problematic. However it was important that participants were allowed the opportunity to see my account, and so all participants were sent a copy of Chapter Ten and invited to comment on any aspect they wished. Their comments are reported on in section 10.13.

9.7 Referral to Zen / SOL ‘experts’

Results were discussed with Laurie Thomas, from a SOL perspective and with John. These conversations were partly comments on the analysis, but also on why the ‘experts’ thought that these differences and similarities had arisen. These conversations are reported on in section 11.2-11.3. Because the thesis changed substantially with the inclusion of the ethnographic data a further conversation with Laurie took place in 1998 when the thesis was nearing completion and this too is reported on in section 11.3.

9.8 Referral to Peer ‘Experts’

The analysis chapter was also sent to three ‘experts’ who were either interested in issues of learning, interested in concepts of self, in Zen or some or all of the above. I then met and had extended conversations with all three. These conversations which ranged over both practical and theoretical issues are reported on fully in section 11.4. Since it could be argued that I had analysed the data from a subjective viewpoint, I wished to be sure that others interested in the subject, who were used to providing critical input, had an opportunity to comment on the data.

9.9 Generation of Theory

Both participant groups were students who had been exposed to particular theoretical positions. There were some important theoretical differences between Zen and SOL, particularly as they related to the nature of the self, and the role of thought. I was interested in whether these emerged in the Learning Conversations. In particular the issues I saw as likely to provide differences in attitude were firstly the central tenet of all

Buddhism, including Zen, that the self is illusory, and secondly how one goes about changing if one is insecure about the contribution of thought and reflection.

In fact, when I became fully immersed in the data at first I felt that few of the theoretical differences I had hoped for were reflected in the answers that the Zen participants gave to me. However by comparing my interviews with those of John it was possible to demonstrate that either they were considerably more aware of the issues when talking to him. This came partly from his challenges but also, I feel that Zen participants were more concerned to present evidence to him of their understanding.

So I had started this inquiry from the position that I felt that there were layers of intuitive knowing which I and other Zen participants had failed to uncover in themselves. My initial theoretical interest was therefore to try to understand what effect, if any, trying to act from a different theoretical perspective had on practical knowing.

9.10 Summary of Validation of the Learning Conversations

As Reason (1981) states there are a number of ways of managing validity issues in new paradigm research. Some of these include:

- ◆ High quality awareness - in this case I combined practical research expertise with a passionate commitment to the subject under inquiry. I also included regular checks on my own thinking in the form of Zen Mondo.
- ◆ Checking against unconscious collusion - interpretation of the data was checked with the Zen / SOL experts. In addition I had regular meetings

with John which challenged my understanding of Zen, and with my tutor Sheila who challenged my understanding of SOL.

- ◆ Feedback loops - The interpretation of the data was reviewed by participants.
- ◆ Challenge was provided by John to some of the Zen respondents.
- ◆ Constructive criticism by 'peer experts'.
- ◆ Multiple Perspectives - Issues were raised in a variety of different ways using Learning Conversations, transcripts of meetings and workshops and analysis of drawings, fiction and dreams.
- ◆ Multiple Viewpoints – Triangulation was provided inviting criticism from those with very different perspectives. All these were reflective in nature but provided qualitative differences in perspective. Examples of these were

Participants – Did the analysis of Learning Conversations provide a truthful and plausible account of the conversations?

Experts – Were the core elements of Zen and SOL addressed?

Tutor – Were the requirements of the inquiry overall included in a format suitable for a scientific thesis?

Peer Experts – As outsiders to the inquiry interested in the subject matter, did the analysis cover all of those aspects they thought should be included in an appropriate manner?

Myself – Did the thesis reveal my own critical subjectivity?

Chapter 10 - Analysis of the Learning Conversations

*If you're compelled to find some cause
that causes everything you do -
why then that something needs a name.
You call it "me". I call it "you"*

Marvin Minsky

This analysis of the Learning Conversation I have left largely intact, as they were written before my final revisions. In fact in rereading them some parts strike me differently now, and I have inserted text boxes to demonstrate some of these points. It would detract from the overall clarity however if I had attempted to do this at every point, so those I have chosen are those most important to me.

The overall conversation was designed to assess what impact Zen / SOL has had on participants, in terms of personal transformation, attitudes to 'self', interpersonal relationships, and the teacher / student relationship.

10.1 Impact of Zen or SOL on Participants' Lives

The initial question - *'what impact has Zen / SOL had on your life?',* I really regarded as a warm up. Important issues might emerge but I did not intend to dig here, as I was trusting that my tactic of asking the same question in different ways would itself deepen the levels of meaning. Most Zen respondents felt that meeting John had a huge impact on their lives. Words such as *"shattering"* and *"absolutely vast"* were used to describe what was undoubtedly an important experience for these respondents.

The main impact for many participants seemed to be that it caused them to question previously held attitudes. Zen learners in particular were often vaguer about how they thought they had done this.

B - "it occurred in spite of trying to understand it at the time" (Q 1 Zen)

M - "I think its helped but it's difficult to know how I would have been otherwise" (Q3 Zen)

John, of course, did not allow the luxury of not knowing, or even of not judging. In a long series of exchanges he pushed S hard on the **value** of Zen to her. S was exceedingly reluctant to answer in terms of good and bad. Summing up part of the conversation John said

J – "Well, you seem to set a value by Zen. You seem pleased that you are more aware of things now than you were. There is a clear indication of value and benefit, and yet when I ask you, is it good or bad, you seem unable to answer. Why is that?"

As the exchanges make clear S is very aware that it is the ego which judges and chooses, and is reluctant to say that she sees this as a benefit. Near the culmination of this exchange an impasse is revealed:

J – "How are you going to resolve the conflict you have raised between the ego senses of value, which you attribute to it, and the fact that you know nothing short of Zen is worth a fig?"

S – "Well I think they are irreconcilable."

J – "But you seem to have reconciled them except when the hook is dug under your chin."

S - "The fact that I go on living in much the same way, you mean?"

J – "You say that it's good and you value it, and you do, and yet you know theoretically that it's not worth a fig."

.All Zen participants have this difficulty that if they say they value something - who is the valuer? And if it is the ego mind - what is that worth? Undercurrents of this same duality emerge at different points in the conversations.

The SOL sample also felt that SOL had had quite an impact on them, and also used words such as *massive*, or *a very big impact*. This is harder to understand as initially SOL respondents tended to talk about recognising when they met SOL that they had implicitly been working towards being Self Organised Learners. What they seemed to value was coming across a system that made sense to them, and in that way, it also had a large impact.

When speaking of the effects of SOL on their lives however some SOL learners took a more pragmatic approach. These seemed to feel that they had been moving in the direction of a more self organised approach and that finding SOL was **making explicit much that had been implicit in their thinking**. What they seemed to value was finding a coherent model into which they could integrate their own beliefs and attitudes. The examples below show their feeling of recognising something which they felt they already partly understood but lacked a framework to utilise effectively.

R - "SOL integrated my personal knowledge with objective knowledge" (Q1 SOL)

C - "It influenced the way I progressed my ideas and developed coping models" (Q 1 SOL)

R2 - "I've been a self organised learner all along but never sorted out what it meant in my life, for example in personal relationships" (Q 1 SOL)

D - "If someone else can make explicit for you in some way something you have been doing implicitly it gives a deeper understanding and also provides a way of doing it more precisely". (Q1 SOL)

The only exception to this view of SOL was the SOL learner who distinguished between '*perspectives of knowledge*' and '*transcendental purpose*'. This categorisation was used by L to describe what he felt were the limitations of SOL for him. L acknowledged the value of having perspectives with which to evaluate knowledge, but felt that this did not represent a complete philosophy for living life.

L - "OK there's more reflection - being conscious of it is a - lets say - superior state - a better position to be in. I'm better at achieving what I want to achieve - it doesn't actually explain to me why I want to achieve it" (Q 1 SOL)

The Zen sample, as will become evident at later questions are actually aiming at what might be called transcendental purpose. Whether they called it "*achieving Zen*" or "*enlightenment*", their stated overall aim was for some radical form of self transformation. While few seemed to have confidence that they would achieve this they nonetheless felt that Zen as a philosophy was intrinsically about what L called '*transcendental purpose*'. As noted above the SOL sample did not appear to view SOL in that way. **This is not to say that in theory SOL cannot or does not have some transcendental capacity. It is merely to note that most of the SOL sample appeared to have a more pragmatic and instrumental view of the SOL system at the early part of the conversation.**

10.2 Self Identification

Since a central tenet of Zen is that the concept of a continuous self is illusory, I was particularly interested in uncovering evidence whether this was a problem unique to Zen participants. Something which initially surprised me during my conversations was that most Zen respondents answered the first three questions as though the **nature of the self** was not in question. In other words no-one queried words such as "I" or "you" at this stage. It was not until question four, which is about insight into the self that doubts appeared to surface. There was therefore no early evidence that anyone was operating to anything other than some version of 'ego theory'. This issue will be addressed later when attitudes to 'self' were explored in greater detail. **The point being made here is that unless I probed directly about attitudes to 'self' everyone, including the Zen learners answered the questions as though 'I' were a unified whole.**

The exception to this were the three interviews conducted by John, where those previously interviewed by me, when challenged by him, often gave very different answers. This suggests that their answers are context dependent. When in the presence of John, they are keyed up and try to answer in ways that they think shows their understanding of his teaching. However when in 'ordinary' conversation with me they operate to the conventions of normal conversation, i.e. that the word 'self' is synonymous with the word 'person'.

As C comments at Q3

“I’m risking being, and standing my own ground. It’s (Zen) helping but it doesn’t necessarily make it more comfortable. I’m letting myself out - not trying to keep my self under wraps.”

Myra - "What is this self you are letting out?"

C - "It's how I really am not how I would like to be" (Q3 Zen)

C's comment implies that she conceptualises herself as having a central 'I' in charge of things. This is hardly surprising. As Blackmore (1994) and Dennett (1983) observe, even those who spend a great deal of time studying notions of self in academic life and express doubts about the continuity of the self as it is normally understood, in practice continue to act in everyday life as though an 'I' exists in some unified way as an intentional being or agent. It should perhaps have been expected that Zen learners also responded in that fashion, unless actively probed on the subject (or facing John). In fact the change from a self referencing viewpoint to another perspective which is not self dependent in the way this is usually perceived, is enlightenment. I had **not** been expecting to converse with anyone who was aware at all times of these issues, but in the case mentioned above, when I probed on the nature of the self, I would have expected some answer suggesting that this issue was more problematical.

My comments suggest that I was expecting more evidence that Zen participants were aware of some sort of separation of their ego self and their 'true' self, and that this would show up as some sort of sensitivity to the word 'I'. But as John's conversations make clear it is over identification with the ego that is the problem, not separation. I was carrying around concepts relating to this because I was researching the self, and thus was very aware of the distinction between ego mind and the self. I am now not at all surprised at the way the Zen participants answered.

Such conversational behaviour does of course reinforce concepts of self. It is now conventional wisdom that sexist language reinforces sexual prejudice and many people now make determined efforts to try to eradicate some at least of the more obvious examples of sexist language from their vocabulary. For example few committees now have a Chairman, preferring Chair or the more clumsy Chairperson.

It is more difficult when it comes to selfhood. After all, if some acquaintance asks "*how are you*" one tends not to say "*what do you mean by 'you'*"? This linguistic convention at first appears to obscure differences between the Zen / SOL learners. However it is clear when my interviews are compared with those of John that Zen learners are considerably more aware of the problems inherent in concepts of self than their answers to me would indicate.

Myra - "Even if you haven't achieved Zen what impact has it had on your life?"

T - "Quite a shattering impact. I've been belonging to one or another philosophical association for over 20 years. Zen put that firmly in its place. You find you'd made quite an accommodation with it, it's very comfortable. Zen was a sudden sharp shock - I'm actually going nowhere". (Q1 Zen)

John - "Even if you haven't achieved Zen what impact has it had on your life?"

T- "A dissatisfaction with my life without Zen, for sure. A degree of frustration that I haven't achieved it. A continuous looking at my life, possibly from a negative point of view, but I'm checking, and I'm aware that my ego is checking my ego (my emphasis)- but on the other hand, I often

have days, and moments in days, of great clarity. I feel my heart warming, and relationships within my family are good and improved".

John - "Most of those seem essentially ego-based, would you agree?"

T - "Yes I would, definitely. I would say that until I had achieved Zen, everything in my life is ego-based and that's the frustrating thing about it"

John - "So essentially it's new lamps for old in that the impact it has had on your life is very much within the domain of ego, which as it were governed your life before you came. And what one would call out of control behaviour, moving on round the dial to warmer hearted behaviour is to be welcomed." (Q1 John)

As T's responses make clear when talking to the master he is very aware of the self or ego problem. In talking with me however that issue did not arise in the same way. John however rarely allowed references to self to pass unremarked and T was probably unconsciously aware of this and tried to pre-empt the problem. However in Zen, neither the negative approach of stating that you are aware of the 'ego' problem but you are working on it, nor the positive approach of stating that although you haven't got there you are becoming better at improving social skills and feeling more comfortable with yourself, is **not** what it's about.

The SOL sample can be pleased when they improve their social skills, but as John was pointing out, a 'self' satisfied approach (e.g. my relationships have improved through my practice of self observation) simply promotes further the fixed concepts of self that inhibit Zen realisation. So the **existential doubt** which surfaces here and there in Zen interviews and is raised by John at every opportunity, is a necessary part of the Zen

learning experience. All of the Zen sample feel this existential doubt to a greater or lesser degree, but keeping it continuously in mind is agreed to be very difficult.

10.3 Reliance on Systems

It was at Q 5 which asked what participants thought they should do, or not do, to achieve their desires that the issue of method came up. **Being more aware than previously was a quality which was greatly valued by both samples.** I had expected a difference between the Zen and SOL learners here. SOL has an extended methodology concerned with the ability to analyse one's problems and become more purposeful. After some time knowing John I thought that no Zen participant would share this belief. Many Zen respondents felt that Zen had made them more aware of their own behaviour, but had given them **no guidance** as to how to change it in the direction they wanted. From time to time the Zen master might have told an individual to do specific things. The only example (at Q 5) was S who said that John had initially told her she should read about Zen everyday, and then threw her later by saying that she read too much. She interpreted this as John feeling that she had come to rely too much on books. This contrasts with the SOL learners who value the frameworks and methodologies of SOL as providing some guidance as to how to achieve their aims. **SOL is therefore interpreted by its users as essentially epistemological and Zen as ontological.**

SOL epistemology assumes that the same techniques which are used to acquire personal learning, social skills and aid self development, can be further refined. The shift in emphasis from content to process allows the possibility of transforming the self to levels

undreamt of at the beginning of the process. Zen, on the other hand, views the change of emphasis from content to process, which happens with both systems, as another stage of learning which also has to be discarded.

As already noted the SOL sample, in responding to question 1 "*what impact has SOL had on your Life?*" tended to answer in a much more positive fashion by giving examples of particular benefits which they felt that SOL had conferred. While a few initially answered this question in terms of the value of the SOL paradigm to their own research, taking their answers globally, they recognised and valued that it had also caused them to question their own personal relationships (question 3) and how they were developing as people. They see the acquisition of personal skill in listening and responding appropriately to others as an important ingredient of a 'learning conversation' approach that can be applied to everything in their lives. Because they saw this approach as essentially skills based they were thus able to discern progress in themselves (although there were individual differences in levels of commitment to self development.)

The Zen sample are however in a rather more uncomfortable position. Naturally they wish to think of themselves as changing and making some progress over how they were, otherwise what would be the point? But as they have, as an ultimate aim, dropping the ego -self, they also have to drop all thoughts of things having to have a point, since this would be just another mental strategy or system.

The SOL learner is concerned to understand his/her aims and purposes and answer the question "how can I best accomplish this" by **doing**. For the Zen learner the question

often appears to be "how do I **stop doing** what I'm doing without replacing it with another mental construction?" This dilemma was perhaps most clearly expressed by T when he said,

T -" At my level, that of a novice, it is giving up, becoming aware of all the old bad habits one has indulged in and even fed. It's a silent observation of these things until they loosen their grip. Not like doing - like letting old clothes fall from me." (Q5 Zen)

However practising silent observation is not as easy as it might appear and is easier to say than to do. Thinking that you are aware of the need for self awareness without judgement, may be a prerequisite of resolving the paradox of Zen, but intellectual awareness does not necessarily lead to resolution (see also 5.11 The Difference Between Theory and Practice). This awareness of the dilemma was expressed at different times by the Zen sample, and seems to be a stage in which **long term Zen learners recognise that everything they do, every new strategy they develop is also a further and more subtle manifestation of ego.** And ego, as they are told over and over by John, is something to be dropped.

This leads many Zen learners to a defensive position when, especially in conversation with the master, they realise that they are just coming up with different versions of T's gradualist strategy described above. This roughly paraphrased states that by self observation, one will become more and more aware of one's bad habits and by identifying them, be able to stop doing them. **This position does in fact accord with that of the SOL learners.** They are practising Self Organised Learning by examination of their own construct system and by interaction with others in learning conversations.

As they practice this approach they progressively refine their construing system and allow old habits to fall away. New habits take their place, but as the Zen sample know to their cost, that is true of them also. However **not doing** is not the point of Zen either. Because they reach an impasse which they have failed to overcome, by pushing them to give an explanation of how they attribute meaning in such a situation, Zen learners resort to describing a strategy for progress. **This strategy seems to consist largely of becoming more self aware and as such is similar to that described by the SOL sample.**

They too are practising a strategy of gradually acquiring expertise and increased self awareness. They are exploring their internal world with increasing rigour. The only practical discernible difference between the two samples is **their emotional response to this situation.** Since SOL learners have no concept of having to drop all mental constructions in order to proceed they can be relatively satisfied that they are making progress. Zen learners, on the other hand come up against the impasse that they have to give up thinking in terms of systems and do not see any way to proceed. They do not see a method of 'dropping the ego' and therefore they see themselves as failures. (It should perhaps be mentioned here for the sake of clarity that most of the Zen learners did not mention humility in this context. They are past the stage where they feel that an obvious show of humility demonstrates a lack of ego.)

10.4 Reliance on Thought

Although I had expected the two samples to show a different perspective on the use of method, I had not expected such a sharp distinction when it came to the role of thought

itself. The central issue of the role of thought arose in contrasting these two answers to question 2, "*Has it (Zen / SOL) affected how or what you learn*". Here, a very fundamental difference in attitude appears to surface. Contrast the following two answers given to me at question 2.

T - "My learning would improve immensely if there's nothing to get in the way, no judging, commenting etc." (Zen Q2)

R2 - "The monitoring, re-construing and spiralling on, made me realise how I structure meaning - gave me a meta-perspective" (SOL Q2)

In the first example the Zen learner apparently wishes to drop the very mechanism valued by the SOL learner in example 2. But are these two learners talking about the same thing? In SOL, as in Zen, learners are encouraged to observe the often random commentary that accompanies our experience of perception, a sort of mental chatter. In SOL identifying this random commentary, often called 'being run by robots', is something which the SOL learner is encouraged to become aware of and drop, for a more purposive mental activity.

SOL learners are encouraged to monitor and examine their construct system. They are encouraged not only to re-construct, i.e. **change the content** of their construct system, but also to look at the **total process** within which their construct system is embedded. However the aim of monitoring their mental processes is in order to substitute a more purposive process in which they are able to influence their thinking (and behaviour) in a desired direction.

Of course thinking purposefully about how one structures meaning, and finding that helpful (the example given by R2) does not mean that interludes of mental chatter still do not occur. However the strategy pursued by SOL learners is that when they realise they are being 'run' by this they attempt to think more purposefully about their behaviour by identifying their aims and attitudes. They use the **MARS** formula which is an important reflective facet of SOL; monitor, analyse, reconstruct, reflect and review, and spiral forward in a continuous re-evaluation process which SOL learners value greatly.

However in his book *Exploration into Insight* (1979) Krishnamurti makes the point that what we call chatter is simply the activity of the mind when we are not aware of any purpose. However more purposive mental activity, is, in his view, equally suspect.

“I am just asking you why does the mind chatter? Is it a habit or does the mind need to be occupied with something? And when it is not occupied with what it thinks it should be occupied, we call it chattering. Why should not the occupation be chattering also?”

So the SOL learner distinguishes between helpful and unhelpful thinking. Such a step is rational.

The Zen learners however are told that there is a further step in which they not only have to alter their thinking but that they have to distrust the very process of thinking. They are told that there is **really nothing to learn** and are in the position that every time they observe their mental processes they are told to drop all judgement and that this process will, if done with sufficient awareness, trigger self-realisation. It is this fundamental paradox, which they do not understand and have no idea how to achieve,

which creates the tension which John utilises at every opportunity. The Zen learner has been exposed to the notion that all purposeful mental activity is as suspect as the more random mental chatter. As B says,

B - "It (Zen) - left me with a suspicion and a disrespect for learning based on methodology - if you do this and this - then that will happen. Zen learning is frenetic activity followed by a sudden shift in gravity." (Q 2 Zen)

I now feel that many Zen participants display a fairly good intellectual understanding of self realisation, although they are reluctant to express it in intellectual terms. B in particular gave short and often flippant answers to many of the questions, but he takes them very seriously. I once heard him describe at a meeting how whenever he was confronted with letting go or surrendering, he could see himself erecting a sort of mental envelope around it. The ability to see that clearly is 'standing at the wall'. The trick isn't how to get over the wall, it is to see that there isn't any wall, that too is a mental construction.

It is hardly surprising that the Zen learners were less ready to commit themselves to examples of what they learned. The following example of facing John asking the question gives some idea of what they are up against.

John - "So how has Zen affected how or what you learn?"

T - "It has allowed me to see the coarser snares of ego and, on good days, the more subtle ones. There are indeed very rare moments when the seer is seen and therefore the learning is learnt, as it were, and there isn't anything more to learn".

John - "So what evidence would you adduce to refute the suggestion that the only thing that is learning is your ego? Learning how to be less snared,

less entrapped, a little freer as it may feel, what evidence is there to show that the learning is reaching any deeper than into your own ego? (Q2 John)

Hardly surprisingly T was unable to come up with such evidence. (John was, of course, not expecting T to supply an answer, what he was asking for was that T show in some way that he recognised the impossibility of supplying evidence of tacit knowing).

10.5 Interpersonal Relationships

I had thought it possible that some of the Zen participants might feel that Zen had not helped their relationships. My own experience had been that once one begins to look at everything in a different way, relationships change, often in unexpected directions. However one aspect on which both samples seemed agreed was that by a process of self observation, encouraged in both Zen and SOL, they were more sensitive to the feelings of others. By having their attention focused on the process of how they responded to situations, all felt that much which had been implicit in their former dealings with others had become more explicit and had thus furthered their understanding of personal relationships.

Many felt that their interpersonal relationships had improved in ways that they valued. In SOL the process of turning from being run in a robotish fashion, to being sensitive to where someone else is coming from was felt to be an important gain in personal growth.

Examples from SOL learners were,

C - "I understand better how people think. I'm much more tolerant and patient with other people's points of view". (SOL Q3)

R2- " I've taken on the notion that everyone has those feelings - I don't record criticism as dislike but as another value system confronting mine. (SOL Q 2)

It was in response to this question that the value of SOL in personal growth appeared at its strongest. While also pointing to the fact that the basis of relationships were clarified, as I had suspected, Zen learners appeared to put that in less positive terms,

M - "You discover the fact that everything is under the microscope - it gives you a sense of what the situation actually is - it can be frustrating at times". (ZEN Q3)

T - "It brought matters into the open. Accommodations with one's partner - it was difficult to proceed with them". (ZEN Q3)

However it seems fair to say that both the Zen and SOL learners felt that the process of re-examining the basis of ones relationships had great value, even where it led to difficulties. Papering over the cracks in relationships or making accommodations are ultimately unsatisfactory, and it is in this area that Zen and SOL learners seem most in agreement that there is a value in being clearer about the basis for personal relationships, even if changes in the relationship causes temporary difficulties.

M, quoted above chose the area of personal relationships as an example of how Zen had affected his learning (Q 2) when being interviewed by John. John queried whether the change had actually been helpful.

John - "So, although you come out with a lot of nice sounding statements about behaving morally, in the general use of that word, towards people, in what way would you say that Zen had actually hindered your interpersonal relationships? Has it, for example, caused you to become so internally

introspective and internally preoccupied that, in fact, people pass through your life, your acquaintanceship, even those close to you everyday, as though they're strangers, not really yet in close contact? Anyway, in what way has it hindered your interpersonal relationships? (Q3 John)

M giving this some thought agreed that

" Zen might be a part of that introspectiveness which is quite interesting actually, that what you're using to try and help you deal with your relationships is, in fact, contributing to their not being right, which is something to think about, definitely." (Q3 John)

A later question "Has your Zen/SOL made you more or less sensitive to the feelings of others?" covered much of the same ground as that of Q3 and raised the same sort of issues. L made a similar point to that made by John to M above when he said

"It varies. Sometimes my purposefulness cuts me off from other people - at other times I'm sensitive to rubbish." (my emphasis) (Q8 SOL)

In relationships, attempts at **control** by pursuing a strategy of some kind in relation to other people inevitably leads to a loss of sensitivity of what is actually happening in the relationship and inhibits the sort of freedom which leads to change. Paradoxically by trying to cultivate some sort of sensitivity either by introspection or by a strategy in relation to others, the end result can be to reduce sensitivity and as M conceded can lead to living in an inner world which has little relevance to what is happening in reality. Y on the other hand, felt that he only understood his own problems but that this process helped him to be more sensitive to other people.

"I'd say I think it's made me more sensitive to my own feelings - consequently to those of other people " (Zen Q 8)

Y here recognises that it is sensitivity to his own feelings and desires that is the driving force in his interpersonal relationships, and he too feels that he has become more introspective. As he said

Y - "It's made me more aware of my relationships to other people and sometimes that has been a hindrance in the conventional sense, in that I've become more reclusive - not necessarily applying Zen in the correct way. But it's certainly made me aware of the superficiality of relationships." (Q3 Zen)

In Zen the motive of altruism is highly suspect. John made clear to Zen learners that the key to understanding without using a method is to look clearly at all they say and do without judgement of any kind. Only when there is increased clarity without judgement can the illusory nature of the ego self be seen.

I had this the wrong way around. Real clarity comes after the judgement is abandoned, it is not a chain of events whereby relative clarity leads to a shift. Only surrender leads to the kind of shift we were all interested in.

The area of personal relationships tends to be fruitful ground for exposing many personal illusions.

T, also given a hard time by John on interpersonal issues stuck firmly to his guns that ultimately this was beneficial.

T - "..... when I first came to you I think there were very, very great problems with personal relationships, which has been shown to me and just the seeing of them has lessened their pull One can still be awfully caught out, and one suspects they're sort of lurking very deeply, but nevertheless my relationship with my wife, and with my children, they have improved, appear to have improved immensely." (Q3 John)

One issue which I expected to be raised by the Zen sample was the **nature of any relationship between two illusory egos**. If both sides are constrained by the hopes and fears of ego mind, then some delusion must enter the relationship.

In John's conversation with M discussing the impact that enlightenment might have on one's life (Q 7) although not using quite this language, the issue of the basis of relationships was discussed.

John - "And perhaps the other way around, you have been used to feeling yourself in one particular way -

M - "Yes, I think it makes you see other people completely differently. That's true, yes. I think you see something much stronger."

John - "Do you expect to be happier?"

M - "Yes, perhaps I'll be sadder as well though."

John - "But the happiness won't be conventional happiness, and the sadness won't be ego type sadness."

M - "No."

John - "So it isn't just that one will go into more extreme versions of the same emotions, but that the very basis of the emotions were changed? Is that what you mean?"

M - "I think so, yes, because you are actually interacting in the real way that you are fully capable of doing, then when you are interacting with someone that you are having a good time with, then you would be experiencing something very good without the hindrances we have with our egos and feelings of keeping up the momentum, and all that sort of thing, wondering where you really stand in a situation. And then also there's the

sad aspect that you will be able to see people more clearly, and feel quite sad about some of the things you see."

10.6 Insights into 'Self'

At question 4 "*How much insight do you feel you have into your 'self'?*" there was a general reluctance among the Zen sample when talking with me, to claim any real insight. The very word 'self' clearly rang alarm bells which had not been triggered by use of the word 'I'.

B - "At an intellectual level it's easy to play around and think this is insightful - I can see retrospectively the changes within me - there's a level of involvement in personality that I'm more aware of before I met J" (ZEN Q 4)

Y - "Well I think I find myself preoccupied with myself most of the time anyway - its made me aware of my preoccupation with myself. But as far as insights go I don't think I really value an insight unless it's like that (snaps fingers). I don't think I value insights of ...well I'm like this or I'm like that and it's nothing more than everyday codswallop really - the usual banter". (Zen Q 4)

The quote below from T illustrates that although he did not touch on the issue in quite this way with me, he was aware that when talking to John he had to demonstrate more caution.

T - "Whenever one uses the word 'oneself' in Zen, one has to be jolly careful about what one's talking about. If you mean the physical and psychological set up which I have inherited and grown, and personality as well, and the sort of mythical ego which has grown with it, then at moments that can be seen with far greater clarity than ever before. But as I said before, one suspects there are deep seated root weeds in one's personal behaviour which still snap up and grab one if one isn't very aware". (Q4 John)

Some recognised that '*until you get there*' any speculation about the nature of the self was by definition wrong, since if they had it right they would "*be there*". Others interpreted the question in the same way as had the SOL learners as meaning **in what way are you better able to understand yourself than you were before.** A theme emerged here which seems worthy of comment. R2 comments that a self reflective approach can lead to an awareness of **process.** As he put it

"I began with a self-reflective approach and saw the pattern of my feelings. I became much more self aware." (Q4 SOL)

L was also concerned with the extent to which a self-reflective approach could lead to self change. As he said

L - "I'm now capable of redefining myself. It's (SOL) content free - in that sense it is helpful - I'm much less confined by predetermined judgements". (SOL Q 4)

L was doubtful that he had an overall strategy for life. He seemed to feel (taking his responses overall) that he had acquired useful skills which were a start to personal development but that there was some other more fundamental difference of **being** which was eluding him. L had attended the seminar referred to later, on Zen and SOL. He was not saying that Zen had an answer for him which SOL did not. He was not particularly interested in furthering his knowledge of Zen. **What he was saying however was that Zen was addressing a different question to that of SOL, since one was primarily epistemological and the other ontological.**

Zen has of course acquired an epistemology, and a great deal has been written about Zen over the centuries. Suzuki (1973) repeatedly makes clear however that Zen is neither a philosophy nor a religion, but a personal experience based upon personal inquiry. It could be argued that Zen has a methodology since *koans* or training questions provide **techniques** to further progress in Zen. The Rinzai school of Zen adopted the use of *koans* in the tenth and eleventh centuries in order to check what they saw as the rampant “quietism” and passivity of the Soto Zen school who adopted meditation as the main vehicle for teaching. *Koans* were at one and the same time a means of combating the quietist methods they detested, and also a means to curb the growth of intellectualism in Zen. Since koans cannot be solved by the rational mind, the aim is to push the learner into a new dimension. True Zen cannot be approached by intellect alone, and it was this inner truth to which L was pointing.

After reflecting upon the issue raised by L, I felt that I had come to a deeper insight about the nature of the two systems. **SOL provides a means without an end and Zen provides an end without a means. SOL is about becoming the person you choose, an internal model which is forever being modified and reconstructed.** Within the SOL paradigm there is apparent freedom to move in any direction, and this freedom is bounded only by the mind and imagination of the person concerned. It is truly a world of becoming, of process, in which there is no end result, and further progress can always be made. It seeks for personal meaning and personal truth. Its **epistemology** provides a blueprint, a place to start, although it recognises that the map is not the territory.

Zen is about realising who you are at a deeper level than that of personality and accepting being the person you have always been. It is not concerned about truth since that can only ever be relative. It is not concerned about self-improvement since that can only relate to the personality. Your essential being cannot be improved, it is as it is and self realisation consists in realising that at a deeper level than that of thought.

SOL provides a means without an end, in that it provides a system, an epistemology, which in theory can generate great change but it is not prescriptive about the end result. Zen appears to provides an end, i.e. enlightenment, which is a state of being, without a means of getting there.

However although this state of enlightenment is discontinuous from previous experience and thus could be seen as an end, **I do not mean to imply that this state is static.**

One can continue to deepen and enrich one's understanding, so this state still encompasses movement and flow. **What comes to an end is the dualistic method of thinking which characterises the unenlightened state.**

As I make clear in chapter 16 – enlightenment is not a state. A state is something that can be entered or left.

10.7 Improvement in Awareness

In answer to the question *"What, if anything, do you feel you either have to do, or give up doing in order to achieve Zen / become a better Self Organised Learner?"*

Most of both samples thought that Zen / SOL had increased their awareness and talked

in terms of the difficulty of finding a new way to operate in the world. For a Zen learner like B the question merely accentuates what he sees as his dilemma - he knows he wants to change, but to define the way the change should take place would pre-empt the radical change he wants.

B - "the question itself just poses the dilemma and to answer is just to be drawn into it. I'm aware of myself and of an intellectualisation that says that this is what I have to give up - I wish it were two sugars in my tea" (Q5 Zen)

Both S and M, also felt that they should give up intellectualising about the problem.

M - "I've always found it useful not to be too abstract about what is going to happen. Don't worry and get on with it" (Q5 Zen)

S - "I have to give up thinking about doing something and actually do it" (Q5 Zen)

Such answers reveal an implicit understanding that **thinking** about the problem isn't going to get anywhere from a Zen standpoint. But if you don't think your way out of the problem, what do you actually do? D, a SOL learner came up with an answer which initially appears to accord with a Zen perspective.

D - Give up knowing ahead of time what the answers are going to be" (Q5 SOL)

Living without expectation of a particular outcome is an important part of the Zen perspective, and is one of the reasons why the Zen sample have difficulty with this question. On the one hand if they say there is nothing to be done, they are aware that

such negativity will not lead to the outcome they desire. On the other hand if they are prescriptive about what they might do they inhibit the process of radical change. D also gives a reasonable explanation of what stops more people living without expectation.

D - "I think the human avoidance of unfamiliarity more than anything else. I operate on a model of who I am based on my past experience, and I can make predictions based on that and they generally come pretty close. If I went and changed I'd have to find a whole new basis for making predictions or give up making predictions at all.. That is what attracts me to Kelly's theory - giving up any attempt to make predictions. The irony of it is that the things we need to give up trying to predict are things we are totally incapable of predicting anyway." (Q 5 SOL)

Both samples seemed aware of this in that some answered in terms of what they might try to **stop doing or become better at doing.**

C - "I think I have to become wiser as to my emotional pulls and pushes Being more instantly aware of how I'm responding to life" (Q 5 Zen)

T's quote mentioned earlier also makes a similar point about awareness,

T - ".....becoming aware of all the old bad habits one has indulged in and even fed. It's like a silent observation of these things until they loosen their grip. Not like doing - like letting old clothes fall from me." (Q5 Zen)

Some SOL respondents also answered in terms of becoming, both of the examples below valued the need to become more aware of other people's perspectives by becoming better listeners.

C - "I have to give up being prescriptive. You have to learn to be a very good active listener. You have to put other people first and recognise that the path has to be constantly modified to take account of other people's attitudes and feelings." (Q5 SOL)

R2 - "I need to accept the input of others from a less argumentative stage - I'm becoming a better listener. I construct a sense of meaning rather than construct a defence." (Q5 SOL)

Both samples therefore are concerned about self transformation - about **becoming** - whether this is to be wiser, to be more self aware, or to be more aware of others. Question 9 also shed some light on this issue when it asked "*Has the study of Zen / SOL changed any of your habits or routines?*"

Taken as a whole I think the Zen sample reflects a certain kind of hopeless knowledge that it is impossible to describe the changes in themselves, and either take refuge in flippancy or in generalities. B and Y chose the flippant route.

Y - "Maybe on Sundays." (Q9 Zen)

B- "Not one iota and yes quite fundamentally" (Q9 Zen)

B's answer looks as though I should have followed it up by asking what he meant. I didn't do so because at the time I thought I knew what he meant. Throughout the interview with B I felt that he, perhaps more than any of the Zen respondents was expressing the difficulty of communicating experience. Indeed at the end of the interview he said that he thought that he had been answering the same question in 15 different ways. The effect on him was that he became more terse at his frustration in being unable to communicate the **quality** of the difference that he felt Zen had made to his life.

C and S thought that there was a difference in their level of awareness.

C - "It's made me more aware of them (habits). I still have a bath every day and I still drink tea first thing in the morning but it's the awareness of things, not letting them be routine." (Q9 Zen)

S - "I go on going on courses but I think they're very ego based ... But in a way it's to increase one's level of awareness and whether it does it in the right way is a moot point." (Q9 Zen)

So are the two samples coming from the same place? Since none of the Zen sample are themselves enlightened it is probably true to say that both sets of respondents are in a similar position. However the fact that both sets of learners operate in a similar way does not mean that they have similar aspirations. D puts his finger on a crucial difference. Although his answer started this discussion in that he raised the issue of living without expectation, that response goes on to say

D - "I have a construct of anticipate versus expect that I use - where expecting is trying to operate as if I were already there and know the answer. Looking back from there I not only know what the answer is but I know the framework in which the answer has meaning. Whereas anticipating is much more elusive than that, it doesn't have the same sort of fixity so it's a much more flexible stance." (Q5 SOL)

Such a stance may be more **flexible** but it relies upon thought and upon a **comparison of constructs**. It creates **duality**. And duality is something the Zen learners are also exhorted to drop. The constructs of expect versus anticipate may appear to help **D** not to expect in a fixed sort of way. However even anticipate implies an anticipator. Zen learners are exhorted to break out of the need to compare everything and simply act in the world. It is this need for comparison, which is part of the ego structure, which is

seen as the root of the problem in Zen. Exhorting S to cease to worry about giving up doing and act, John said at Q5,

John - "What about simply stepping into the spotlight? You have heard me say on innumerable occasions that the final step requires a certain nerve, that dipping one's foot in and out of the pool is going to get one nowhere. One has got to jump in. It's an act of will, and yet not of will because it emanates from somewhere deeper than will, the deeper impulse to Zen. Surely that's what you need to do, rather than bothering about the negative of not doing what you are doing. That's a rather negative way of looking at it, rather than the positive, forward thrusting approach. (Q5 John)

10.8 Self Transformation

In response to the question "*How strongly do you believe that you will achieve Zen? / transform yourself through SOL?*" I was expecting the SOL participants to be much more positive in their responses. Committed as they are to being more active listeners, to having more meaningful learning conversations with themselves and others, most thought the process of change would continue for the better so long as they continued to work at it. Certainly at this question it became clear that the SOL sample believe that they can radically transform themselves

R2 - "I believe you can change absolutely by reflecting on your own experience. The MARS cycle means you can extend this reflection to any area." (Q 6 SOL)

D - "Utterly. That's an easy question. I think more than I can possibly imagine from where I am now." (Q 6 SOL)

The Zen sample were not asked whether they could transform themselves but whether they could become enlightened, so it is not surprising that they were somewhat more guarded in their responses.

M - "I don't know whether I will or I won't" (Q 6 Zen)

T - "That's impossible to judge. I'm most nervous and anxious that I won't" (Q 6 Zen)

Y summed up the somewhat paradoxical position for much of the Zen sample when he said

"Well I think that future speculations of that kind are completely futile. I think there was a period when I held it as a sort of goal, but the more I involved myself in thinking like that the further away it was really becoming - to hold that as a kind of objective. I think you have to hold a kind of faith always, or a kind of doubt, but to really hold to enlightenment is it depends on how you really hold it. I've read a lot about Zen masters like Bankei where their one ambition, their total ambition was that. It's definitely the most important thing - to see into my true nature - but as to success and so on - that's futile." (Q6 Zen)

Question 7 also attempted to get at differences in self image by asking *"If you achieve Zen what impact will it have on you day to day living?"* Four of the six Zen respondents refused to be drawn on this issue. T felt that the effect would be

T - "Great and dramatic. It would have a shattering effect on my normal psychology. To always do what is appropriate, and not be predictable. It would have an effect on family life - I would not fit in with their expected patterns any more." (Q7 Zen)

Implicit in this answer is a sense of a great and sudden change. The SOL sample were also asked a version of this question *"As you progress as a self organised learner, what impact will it have on your day to day living?"*

The way the question is couched progress is implied and L refused to be drawn on this issue. Throughout the conversation with R2 his major area of concern and change was personal relationships and his answer again reflected that.

R2 - "It affects my understanding of my partner's understanding. Her constructions are something I can learn rather than challenging mine. It makes me a better communicator." (Q7 SOL)

D likened his progress to that of intelligent software in a computer. People often live with what he called the default setting, and didn't bother consciously choosing from the menu. SOL, he felt, helped him to become better at knowing when he wanted to choose. More importantly choosing he felt gave him practice at this process and had a consequence.

D - "I get better at knowing when I want to choose. And also it's like a bit of intelligent software that if I choose something more suitable often enough then the programme changes so that the default thing is a bit more flexible and a little higher quality than the default setting used to be." (Q7 SOL)

For SOL learners then progress can be fast or slow but it is seen as a step forward. For the Zen participants however it is the magnitude of the commitment which is largely at stake. Discussing this with T who seemed doubtful about any progress John said

"..... You haven't immersed yourself in it sufficiently, endlessly, with sufficient determination and commitment. One must not end up in limbo in Zen, it's very easy to do that, but it's a failure of resolve, of commitment, and essentially saying something quite deep about one's assessment of one's likely, or unlikely, prospect of achieving it."

10.9 The Teacher / Student Relationship

Q13 was concerned to probe the teacher / student relationship. The two aspects of that relationship where I suspected there might be differences were, firstly how necessary the student feels the 'teacher' is to his/her progress, and secondly whether the student thinks the 'teacher' feels responsible for his/her progress.

Students in both samples were split as to whether the 'teacher / expert' was necessary to progress. Zen participants appeared to see John as an exemplar of what they wished to be. SOL respondents saw their tutor as necessary to their progress in acquiring expertise. Both samples felt that their 'teacher' had been extremely useful in facilitating the process of learning, but some of both samples felt that further progress was up to them, and therefore did not see the teacher's presence as absolutely necessary, although probably desirable. As M said,

“He has been very useful up until now - he’s a good prompter at putting you on the straight and narrow we have a great capacity for imagining things, he soon puts you right. He doesn’t feel responsible - he’ll help you out if you’re interested.” (Q13 Zen)

The SOL sample also thought that their tutor had been of great assistance in helping them become truly self organised. As D put it

D- “(Conversations with both tutors facilitate a process) ...in requiring me to clarify the relationship between my general self organised learning in terms of the development of my work and the relationship between the two. They are people I can talk to and who understand some aspects of what I'm doing better than I do. (Q13 SOL)

In many ways this seems a similar reaction to that of Y who says of his relationship to John,

Y - "A pointer on how to get there. It's certainly necessary to have contact with someone who knows what they are talking about, and up until now John is the only person I've met that I feel that way about." (Q13 Zen)

Both sets of 'teachers' are therefore regarded as experts, but in the case of the Zen sample the problem for the student is the emotional and spiritual expectation that they carry in respect to John. Question 14 which was asked of the Zen sample only was "*If Zen is a different way of being how do you dare to converse with a Zen master as an equal?*" John thought that this question would expose more of the underlying attitudes of the Zen sample to him. Y neatly evaded the trap, and his answer illustrates the reason for the question.

Y - "I think the problem is really that people tend not to converse with a Zen master as an equal and put him up on a pedestal consequently it reinforces another illusion about a Zen master. Such as having magical powers. If they were really communicating with a Zen master on equal terms they would be better off." (Q14 Zen)

In fact Q12 "*What particular powers does a Zen master have that others don't?*" was also intended to get at this issue, and was only asked of the Zen sample. As a whole the Zen sample tended to the view that it was the **clarity** of interaction with John which was the most notable characteristic of interactions with him.

M - "A Zen master is able to respond to things clearly and cleanly. To a person not operating in that way it is confusing. It can seem quite spectacular." (Q12 Zen)

S - "The openness with which he listens to other people I suppose it's the clarity of the reaction that is so very different." (Q12 Zen)

Y - "I think they are maybe in tune with the world around them and really very simple people, and the so-called magical powers that they have seem to be magical powers because other people aren't in tune with the world around them. And because they (ordinary people) don't see themselves completely they find it absolutely amazing to meet someone who is in tune with everything that is going on." (Q12 Zen)

Zen respondents were therefore not tempted into descriptions of extraordinary powers in the first interview with me, but since John felt that some, indeed most of his students, felt a reverence that was inappropriate, he went on to challenge these evasions in his interviews.

John - "Do you think they can read minds?"

T - "Yes I do. I think they can, whatever mind is, that they can see through it, they can see what is passing over the face of the water." (Q12 John)

John - "What abilities then do you think they have, apart from their awareness? Do you think he can foretell the future, or levitate?"

S - "I think he can have an idea of the possible future, but not the actual future, because all the interactions of the web cannot be foreseen. I think you are aware of trends, more than the actual detailed future. And sometimes you are absolutely spot on, but not always. (Q12 John)

John - Any other powers you think a Zen master has?

M - "They seem to be able to know a lot about you, and other people, just by looking at them, looking at their eyes, they can tell a lot about a type of personality, or a problem that someone might have, just by looking at them. And I think for that reason they also have the power to know what people are thinking to a certain extent.

John - "You mean mind prediction, rather than mind reading?"

M - "It's mind prediction, I think, rather than mind reading, yes." (Q12 John)

These answers indicate the direction that John himself thought that students harboured ideas about him, i.e. that he could read minds and that he could foretell the future. Because he himself never encouraged people to indulge in such speculations they were fairly cautious in their responses, even to him. There is no doubt however that all his students regarded him as unique in their experience. And all of course wanted to be like him, not in personality, but in quality of awareness.

In contrast the attitudes of SOL students to their tutor, although as warm, does not carry the overtones of extraordinary abilities attributed to the teacher.

R2 - "They're very necessary but not from a standpoint of being dependent. I think it's important that they engage Self Organised Learners in learning conversations in order to expand SOL into other areas. There are always those who think there is only one correct way. L always says 'what do you think?' (Q13 SOL)

R - "L is always willing to listen and then to add things. He treats me as an equal but he is the expert - and I listen." (Q13 SOL)

Although both of these learners treat their teacher as an expert, R2 seems to be saying that he feels the message can be developed and carried into new areas of expertise by

SOL students. L in an informal conversation also thought that this was likely in any epistemological system. The founders of the system point out the way and the student applies it to their own particular area of expertise and thus carries it into new realms. Zen learners on the other hand have had to come to terms with the fact that until their own ontological awareness changes, anything they say or do is suspect.

The role of the 'teacher' has been covered here in so far as it appears to differ between Zen and SOL. However one important issue not covered is whether the relationship of the Zen master to his students is a healthy one. Is the Zen master like a therapist, or is his role quite different. Since there is evidence from other sources that some at least consider John's behaviour harsh, this issue is considered in more depth in Chapter 15.

10.10 Morality

John felt that a stumbling block for many people when contemplating giving up *judging and choosing* was that it somehow seemed to be giving up on the ability to differentiate right from wrong. By giving up the self one somehow seemed to be giving up the ability to discriminate between good and evil. By asking whether learners thought that Zen or SOL had some form of higher morality two issues emerged which did not differentiate the samples but united them.

B in common with several others felt that Zen was not moral.

B- "It's not moral. But I feel drawn to attain it as something I want to do. That wanting to be something other than I am, to take the moral high ground is just another software routine." (Q10 Zen)

Y- "Definitely not. It's clear that all the problems are due to over boiled egos striking out on each other and everything around them and if more people were enlightened there would be a lot less conflict." (Q10 Zen)

Some SOL respondents also felt that there was no inherent morality in SOL.

R- “You can be a self organised learner and be highly immoral” (Q10 SOL)

L- “No. You can be a self organised mass murderer.” (Q10 SOL)

Some in both samples therefore believed that an increase in awareness did not in itself confer a higher moral attitude. However both samples also felt that the changes brought about by greater awareness made it more likely that people would take a more positive direction. Simply stated, it was suggested that if a person changes by internal scrutiny of their feelings and attitudes they become more sensitive and this has a beneficial effect on those around them and thus could be regarded as moral.

R2 - “It opens up the possibility of examining long held beliefs. Years of public policy on blacks has treated them as though they were inferior (particularly academically). SOL means your own perceptions and values and not taking on board ‘other organised’ values.” (Q10 SOL)

C- “I think SOL can bring about a lot of change. Morality is about perception and as you change constructs it affects morality.” (Q10 SOL)

M appears to be agreeing with this view of internal change as the key.

M- “Yes. You basically can’t make any mistakes because you’re operating from your true self and that is the morality.” (Q10 Zen)

10.11 The Difference Between Theory and Practice

Question 12 attempted to revisit the question of experience by returning to the impact that Zen or SOL had made on learners from a slightly different perspective. It asked

“Would you have expected Zen /SOL as you have studied it so far to have changed you more than it appears to have done?” Most people in both samples felt that they had no expectations about the effect of either system. In the case of the Zen sample B and T stressed that they were trying to give up having expectations. M felt that any expectations he had had were self deceiving.

M- “I did have great hopes when I was younger. My hopes have been dashed a lot since then. My initial interactions were filled with my own imagination and I know now they were incorrect. There’s a lot that can’t be said in Zen. It’s a very private thing.” (Q15 Zen)

Y pointed out also that although things might superficially seem to have stayed the same some kinds of change were difficult to pinpoint.

Y - “I’m sometimes surprised for instance now being back in England and having known John since I was 18 I’m sometimes surprised to be delving in the same quagmire as I was before. But at the same time I realise that it’s not really the same quagmire. Superficially it is because it’s still passing through my mind but it’s the attachment to that quagmire that is maybe less defined.” (Q15 Zen)

The SOL sample on the whole felt that they had no unfulfilled expectations apart from D who said,

D- “Just because you can see the mountain doesn’t mean you can walk there in a day. Just because I knew things didn’t mean I was ready or able to put them into practice.” (Q15 SOL)

He could just as easily in this instance been talking about Zen. One of the things that became clear for me in all of these conversations was the large gap between theory and practice. Seeing intellectually what needs to be done is no guarantee that actual behaviour will change.

10.12 The Koan

The koan *why is a mouse when it spins* did not tempt any Zen participant into trying an answer. It was not likely to be answered on the spot, but no-one succumbed to trying an intellectual answer. Those who had conversations with John also refused to answer as can be seen from the transcripts of John's conversations. I did ask a few people what they thought the purpose of a koan was. They saw it as a device for getting them to make some conceptual leap, but one which they felt was beyond them.

10.13 Referral back to Participants

Further contact with participants took place in two ways. Firstly some people contacted me spontaneously after our conversation, and I also sent a complete transcript of the analysis section to all participants for their comments. Of the two types of contact the spontaneous tended to reflect how some participants **felt** after the conversations, whereas the transcripts encouraged a more reasoned, and hopefully critical, response.

M called me after our conversation. I also saw him after he had his conversation with John. He had not been told that the second conversation would consist of the same questions. He told me that our conversation had set up all sorts of reverberations in him and he continued to think deeply about the first question about the impact Zen had

had on his life. He felt that he had not managed to communicate the great importance Zen had for him, but there was no particular answer he wished to alter or amend. He thanked me for setting up a process within him which he likened to the sort of experience he went through after a meeting with John, where he was always left really looking deeply at where he thought he was. The conversation had given him no answers, but he seemed grateful at being asked the questions.

I saw him again at a Zen meeting after he had seen John. He commented wryly that realising he was trying to answer the same questions had been no help at all, because the questions were not answerable. He sent me a note after receiving the analysis transcript saying that he wished the research could be ongoing so that he had to keep these questions more in mind and answer them regularly. I felt after these contacts that **M** had taken the questions in the spirit in which I intended them. Curiously, however, it did not affect my decision about cancelling further sessions. Like everyone who knew John all of us wanted to be able to meet him more often, and it seemed to me that **M** was using our conversations as a substitute for contact with John. But I felt then, and continue to feel now that it is up to each person to find some way of keeping the meaning of Zen alive in themselves. Had **M** continued to call me I would have responded as best I could, but I did not want to set myself up as a substitute for John. **C** also called me after our weekend together. She too thanked me and said that she often felt as though she was struggling very much on her own but that the weekend had reminded her that everyone who knew John had such struggles. It was at that time that I suggested to her that the tasks John had set her (see section 12.4) were a form of

‘standing at the wall’. She seemed struck by this and said that she was pleased that someone had recognised her journey and had listened to her.

I said I had been surprised by some her answers. What had come over to me was that she felt that Zen had triggered a process of finding out about herself, (she had recently divorced and taken an MA in Ceramics), but that perhaps another trigger, e.g. a therapist might have done that. What specifically had been the Zen component? C said she thought it was the **clarity** of talking to John that she felt had made the difference to her. (I still felt that this was not definitive but left the issue unresolved). I then said that when I had probed on her sense of self I was unclear from her answers what she thought was the relationship of her ego mind to her self. How did she see that?

C said that she saw her ego as part of herself but that her true self was also part of herself. She simply tried to listen to herself as deeply as possible. I asked whether John had ever asked her to consider who was thinking, feeling this etc. and she said no. I felt then that when John had asked me to work on *who am I?* that this was, perhaps, a reflection of what he felt appropriate to my personal approach to Zen.

S also rang me after her conversation wanting to amend some of her answers which she felt were unclear. She also typed up the transcripts of John’s conversations, and as can be seen in her own conversation she added in amendments to her answers in brackets. As we talked I did not feel that what she wanted to add materially altered anything she said. I felt very strongly that what S wanted was reassurance that I did not find her answers stupid or inadequate. During our phone conversation then and in many

subsequent conversations (see section 12.3) I tried to give such reassurance. At times **S** appeared to have low self esteem, but she also stubbornly held to her views, a combination not always easy to deal with. After John's death, until her death in 1998 **S** and I were in close contact and I felt that we used one another as a resource to remind ourselves of our Zen commitment after John's death.

R a SOL participant also rang me to amend one or two of his answers. As in the case of **S** I did not feel that this conversation was about amendments. One of the things **R** and I had talked about before and after his LC was how his commitment to Catholicism affected his responses to both SOL and Zen. I felt that **R** had responded to our conversation by having a hard look at many of his beliefs and his phone call was a continuation of that process.

There was one further example of a spontaneous response to our LC. At the end of the conversation with **B** I did not turn the tape recorder off right away, and the following exchange took place.

***B-** "Those were not the kind of questions I was expecting"*

***M-** "What did you expect?"*

***B-** "I don't know but they were really tough questions. I felt the way I often feel coming away from seeing John. I didn't think that anyone else could put me on the spot like that"*

So although the questions look innocuous they did remind Zen participants of what the everyday issues were. Had John's health allowed him to finish his conversations with **B** and the others, I think they would have found even greater difficulty answering with John.

In all the above instances I felt that the phone conversations demonstrated that the LC had set going a process, similar to answering a koan, in those who called. They did not have answers to their own questions but they were I think very open to a process of self examination.

After being sent a transcript of the analysis of the LC's and invited to comment on any aspect they wished, only four of the eleven participants spontaneously did so (one SOL and 3 Zen). All four felt that **the analysis presented was an interesting account of the process and accurate as to their own personal part in the proceedings, but only the lone SOL participant offered any critical opinion.**

L, said he was both pleased and appalled at reading his contribution, and his letter is shown in its entirety because of the excellent points he made. Firstly, he was pleased because it reinforced his feeling that SOL was essentially **epistemological** and Zen **ontological**, but appalled that (to him) he sounded rather smug. **Since he made a few further points about the ontological aspects of Zen and I agreed with his analysis** I redrafted a small part of that part of the chapter stressing this aspect further.

Secondly he raised the issue of the difference in aspiration of the Zen and SOL participants and how this affected their relationship with the 'experts' concerned. I took his advice and expanded the section about the relationships between the experts and their novices. L also raised the issue of motivation, since he felt that the analysis suggested that some of the Zen participants used Zen against some sort of self fear. I also added in new material about whether the Zen relationship was essentially a healthy one in Chapter 15.

1st May 1997

Dear Myra

Thank you for your letter of 31st March

I am sorry that I haven't responded sooner, however I am also in the process of assembling chapters of my own thesis.

In terms of comments I was both pleasantly surprised and appalled by some of the statements I made.

On the appalling level I think that my remarks on SOL as a genuinely superior state smack of intellectual arrogance. Certainly, I think that I am more self aware than I was in the past, although this may be a different type of awareness rather than a higher level. I would, therefore, probably qualify my remarks in section 5.1 regarding "a superior state" and suggest a more focused position (i.e. focused on purposes).

This minor adjustment aside I was very interested in your distinction between SOL as epistemology and Zen as a potential ontology. Nothing has changed my view on this difference and I think the conclusions regarding means and ends are still valid. I think it is difficult to use sol learners and zen learners as subjects in the sense that in many ways they represent people for whom the approach is something to be mastered. Certainly there are differences between John's position and that of his students and I would imagine that Laurie and Sheila are probably different from some of the Sol people, particularly those who are using the SOL methodology as a means of occupational self improvement (i.e. SOL=PHD=chance of better job).

One key question which may very well be painful for both groups would be an examination of their relationships with the respective master practitioners. In the case of John, my guess would be that his students regard him as something to be aspired to (i.e personal embodiment of an ideal) in the case of the SOL learners I think such an

explicit relationship is less likely. I see my own role as adding something to the work of Sheila and Laurie (i.e. going beyond them) and furthering the system. Whilst I like them as people and I respect them as people who have and are helping me I do not regard them as enlightened in the sense that John was or is regarded by zen learners. To this extent I would be interested to see an expansion of section 5. 11.

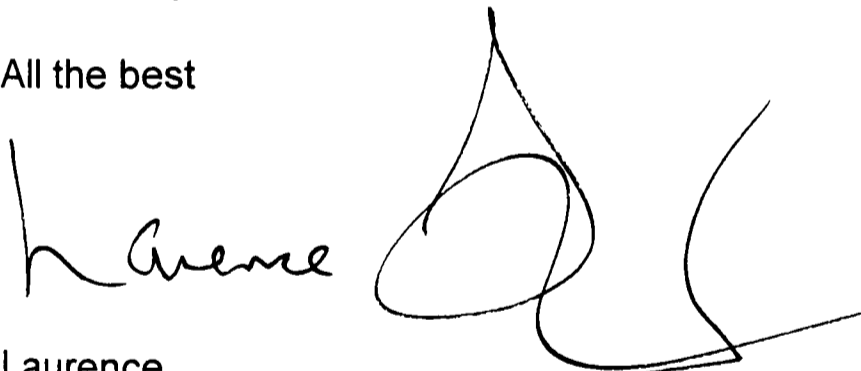
A second question of interest to the Sol group would probably be an examination of the motivation for learning . In the case of the SOL group I would suggest that this is likely to be instrumental in as much as they are or have been registered for a formal qualification. I am not too sure about the zen learners although the comments you have provided indicate a certain level of fear of their own ego. T's comments in sections 5.7 and 5.8 are illustrative of the feeling that there are somehow deep seated weeds which one must be alert to - a more clinical approach might suggest that T is using zen as a defence against some sort of self fear (fear of ego). I am not sure how far this analysis should be pursued and I would certainly not want to adopt a Freudian approach, nevertheless there may be some interesting questions to be answered as to why some people choose zen and others sol (and at least on person both) - perhaps they are dealing with different types of issue or are attractive to different kinds of people.

I hope my comments are of some use to you - I have also scribbled one or two notes on your manuscript which I am also returning.

If you want to get in touch please give me a ring

I would really like to see you thesis when it is completed, perhaps we could meet up next time you are in London

All the best

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurence', followed by a large, stylized flourish or scribble.

Laurence

While the other comments were gratifying in that they were complimentary about the clarity of the presentation and that Zen or SOL had been fairly portrayed, they did not offer any further feedback of issues. My own assessment of this is that respondents tended merely to check the account for accuracy where they themselves were mentioned. They saw the provision of overall analysis as my department, none of them being academics. This confirmed my assessment that a repeat visit to respondents would not have raised further critical issues. While a repeat conversation would have produced more personal data it seems unlikely that this would either have been of the constructive criticism which I hoped would aid my own resolution of the answers I was looking for; or the qualitatively different ontological example that John represented.

In case other respondents were unclear that I was hoping for more feedback I telephoned some of the other participants. **In every instance they also said that there was nothing with which they had disagreed**, and that this was the reason that they had not replied.

10.13 Theoretical Orientation

At the beginning of this chapter I stated that one purpose of this analysis was to arrive at an explanation of behaviour based upon respondents practical knowing. **What is the difference, if any, between what people understand of Zen /SOL and how they appear to be operating in the world?** I do not wish to rehearse here the theoretical differences between the formal teachings of Zen and SOL. Rather I am interested in whether the summation of their knowing about Zen or SOL has changed their lives and how?

In terms of theoretical orientation it appeared to me that what the Learning Conversations had tapped was a reflective process. This is hardly surprising since SOL Conversations are supposed to do just that. By responding reflectively **both the SOL and the Zen samples appeared to be operating more in line with the epistemology of SOL**. This does not mean that there is no difference between the perspectives of the two samples. It would appear however **that SOL comes much closer to describing the reflective process people in both samples were going through when they examined their own behaviour and attitudes**. Given a situation in which Zen and SOL learners are asked to explain their motivation, and their attribution of meaning, both seemed essentially to be using the same **process** of examination. Each look inward and examine their own motives and behaviour and feel that this makes them better able to assess the motives of others. They reflect on their own experience, and review their progress. Each try to improve themselves and try to discern progress in themselves. They negotiate meaning in their interactions with others, when trying to make sense of the world. This conclusion held no surprises for me. After all none of the Zen sample were enlightened, and **the shift in perception and awareness, which arises upon enlightenment had not happened**.

What a Zen approach does for Zen learners is to make them unsure of this process of learning. They lose confidence in their habitual mode of operation but feel unable to stop their habitual mode of response. The **Zen challenge to the SOL paradigm** (and any other paradigm), which provides techniques of how to effect radical change is to query whether any system of models or techniques can help change the mode of

functioning of the mind. **The Zen gift, some might say curse, is to start a process of querying which casts doubt on the present mode of functioning.**

Some of the Zen sample are very aware of this dilemma but have as yet no idea how to resolve it. This side of the ontological change which John epitomised for the Zen sample, **this reflective dialectic process which SOL epitomises describes what is preventing Zen learners from achieving the sort of change they are seeking.**

SOL learners can proceed using an epistemology and set of techniques in which they progressively refine their construing system. They find that not only their own research but they themselves change by contact with SOL. They approve of this change in themselves and **assume that it can continue in direct relation to how much effort they put into it.** Zen learners have quite different aspirations, and have been exposed to the notion that all such progress is illusory and will not help them resolve their central dilemma.

However since Zen learners need to understand the source of their mental constructions, which are ego based, **SOL provides a useful tool to understanding what it is they think they have to overcome.** The techniques in SOL, like the training questions in orthodox Zen provide a means to expose the root of the problem. **It is this Zen challenge which should prove of interest to western psychological theories.** John made it clear that if one can push beyond the barriers of the having/doing mode there is another mode of functioning. If his own example is anything to go by, this shift in mode also actually involves a shift in brain hemispheric functioning.

If as Professor Tart says that much of psychology is concerned with 'endarkenment' and consists of charting the barriers to enlightenment, then the contrast between the emotional attitudes of the Zen learners and SOL learners is instructive. One could of course try to analyse some of their responses in terms of psycho dynamic interpretations. If in fact I had chosen to follow a person's psychological self development through case studies then this avenue may have been relevant. Certainly the idea that early childhood experiences have an effect on habits and responses is now part of popular culture, and it is perhaps interesting that no person in either sample mentioned psycho dynamic explanations in their responses. Since the thrust of this research is firmly towards the 'transpersonal' and the issues involved in comparing different aspects of experiential learning this lack of mention is perhaps understandable.

However one further issue which I felt the Learning Conversations raised for me was explicating John's role more fully. To many who did not know him well he sometimes appeared hard and uncompromising. In most transpersonal workshops that I had attended there was a concern to provide empathetic support, in the way that a therapist might. John was most firmly **not** in that mold and this issue is addressed in Chapter 15.

One of the great strands of **personal learning** which I feel was achieved in this thesis was to finally lay to rest in me any notion that **knowledge** of Zen will help me to become enlightened. I see that the discipline of carrying out this thesis has made me somewhat different in perspective from the other Zen learners, but it has not made me any more likely to achieve Zen.

Chapter 11 - Conversation with the 'Experts'

*Joshu, the master, said simply "Mu",
Leaving his pupils nothing to do.
He affirmed by negation, his insight profound,
Demonstrating the freedom of a mind unbound.
"Bound to what" you may ask, as have many before,
While, unknowing, they push at a wide open door
Jonathan Hey*

The process of consulting others in my attempt to understand my findings was for two main reasons. First as a form of validity, did my interpretation seem idiosyncratic or did it seem a reasonable one to those who were either 'expert' in Zen/SOL, or 'expert' in learning, or 'expert' in transpersonal issues. And secondly, had they any practical suggestions as to how to improve my understanding/ or theory building or my further approach to the problem.

11.1 The Zen and SOL Experts

The issues raised in Chapter 10 were discussed with both John and Laurie as experts in Zen and SOL. I had originally envisaged this process as being a check on whether the 'experts' thought that the learners appeared to understand the relevant Zen or SOL paradigms, and whether what was being understood was what was intended. Although the conversations with both discussed the main findings outlined in the previous chapter, the illuminating parts of each interaction tended to be when the conversation turned to other areas important **to the expert**. I had expected a large gap between John as expert and the Zen learners in that all Zen learners knew that they were not enlightened and thought that John was. It

emerged however that Laurie too seemed different from the SOL learners. I have concentrated on these areas in the accounts given below of my conversations with John and Laurie as these demonstrate some of the similarities and differences not only between Zen and SOL, but between theory and practice.

Constructive criticism of my analysis is discussed with three other 'peer experts' who had either a learning perspective or a psychological one or both. In these interactions I was testing whether my analysis seemed reasonable to a discriminating observer.

11.2 The Zen Expert

I did in fact have several long conversations and numerous telephone conversations with John over the course of the research. Since the initial agenda of the learning conversations were set in consultation with John he was interested in the ongoing research problems I encountered. When I tried to set up a meeting simply to talk about the results I always found afterwards that the conversation had strayed from that initial discussion. Upon reflection I feel that although John expected me to complete the research thesis he was very much aware that a major reason for me to undertake it at all was to address my tacit question *what is enlightenment?* He therefore used each and every conversation I had with him to push me to the limits of my understanding of that question. So that although I got some idea of his feelings on some of the issues, he also turned each meeting into making me push beyond what others had said to answer the questions for myself.

At the main conversation we had about findings he asked to listen to excerpts from the tapes. He was saddened by many of the answers, not because the Zen sample had not answered as expected but because he felt that their answers demonstrated that they had come to an accommodation with Zen, and that they had ‘given up’ any real expectation of enlightenment. This conclusion of his was not because of the answers to question six *How strongly do you believe you will achieve Zen (i.e. enlightenment)?*, but a comment on the overall answers.

He saw the striving evidenced in the Learning Conversations as part and parcel of the dualistic need to compare everything which no Zen learner had been able to free themselves from. There is no such thing as partial freedom, either duality is dropped or it is not.

In a later conversation we had about six months before his own death he told me that he thought it would be more fruitful for me personally to turn my attention to the issue of personal relationships. As things worked out the double effect of his death, and that of Viv’s made me acutely aware of my emotional life and my personal relationships, and an account of how that affected my behaviour is given in Chapter 13. How I reacted emotionally to grief is one of the major ways in which I realised that Zen had indeed changed my own life.

11.3 The SOL Experts

Sheila’s Influence on the Thesis

The process of looking constantly at the SOL perspective and how it differed or was similar to Zen was an ongoing dialogue between Sheila and me throughout the

course of the research. Many of the more subtle points of difference raised here and earlier were as a direct result of Sheila's challenges to me to articulate just why I felt the way I did about both Zen and SOL. And throughout this process, although she gave me some uncomfortable moments, she always encouraged me to take my own stand on every issue. This process of reflection and challenge is an integral part of the SOL learning experience, and one I benefited by throughout the research.

Conversations with Laurie

I had two conversations with Laurie. The first took place after I had completed the analysis of the Learning Conversations. The second took place after my major rethink when I was nearing completion of the thesis. Since it is this second conversation which explored many of the methodological problems of doing justice to the Zen and SOL experiences this section concentrates on this. Since this Learning Conversation was intended to sum up Laurie's reactions to some of the issues discussed here I used the MARS formula of monitoring, analysing, reflecting, and reviewing, and kept this model in mind throughout our conversation. I did this partly because it seemed consonant with the SOL paradigm, but also because it felt appropriate to the type of review conversation we planned to have. Sheila was present as an observer on both occasions.

I asked Sheila some time later whether she regarded my conversation with Laurie as a Learning Conversation, because I had started out consciously using the MARS heuristic. She said that it had started out that way, and then it had just

'taken off'. I think that the conversation just took off because both Laurie and I were deeply interested in what we were talking about.

There was no need of a conscious procedure to deepen the levels of meaning since each of us was concerned to understand the other. This seems to me to emphasise what I said earlier about the MARS heuristic as not necessarily needful to the form of the conversation. It is a useful guide for someone setting out to conduct LC's. By drawing attention to a reflective cycle, it was meant as a tool which would then be internalised so that developing a conversation became an unconscious process. One could carry out the MARS form of a LC in which no deepening of meaning took place. One could also have a deep LC with no obvious use of MARS.

One of the areas of experience which Laurie raised at the Seminar on Zen and SOL discussed in chapter 14, was the difficulty of communicating living experience and of knowing what was really going on inside someone else's head. This is one reason why he values conversation both with oneself or another, as a means of explicating this. He sees the process of reflective conversation as a means of exploring the relationship between the conscious self and the whole self, where much remains tacit. The aim of a Learning Conversation is to make one's whole experience more available. But, as Laurie observed, even when conversing with oneself, **you can only know one side of the conversation.**

I explained a difficulty that I had felt throughout the research, that while I valued the reflective process, it often operated over time. While one might be lucky enough to provoke an 'ahah' moment within a planned conversation, such moments often occurred hours, days or weeks later, and seldom took place to

order. While having repeat conversations might go some way towards getting over this difficulty, the problem of communicating experience remained. Laurie agreed that the ideal would be to observe while someone is **in** an important experience when it happens, but even then there are elements one would never catch. The Learning Conversation as a creative encounter should have some kind of spontaneity, but that doesn't deny that the process of having a LC provides a structure, however open. When you construe within a conversation you are constructing a model of the other, and that can cut you off from the conversation.

As Laurie observed,

“experience as a word is past related – it suggests accumulated knowledge. Inner conversation informing the whole person creates changes but consciously one never has complete access to the nature of the change.”

I found then that Laurie and I agreed about the tacit nature of much knowledge and that this knowledge is difficult to communicate. As Laurie said *“I am my knowing”*. The differences that emerge between Zen and SOL are related to issues of the adequacy of propositional and presentational knowledge as an aid not to knowledge but to change. Learning Conversations inform and explore, as Laurie said,

“ My version of it is that one builds meaning and acts on the basis of meaning and observes the consequences of it – in some cases with immediate consequences – in other cases with longer term consequences. But unless you are tuned to the whole process you won't know when to reconstruct your meaning and when to test it out in the real world.”

It is assumed that if this is done with rigour it will lead to change. Zen is asking whether one can ever change sufficiently without changing the **mode of processing information.**

One subject that Laurie raised was,

“When I read your thesis you saw the psychology of the self embedded in SOL, and it stood me back why we used the word Self in SOL – we used it as meaning the opposite of other organised.”

While Laurie agreed that much of the presentation of self within psychology involved constructing or reconstructing the self, he thought that within SOL it was used without those connotations.

Since my own view is that the use of the word self, regardless of context carries with it a great deal of mental baggage, we agreed that the Zen view of self was a fundamental paradigm issue between Zen and SOL. Laurie sees modelling oneself to oneself, as quite different to re-constructing oneself. But is there a modeller, I inquired?

“Ah that’s the problem isn’t it? If there is a modeller then the modelling is artificial. I prefer a cybernetics explanation of modelling as a process but without the modeller.”

In cybernetics feedback loops can correct errors in the process without reference to a central control, just as a radiator with an individual thermostat can maintain its own setting, regardless of what is happening in the rest of the system. The modelling process without a modeller seems close to Zen, but does the modeller have purpose? Laurie felt that any construing system will have properties which appear purposive,

but that this directionality becomes intentionality when the system becomes aware. SOL sees the Learning Conversation as intervening into one's directionality. Here the Zenlike comparison begins to break down. In order to transcend one's own personal paradigm, in Zen one abdicates any intentionality **created by intellect**. This is why one is exhorted to give up *'judging and choosing'*. It does not, of course, mean giving up responding to circumstances appropriately, it simply means giving up one mode of response. But that mode, is one which is encouraged in education and admired in our culture, and is difficult to change.

Another basic issue concerned the building up of knowledge. Laurie felt that there was a building up of knowledge where change gradually took place because future generations learned from what had gone before, *'by some people standing upon others shoulders'*.

"I do believe that you can discover the appropriate constituents and skills to reproduce something once someone else has done it."

In his view it should be possible to formulate some set of circumstances which would make enlightenment an everyday event. But he also thought it might be necessary for this to happen before one could study it. This, of course, appears to run counter to John's insistence on a lack of method. But what John was against was a structured method to be followed as an aim. There was an experience involved in knowing him that was a challenge to those who knew him to understand.

The difference between Zen and SOL is that Laurie was troubled by John's apparent unwillingness to **converse** about this. I challenged this interpretation as I feel that

John **engaged** with people at a very deep level, although never in the way they expected or desired. Laurie still feels that there is some evasion here. As he said,

“I know someone else like that – he had a need to outplay you. Whenever you got near to reflecting back to him he would immediately move his position in order not to get captured. One negative view of enlightenment is being unwilling to converse on equal terms – another bit of me doesn’t believe that at all”.

Laurie met John on two occasions, and his ambivalence is hardly surprising. Outside of the protection of a religious community the behaviour of a master seems suspect. Zen masters do not see their role as researchers, counsellors or therapists and this difference is explored further in Chapter 15.

One further issue I would like to raise is one which I found personally helpful.

When discussing the state of ‘standing at the wall’ Laurie suggested

“I believe if the issue is irresolvable it isn’t the issue. It’s a manufactured problem. If one pushes into provisionality hard enough the pattern changes. You don’t answer questions, you learn to ask questions which will disprove the apparent difficulty”

I thought that Laurie had neatly summed up for me why I was carrying out this inquiry.

One thing that strikes me about this conversation now is that much of it is still valid for me. Laurie was correct that when you stand at the wall your inability to transcend the wall is a manufactured problem, it is a mental construction caused by expectation. However I do not think that the transcendence I experienced was a form of inner conversation. One could of course claim that non verbal communion with oneself is an inner conversation, but this too I find highly misleading. It was when I saw the mechanism which was trying to create conversation, and did not engage with it, that the wall was seen for what it was – my way of experiencing myself. Once this is seen from outside it can never operate in the same way again.

These experts were all people I knew who had a professional interest in psychology or learning. They were:

Dr Nigel Norris, Dean at the School of Education of the University of East Anglia, and Chair of the Committee for Continuing Professional Development. He had never met John and knew little of Zen, but was interested in the process of learning.

Dr Chris Mace, a psychiatrist and senior lecturer in psychotherapy at Warwick University. He had known John for 13 years and was a Trustee of the Zen Foundation.

Dr Marilyn Goswell, a practising educational psychologist. Lynn had met John three or four times and her own PhD thesis was carried out as a participant observer in a Buddhist community, and concerned changing experiences of self.

All were initially sent the analysis chapter before our conversations, which were quite lengthy, ranging from several hours (with Nigel) who commented only on the analysis chapter, to a day (with Chris) who also wanted to look at my analysis of haiku (see chapter 15), and commented on both. I spent a weekend with Lynn (Marilyn) who after reading the analysis chapter requested a complete draft of the thesis up to that point. My conversation with Lynn ranged over the thesis, our memories of John, and 'life the Universe and everything'.

Like the participants none of the experts challenged my basic interpretation of the data given in chapter 10. While a few had minor comments or queries as to why I had decided to do this or that, all were concerned with other issues arising out of the data, and what I thought the results indicated.

11.5 Nigel's Comments

As someone who had never met John, and knew little of Zen, but was interested in the **process of learning**, Nigel was primarily concerned with four main issues. Firstly, he felt that I had not demonstrated differences of **motivation** between Zen and SOL learners. How did I **know** that Zen learners were really aiming at enlightenment and not some form of self development? If that were so then one might not expect great differences between the samples. Secondly that the differences between my interviews and John's suggested that while Zen participants were considerably more aware of the problems when talking to John that this awareness did not appear to extend into other areas. There seemed in other words **no transferability of awareness**. Why did I think that was? Thirdly, John talked about learning not having reached deeper than the ego, what did he mean by that, perhaps I should address **levels** of learning. And lastly the impression which he gained of John was of someone who did not aid learning but seemed to hinder it. He felt that no help or guidance was given on how to achieve enlightenment, and any efforts made by Zen participants to talk about this in terms of method or benefits were given short shrift.

Regarding motivation, Nigel was correct that I had not spelled out the issue, and it should not be assumed that simply because the participants were in the Zen Foundation they were aiming at enlightenment. I did of course know all of the participants quite well and during the course of the research saw them at Zen meetings. From personal observation and discussion with John, all participants

thought they did in fact want to 'realise Zen' to use John's terminology. However it might still be true that some participants, while **saying** that this was what they wanted, were actually not really committed to radical change. Indeed John himself was saddened by many of their answers, which he felt demonstrated a lack of the deep commitment necessary.

Regarding **transferability of awareness** and **levels** of learning, I think the revised thesis now makes it abundantly clear the formidable difficulties that prevent both. To ask why transferability of awareness has not taken place in this context is to ask why the Zen participants in this inquiry are not enlightened.

This issue appears quite differently to me now. I think that Zen participants responded accurately to the situation. When facing John, they were talking to someone who had a different perspective and could disconcert them at will. I do not mean by that that his challenges were whimsical, far from it.

When facing me, they faced someone in the 'same boat' and they felt that. I could, by right of denser epistemological knowledge, have asked questions which might have perplexed them. I could have played devil's advocate intellectually. Just as they had a tacit knowing of my position, I had a tacit knowing that this latter tactic would not have yielded what I sought. Now I could have conversations with them which would be different, but not then.

Nigel's comments about his impression of John's attitude being inimicable to learning is now addressed in Chapter 15, which discusses the role of a Zen master. But Nigel's comments reveal the gap between Zen learning and learning in a more formal academic way. If one is concerned to facilitate learning objective

knowledge in a child or adult, e.g. learning to speak a language or acquiring computer skills then the learner is shown how to develop his/her learning skills in order to learn what is needed. When learners seriously see some of the limitations of the learning process and try to use techniques for self-development they often start by questioning **the content** of certain knowledge, and they may go on to question the **process** by which they are conditioned to respond, but mostly they regard the ability **to think** in new and creative ways as **the solution**.

Zen behaviour is not only inappropriate for learning a language, but it is unlikely to be seen by an education specialist as providing appropriate support for any kind of learning. However many people are so accustomed to thinking that we learn best in conditions of support and empathic surroundings that they assume that all learning should be like that. Just as many people interested in 'spiritual' growth assume compassion is demonstrated by being endlessly kind and patient, so they assume that spiritual learning should be seen to be nurturing, supportive, and pleasant. In Zen compassion is shown by carrots and sticks, or by a bewildering and disorienting mixture of the two. Whatever the master thinks will work best for the novice. As John saw it, Hey (1988)

“All the master’s efforts are thus directed towards inducing in the unenlightened that instantaneous realisation that enables the mind to change to the being mode; he may use words, gestures, physical blow, anything that leads to the mind’s awakening.”

Thus Zen learning is not only very different from academic learning but it is also different (as is discussed in Chapter 15) from the learning involved in therapy.

11.6 Chris's Comments

The predominant issue that arose when talking to Chris was that of **expectation**. As someone who had known John for longer than I had, he wanted to discuss what I thought might reasonably have been expected to show as differences between Zen and SOL participants. Although in such an action research oriented methodology I did not have any hypothesis I was testing, nonetheless by initiating an agenda I must have had reasons for the questions I asked. **Because of his comments I redrafted some of the analysis of the Learning Conversations to make clearer what some of my assumptions had been in asking what I did.**

He was also surprised that there were not more differences in the answers concerning **personal relationships**. What initially puzzled Chris was the fact that Zen respondents in answering the questions seemed never seemed to query the criteria for the questions. At the questions about personal relationships and being sensitive to others, no-one said all relationships in those dominated by ego-mind are one illusory ego relating to another. Since this was a theme which often came up in talks he was surprised by its lack of mention.

As I stated earlier I did not expect the Zen sample to necessarily have answers to these problems, but I too had expected them to indicate a greater awareness of the problem's existence than they apparently did. Fortunately an opportunity arose to

see most of them at a Zen Foundation meeting and I was therefore able to ask four of the six Zen respondents why they thought this was.

Two felt that the conversation with me raised in them the same feelings of struggling for answers that they had experienced with John. Some said that they thought they knew the purpose of the questions but that **they felt as unable to answer them as they would with John**. The net effect of our conversation had been to start them thinking. This further corroborates that the Learning Conversation with me was taken seriously by Zen participants.

But as **M** pointed out, one thing you learn at John's Zen meetings is the **uselessness of saying anything** unless you have something **new** to say. This, he felt, was why some issues particularly as regards concepts of self and personal relationships were different in the conversations with me and those with John. John used that feeling of uselessness to generate tension and used further questioning to force people into pushing against barriers. Whereas I only completed the first part of that process which was to remind them of the difficulty of resolving such questions and the uselessness of most responses.

I am indebted to Lynn, who was the only 'expert' who had read the whole of the 1st version of the thesis for pointing out a relevant difference between the Zen and SOL samples. As already noted John seemed able to get through to levels I did not reach, and show that Zen respondents were more aware, though had not resolved, issues of self transformation. However in the seminar at CSHL on Zen and SOL John did not get through to an audience of SOL respondents in the same way. Of

course in the seminar a lot of the concepts raised were new to participants. Nonetheless although the conversational level was quite complex at times, I did not ever feel that it was reaching the non-intellectual levels demonstrated by John's interviews and workshops. This suggests that there are differences that have taken place in the Zen sample over time, in their interactions with John. His presence was sufficient to evoke in them an ontological insecurity which made them dig deeper for responses. Because the SOL respondents had not done this sort of groundwork the reactions were intellectual. As **B** pointed out it is difficult to describe the sort of changes he had felt he had made but looking back he could see a change he was not aware of at the time it was happening.

11.7 Lynn's Comments

What interested Lynn in the thesis was the central question *what is enlightenment* and the similarities and differences between John's form of Zen and her own experiences in Theravadan Buddhism. Like Zen, Theravadan Buddhism is based upon the teachings of the Buddha, who taught that the idea of a 'self' is an imaginary false belief.

In order to see the illusory nature of the self many traditions work with question 'who am I' and Lynn and I discussed our experiences in doing this. Lynn felt that she had received no impression from the conversations with Zen learners that they had any sense that if the ego is illusory, then there is nothing to realise. This is a common theme in Buddhism and Zen. When self realisation takes place there is an understanding that this self reflecting mind has always been there, and there is

nothing to achieve, since it was never not there. However this viewpoint implies that just as the self is illusory, so too change is illusory. I have problems with this as I think that a real and profound change does take place. If indeed a change in hemispheric processing takes place so that it is more global in nature, then simply saying to oneself that there is nothing that needs to be done is not necessarily helpful. It is only after enlightenment and with hindsight that one realises that one's self nature has always been there.

The closest any Zen respondent came to addressing this was C who responded at Q12 as follows,

C - "John can't change me but Zen has been a reflection for me and a very profound one. It's reflected that part of me that is the enlightened part, the nearly enlightened part."

Implicit in this answer is the idea that there is both an enlightened and unenlightened part of herself that is always present and is therefore outside of time.

One thing which concerned both Lynn and myself deeply in our own development was why the realisation that the ego was illusory did not take us further. We both felt that we could see clearly that the ego can **do** nothing, it is just a concept with no 'real' existence. Lynn expressed this as follows,

"The ego mind is just a thought, which is constantly changing, but never gets any nearer to enlightenment. Enlightenment is revealed as being always present when the ego is finally seen to be a delusion"

This too is just a thought, and perhaps the key word here is *finally*. Intellectually seeing that the ego mind is illusory does not automatically lead to enlightenment. Lynn and I were simply expressing our frustration at this point, since we both knew that talking and thinking about enlightenment is unlikely to be fruitful in promoting that kind of change. **In terms of this research inquiry Lynn's contribution made me realise that the only way I could demonstrate what enlightenment was, was to show the actions and interactions of the only person involved who had achieved it, i.e. John.**

Lynn and I have very different conversations now. It was her description of her experience of meeting Satyananda which persuaded me to go to meet him myself. She has changed profoundly and experiences it as a tremendous lightness, and a laying down of her mental baggage. We now agree that while we see that nothing has really changed and we have always been as we are, nonetheless our perspective has radically altered, and this change is of a sort that cannot be reversed. If you look at a visual illusion, such as the vases/faces or a Necker cube, and have experienced the flip in perception, then you never again see what you first saw.

All the above 'experts' gave generously of their time and their input provided a valuable check on my own thought processes. Conversations with Laurie and John made sure that I did not become removed from fundamental subject matter of Zen and SOL, and yet talking to the other 'experts' who had more general concerns helped me locate my own analysis and opinions within a wider psychological and learning perspective.

Chapter 12 - Second Zen Mondo

What is a Learning Conversation?

A Learning Conversation implies that any participant is bringing their total attention to the conversation as far as they are able. Harri-Augstein and Thomas feel that this process is underpinned theoretically by their model of the Self Organised Learner which is rooted in Kelly's metaphor of the person as scientist. It is a reflective process of interaction where, at least initially, the conversations focuses on trying to point to the larger picture or context in which the content of the conversation is embedded. As it develops it elicits awareness of purpose and of the relationship between personal needs and purposes and relevant action. Or in the case of Zen, non action. And it goes on to explore the meaning of this 'personal' experiment in the person's life. In many professional practice situations this would require the initiator of the conversation to uncover to the other person (if there is one) the assumptions implicit in their responses and how this affects their tactics and strategies, and their explanations and theory building.

However despite recognising this I did not apply LC's in quite that way. Awareness in a Zen sense does not reside in the uncovering of tacit elements of the personal unconscious. I found myself agreeing with Atkinson and Silverman (1997) who feel that this means that the researcher and respondent **jointly negotiate the reconstruction of self.** This uncovering may have value for the person since it enables them to present themselves anew, to reflect and re-orient themselves. And that is what the SOL reflective process does. I suspected that it

was what all reflective processes do, and I will return to this issue in Chapter 14 – Methodological Issues Revisited. **But it isn't Zen.** What I had done was to use the agenda as the means of returning respondents time and time again to the basic question *what is Zen in your life?*

One of my motives in carrying out this research was to clarify my mind, and put my own critical subjectivity on the line. All through the research I had, persistently, taken decisions in the light of that. **What is required in Zen is not a rational explanation or reconstruction of self but a direct experience of being.** Outside of meditative techniques which encourage meditators to drop mental chatter and empty the mind, Zen traditionally requires novices to stay with questions that they cannot answer by rational means. Some of the questions in the LCs e.g. *what impact has Zen had on your life* or *has Zen made you more or less sensitive to the feelings of others* are actually asking *what does Zen mean to you* in a variety of different ways. Zen participants were very well aware that these questions were ontological, rather than epistemological and this is why they had difficulty expressing themselves. I would contend however that although I did not do other than play a reflective role in the Learning Conversations that the intent and the meaning which participants attached to the Learning Conversations made it clear that they felt that they had had a sharp reminder of what Zen means to them day to day. Four of the participants had spontaneously rung me after our conversations because they felt that they were still pondering on the questions I

raised. And **B** had discussed with me at the end of our LC that he had found the experience surprisingly powerful.

What are the important differences between Zen and SOL?

There are fundamental differences in **John** as a representative of the Zen state and all the other participants. There appears to be not that much difference between the Zen and SOL samples on the surface when it comes to how they express their presentational knowing. The genius of George Kelly was to recognise the dialectic comparisons by which people 'judge and choose' in their lives and harness this process as a tool of self examination. Others have extended these tools (Bannister and Fransella 1971) (Harri-Augstein and Thomas 1985). I am sure that this recognition of how a person uses this reflective method to explore their world accounts for the huge growth of personal construct psychology. Zen recognises the validity of this as a description of what people do when it urges novices to give up just such judging and choosing. **One system (SOL) explains how the intelligent self directed learner proceeds and the other (Zen) says there is a different way to be.** Had I been trying to uncover this different way to be among those who have not yet uncovered it for themselves I would have set myself an *impossible* task. What I was trying to uncover was what difference their Zen experience **had** made to them.

The difference between the two samples for me is one of intent. The SOL sample use the SOL model to improve their skills at judging and choosing. The Zen sample don't know how to stop, or unlearn that process, so they proceed in a

similar fashion. It is the Zen master who is their reminder that there are other ways of being, and it is in interactions with him that the real 'flavour' of Zen appears.

Are concepts of self important to understanding these differences?

As they are such a central tenet of Zen, I feel they are of crucial importance but I can point to little evidence that they are seen by the others I talked to in quite the same way as I see them. But perhaps this lack of evidence accurately reflects the actual situation. After all none of the Zen novices, including myself, have succeeded in moving to a position where we do not reference everything to a sense of a continuous self, which in Zen is a false consciousness. It is extremely difficult to constantly bear in mind that this sense of self is spurious even when conversing with John. The 'normal' sense of self is reinforced by language, and all the 'normal' situations of social interaction.

In fact it is impossible to keep in mind that the ego is a form of false consciousness, if what is meant by that is keeping it in mind at all times. It is not until the sense of self dis-identifies with mind that the whole problem is not only seen as spurious but is known as spurious by experience. Consciousness is thought. And so keeping particular thoughts in mind is interfering with the free flow of consciousness. It is in fact a blessing that we are unable to keep particular thoughts in mind.

So perhaps it was unrealistic of me to expect more difference without going after this issue in a more major way, i.e. asking more direct questions about it. I was reluctant to do this however in case I created this difference when it was not something which other Zen novices concentrated on. In other words my own pre-occupation could manufacture this issue as an artefact of the research inquiry.

Why wasn't more difference shown between the two samples?

The Zen sample are struggling to examine a process they do not understand, and they are caught up in a method of response which contributes to their perceived problem. I tried to minimise that factor when I moved from the overtly dialectic process of repertory grids to that of LC's. This still leaves the Zen sample with a classic dilemma. When they **talk** about Zen they are using a reflective process in which it is difficult to reveal their essential being. This is why Zen masters look to demeanour and action in interviews. Zen masters don't say 'tell me' they say 'show me' and this is a profound difference. **This showing has to be spontaneous.** Zen novices certainly read accounts of historical moments of enlightenment and they are aware of this. The account given in 4.4.2 of John asking people to come closer to him shows the difficulty of responding spontaneously. **When not put under that sort of pressure Zen novices respond in the same way as anyone else.**

It could of course be asked why I did not find some way of exerting such pressure and this issue is addressed below and in chapter 14 as a further review of my methodology.

What methodology might have exposed the differences I was looking for?

I gradually realised that I believed that no conversation could demonstrate the type of awareness I was seeking to demonstrate. In the Learning Conversations I had used a passive reflective mode initially. I could, as I have already stated, have been much more active in the conversations and challenged respondents harder on some issues. I had intended to have repeat conversations to do exactly that. One reason I did not do that was because I already had John's interview examples. He challenged the Zen participants whom he saw. These conversations show that in his presence novices make greater efforts, but these greater efforts demonstrate that the Zen respondents cannot see a resolution of their problem and without such a resolution they proceed much as a SOL participant might have done. Nonetheless there are differences between the two samples because of the aspirations of the Zen sample, so how could I show this difference?

When I deliberated, the closest I could come to feeling that I witnessed a Zen awareness, where people appeared to be on the brink of tremendous insights, was in some of John's meetings or workshops. However neither type of occasion had actually succeeded in provoking any participant to satori when I was present, although both had considerably shifted the perceptions of those taking part. However I had never expected to capture anyone experiencing satori as part of the research. The object was to describe the Zen experience and compare it with

another psychological system. My experiments to date again brought me face to face with my central concern.

What is enlightenment ?

There can be no doubt from the now vast literature of classical Zen masters that the state being aimed for is oneness – the experience that there is no barrier between the participant and life itself. The word often used to describe such experiences is *oceanic*. There are many accounts, particularly in accounts of meditation (Austin 1998) of this happening on a temporary basis. Once in conversation with John I asked him why such states did not appear to translate into some permanent change of consciousness. He replied that while people can often have experiences of apparently transcending their own personal boundaries these had to be sufficiently deep, where there was no see-er, no do-er and that all was one. They then transcended their previous sense of self. Most people reacted to the experience of a lack of personal boundary too early by attributing the experience to the self, in the ‘I’m having the most wonderful experience’ sort of way. This has the effect of snapping one back into the old mode. Whenever **any differentiation of states of consciousness is made this implies someone who is differentiating and having these states.**

Again I saw but didn't see. I knew very well from previous experience that I was nearly there, but I always created the wall, and snapped back.

PART 4

Chapter 13 - Facets of Zen Experience

*It doesn't matter what one does,
but how one does it.
How one does it
changes what one does*

Jonathan Hey

Until a few weeks before completing the final version of the thesis I thought that this chapter was the most important one in the thesis. Grouped together here were the main events where I thought that transpersonal, rather than intellectual values could be seen more clearly. When in analysing my methodological journey in chapter 2, I looked for evidence of where wholeness, openness, authenticity and emergence in myself were clearest, I felt that the events in this chapter showed this best. Now I feel that about chapter 16. However this chapter also tries to convey the inexpressible experience of 'standing at the wall' not only by accounts of experience, but by the use of fiction, and an analysis of art.

This chapter also shows coherence with my final insight, in that although my strategy of asking myself in 13.2 *who is feeling this* did not cause my final insight, the experiences I relate are coherent with its nature.

13.1 A Zen Sense of Self

Since one of the issues that had concerned me was the central place of concepts of self in understanding the Zen perspective I looked for further evidence that this was an important issue to Zen novices, since I felt it had not been demonstrated

clearly enough. John had a wide correspondence with people who tended to write to him in times of emotional turmoil. It was in re-reading this anonymous correspondence and some of John's replies, which he had assembled in his book '*The I of Zen*', that I was reminded that there was indeed evidence that others had struggled with many of the concerns which I had.

I also recalled Jacoby's (1975) concept of 'social amnesia'. Jacoby's critique of conformist psychology suggests that we constantly 'forget' and re-discover and re-name problems in the name of progress. I wondered whether one of the difficulties of trying to uncover issues like the following in conversational research is because we do not always recall our low points after we have gone through the experience. These correspondents wrote out of their extremity and in the extracts shown below the raw emotion of the experience shows through.

I have selected extracts from some of the letters to John, which appear in his book, and noted his reply. These extracts are from different people. It is noteworthy that John's replies are always succinct. In fact I made use of this (i.e. Zen novices as wordy and John succinct as a literary device, to show some of my own inner reactions to Zen in section 13.4 below).

The first example shows the difficulty of observing the self in action.

Example 1 - Observing the Self

'In getting to know myself by observing my reactions, how can I trust my deductions when so much happens in the subconscious and so often I don't know why I feel in a certain way. If my 'seeing' is distorted, on what basis can I understand what is going on in me? Also, when I pay attention to everything I am doing, each action involves

several of my senses, which means I cannot focus on them all at once. For example, when I wash my hands, there is so much to be aware of ... the feel of the water, the slipperiness of the soap, the sound of the water running from the tap, the children's voices downstairs, the reflection of light in the basin, the texture of the water pouring out of the tap, the feel of my feet supporting me, the feel of my back bent over the sink etc. Each action is so hugely complex, so where does one begin to observe?'

John:

There is, and never has been, any real basis for your actions (or any one else's in the relative world): isn't that more terrifying than the prospect of escaping the limitations of the relative world?

Awareness is only true awareness when there is no selecting and choosing based on ego. There is no complexity here.

The next example shows that the feeling of unreality that I have reported experiencing was also so for other people. It seems to be stage that some go through. Although if my own experience is anything to go by, even when you see, or think you see why it happens, it recurs. As John observes one has to keep at it.

Example 2 - The 'reality' of the 'illusory' self

"I feel that every time I meet you a part of me dies; yet I cling to the memory of that part and, by dint of that, resuscitate it. The result of this is a feeling of unreality about my life, a zombie quality which I cannot disguise to myself no matter how hard I try to engage in trivia. There are times when I feel almost overwhelmed by futility.

I got my fingers well and truly burned at the last meeting, and the intensity of that experience has not deserted me, although I feel it has diminished as I continue to cling to myself even though it is painful.

I feel trapped inside an awareness of my own powerful self-manipulation, and of my incessant pre-empting of experience. Even in writing this I seem to be trying to elicit a particular kind of response from you, as though I were trying to manipulate you into providing me with the key to enlightenment as I envisage it.

John: It is only after having tried its utmost – in terms of awareness – to 'catch' itself in action and failed, that the self gives up – and in doing so, finds its true self.

In the next example the respondent is trying to have his cake and eat it. On the one hand he knows that 'progress' as he normally sees it is futile, but he wants to feel better about himself **and** get somewhere in Zen. Like the correspondent above he also recounts the difficulties of trying to remain aware.

Example 3 - What is progress?

The last six days have been the worst psychologically that I remember. There has been nothing but turbulence and depression day and night. I have been unable to sleep properly, and have exasperated colleagues at work with the amount of mistakes I have made.

Your injunction that we should practise continuous awareness. I am completely unable to do this. If I try to watch, the part of the mind that is watching calls itself 'I' and criticises or interferes all the time. If I try to let go, I become totally identified with the events taking place and all one's conditioning takes over. One 'comes to' hours later.

You told me that I was selecting - I cannot stop selecting - that is my whole existence.

I came to you reasonably happy but with a growing sense of dissatisfaction. Four meetings later there is no happiness in this life at all. Everything has been demolished - peace of mind, love life and probably soon my job. I ask you, is this progress? Why am I so terribly dense that I cannot understand you? The only reason I continue in these dreadful mind-sapping struggles is that having met you, and having recognised something in you however dimly, it seems that I have to go on.

John: The path to Zen is not – and never was – strewn with roses. It is a murder story in which both the murderer and the victim perish, for they are one.

Why do you feel so guilty that your prime concern is, so far as you are aware, with aspects of the relative world ('peace, piece? of mind', 'love life', 'job') rather than with attaining the absolute? If you have made such a choice – at whatever level – then be content with it.

Because it is so easy, the path to Zen is incomparably difficult. Always remember: the spirit of Zen abhors selecting and choosing. Only after enlightenment is one free to be what one really is; everything else will then attend to itself.

Another stage which many go through is inventing new ways to be. Although regulars know that anything invented or thought out isn't being, they continue to try.

Example 4 - How to be

After a terrible storm, a still point. The way seems to be
- Every moment know nothing, and be humble.

John: *Storms and stillnesses are merely tricks of the self.*

The way to enlightenment is through the deepest possible perception that there is no way; there is certainly no room for humility, or arrogance.

The next example shows one of the traps you can fall into if try to doubt thoroughly. Once you doubt who you are or that you have a continuous self, as this correspondent appears to, **you also have to doubt the system delivering the doubts.**

Example 5 - Who am I?

My experience of who or what I am is in a constant state of flux from moment to moment and in all ways. I find I do not know what 'I am' means, for I seem to be a shifting kaleidoscope of a myriad things, a part of the shifting and reforming of all energy, i.e. All that IS. So 'it is' perhaps, but it seems that 'I' am not.

John: *If you need to say 'I am' you are not. If you are, you do not need to say 'I am'. You cannot expect to have a question like that answered. It must answered for oneself in terms of experience and not a 'mentally worked out' reply.*

I like the next example as it shows John's sense of fun. It may seem ridiculous that novices spend so much time asking John (as they often did in meetings) how to give up. Of course there is no method.

Example 6 - How to let go?

I don't know HOW TO LET GO! I DON'T KNOW!

A sudden idea! Maybe the things I try to escape from are/could be really 'good' and very useful, i.e. insecurity, cold, ageing physiology, jealousy, fear, violence (in myself), aggression, vanity

John: *The way to let go is not to want to hold on. Repeat that slowly.*

The problems of sorting out one's attitude to self were, as seen above, a pre-occupation of many people as they began to be familiar with John's approach to Zen. This pre-occupation concerned me too, and emerged at a crisis point in my own life in a way which I had not foreseen.

13.2 Which Self Grieves?

After carrying out the LC's I became aware that John was very ill. I wrote to him expressing, very emotionally, how devastated I was at the thought of his death (which he talked of quite factually). I received a short note back via S the Zen Foundation secretary. It said '*Sympathy is one thing and self indulgence quite another.*' Attached to this note was a yellow sticker from S which said '*I'm sorry to have to send you such a letter*'.

The juxtaposition of both messages struck me immediately as very funny, and I understood instantly what John was telling me. The emotional part of my own letter was all about **my** feelings of loss, and that these had swamped the sympathy which John knew I felt and was trying to express. It was a short sharp lesson that was to have much deeper effects.

John died a few months later without my ever seeing him again, although I spoke to him on the phone. Somehow on his death I found I could not indulge in all those excesses of feeling that are common at such a time. Whenever I found myself overcome by sorrow I asked myself '**who is feeling this**'. That was usually sufficient to stop the emotion in its tracks. If I looked steadily at how my emotions became enlarged and exaggerated by my sense of self, the feelings stilled. I still felt

emotions. I could still feel joy as well as sorrow but these feelings came and went swiftly. I felt no sense of isolation. I felt John's death deeply but I tried to abandon concepts such as I need, I have lost something precious, I am alone, and so on. This state was intensely alive and quite unlike my other reported attempts at self conscious awareness.

A further opportunity to look at how self concepts affected my grieving came all too soon when a few months after John's death it was discovered that my husband Viv was suffering from cancer which had already metastasised and was untreatable. I had lived with Viv for over thirty years and the thought that he was dying was devastating. Since his illness came out of the blue many of Viv's friends and family were equally distressed at the news that he was dying. At one time I would probably have turned to John in such straits, and in a sense I suppose I did, since I used the same process in dealing with Viv's loss that I had with John's. The major difference between the two events was that Viv himself was still alive and had his own needs.

Whenever I felt incapacitated I found that I could function better and more clearly if I kept asking myself 'who is feeling this' as I had before, at the time of John's death. No matter what came up, whether feelings of anger, of loss, of hurt I tried to observe them without judgement. This process led to a number of self discoveries.

I found that I could not observe the self as observer. From a logical point of view since Zen says the ego self is illusory, then it seems natural that one cannot observe

it. However I find a big difference in the **quality** of the experience to **emotionally recognise** that the self is just a concept, as opposed to working it out logically. When one observes carefully, what is seen is not the observer, but **the perturbation on the system of operating to the belief that 'I' control events.** When I considered this further I realised that when previous to this experience I had been trying to cultivate awareness all I was doing was getting in touch with the illusory part of the system. This was not giving me the clarity I was seeking but rather locking me in to a gridlock of how hopelessly I was stuck. Whereas in real life, in experience, if I observed carefully, emotions provide fluctuating movement and a better example of myself in motion.

By observing my emotions without judgement I did not at any point in this process ever feel that I was repressing or denying my feelings. I still had feelings, but they came and went, and I did not dwell on them. As Viv rapidly declined (he died three months after being diagnosed) he found the emotional excesses of other people very difficult to handle. He faced his death with great courage. He took the minimum amount of painkillers as he hated being cushioned from feeling alive. He did not shrink from facing death but he did have difficulty with the living. More and more he relied on me to shield him from other people's feelings. We did not have any deep discussions about this, but he would ask me to field phone calls and he became reluctant to see or talk to anyone but our small immediate family circle. On one occasion when I felt that perhaps I should **say** how much I loved him, he appeared to find this emotionally distressing. It was then that I realised that

unfinished business is very much the preserve of the ego. If after 30 years Viv did not feel the love I had for him, telling him a few weeks before he died was not going to affect anything. As I looked steadily at this process and tried not to shrink from any part of it, I achieved a kind of peace. Towards the end Viv seemed to value that peace, and the ordinary everyday pleasures of a cup of tea, sitting in the garden, occasionally watching the Test match on television. And the great lesson for me was that all the concerns I had about the nature of the self had real practical consequences. I saw that in my grief I was reacting differently from the people around me in theirs, and I began to notice numerous instances of how that difference in my attitude was not shared by others.

During this period I often talked to S and shared with her my thoughts on grieving. The deaths of John and Viv were not the only contact with death I had while completing this thesis. S died in the summer of 1998.

13.3 Which Self Died?

Not surprisingly John's death left a great gap in S's life at a time when her own health was difficult. She had been a diabetic since the age of six and her survival into her seventies required constant and careful management. Management, which increasingly she did not have the will to sustain. In addition she had fallen over and broken her leg, which had been slow to heal, and this seemed to create in her a fear of being a burden to others. My contact with S, who was Secretary of the Zen Foundation, increased a great deal after John's death since as Chair of Trustees, she regarded me as the person to consult about many matters. I tried

to give every support I could but tried to tread a fine line between taking over some of her problems and giving advice on others. I was very aware that if I took away too much of the duties she was struggling with that she would find her life very empty.

It was during the period between John's death in 1995 and her own in 1998 that she told me of her dreams, dreams in which she felt she was in contact with something greater than herself. The first dream happened when she was six. She went into a diabetic coma, and almost died. Shortly thereafter she had a dream where some 'power' asked her whether she wanted to stay in her present life or go to a new life (the feeling quality of the dream was such that somehow she understood in the dream that this new life would be beautiful). She decided however to stay.

Since that experience, on a number of occasions when she was wrestling with some great problem she had a dream about it, where she was shown choices she could make. The dreams both unsettled her, yet made her feel as though she was cared for. When in her retirement she trained as an Eriksonian hypnotherapist, she began to ask herself whether the entity she experienced in her dreams was a part of something greater than herself, or was in fact part of herself. A part which she could not normally access.

Towards the end of 1997, shortly after she had broken her leg, she told me that she wanted to die. We had many conversations about this. She reported that when she told other people about this they seemed highly uncomfortable and tried

to dissuade her from such morbid thoughts. I therefore became her confidante on death and her plans for death. I felt that if I tried to dissuade her from death in the way she experienced others as doing that she would withdraw and feel even more alone. I tried therefore to harness her own deeper beliefs about Zen to the problem as she perceived it. I encouraged her to ask herself, as I had constantly asked myself, who was feeling this - who wanted to die? Was this her ego or a deeper part of herself? I told her that if I thought her decision to die was a 'Zen' decision and that she could convince me of that, then she had my blessing. If, however she was simply tired, and depressed and looking for a way of trying to evade her problems I did not feel the same sympathy. If this sounds either harsh or pious when recounted so baldly, I was how I felt. The last thing S seemed to want was feeling that there was no one she could talk to about what concerned her. All I can say is that she seemed more animated and less depressed during these conversations.

I had been out of touch with S for about a week when her husband rang to tell me that she was in hospital in London. I went to see her and she told me that she had given herself an overdose of insulin. Instead of sending her into a coma, she had convulsions which awoke her husband who had called an ambulance. She was quite open about this both with me and the hospital authorities. They stabilised her diabetic condition but were reluctant to release her since she told them she would try again. She had a bedside phone and I talked to her daily. She seemed surprised at the reaction she engendered in talking of her death. I pointed out that

her somewhat cavalier attitude to life was unlikely to be appreciated by those dedicated to saving life. I advised her that if she wished to be released from hospital she should change her story. (My hope at that time was that if she went home that we could make modifications to the ground floor of her home so that she had a greater sense of mobility.)

She then had another dream. She was again asked whether she wanted to go or stay and again she opted to stay. Not only was she very surprised by this but she was also greatly distressed by it. As she told me she thought that she really wanted to die, so where had this other decision come from? She then talked about this 'other' as part of herself, and she asked my advice as to how to get in touch with this other part of herself and change its mind. Here I felt that S had got herself into the kind of limbo that John mentions in his conversation with M. Although I could get her to talk and even laugh I thought she was unlikely to change her mind in her present environment and I tried to talk her into dropping all her plans until she got home. I also suggested that as a hypnotherapist she should get in touch with and talk to that part of herself that she encountered in dreams. I told her that since she had always felt that the counsel she received in this way was wise, she should pay attention to it, and try to understand it as deeply as possible.

Around this time external authority took a hand. Since S was still seen as a high suicide risk, but her diabetes was stable, she was transferred to a hospital psychiatric ward. This was a very depressing place compared to her previous

ward. She was also unable to be reached by phone, so I did not know of her daily ups and downs. I went to see her whenever I could, but since I lived in Norwich and she was in hospital in London, I saw her 4 times in all of the six weeks remaining of her life.

She continued to be convinced that she wanted to die and that she had to get her dream self to concur in this decision. She also realised very quickly that in the ward she was now in that the same care was not taken with her nutritional intake. She was given a diabetic dietary regime but ate very little. I was startled by the rapid decline which she maintained, not by refusing to eat, but by eating very little. I was also concerned that the hospital might try force feeding her. And indeed when I saw her a few days before she died, they had inserted a tube in order to give nourishment. When I saw her I knew that she was near death, but I was unsure how much the tube feeding would accomplish. As it transpired it did not make much difference.

However I felt that S had not resolved her problem of who had wanted to die – but I really don't know. Certainly I felt that her own wish to die had its roots in that first dream where she felt that to die was to go to some wonderful place. Even when she herself decided that perhaps she was talking in dreams to part of herself, I think she continued to feel that in death she would go to some better place. In her struggle she saw her ego as clinging to life, and her true self as ready for death. I was afraid it was the other way around.

I saw her for the last time 3 days before her death. She seemed then very peaceful, as if she knew that she had achieved her aim and could now relax. And she did not seem to regret her choice.

13.4 Standing at the Wall

Standing at the wall was a metaphor John used for the illusory boundary between relative and Zen consciousness. In a recorded meeting John once described this as follows.

“Being ‘at the wall’ is where, in the non-Zen state, you are so hypersensitively aware of attachments as they come and go that you can, as it were, think them out again as you see them coming. Your mind is in a very thin spread state, where it seems less focussed, more static, but intensely alive; and in a sense one can end thoughts as they come and go, think them out again, and remain in this ‘at the wall’ state.”

Being at the wall tends not to last very long in duration because inevitably the mind tends to notice and judge this state which then becomes **self** conscious. If one tries to remain permanently on this high by cultivating a sense of awareness it tends to have the reverse effect. In my experience because when at the wall one experiences a sort of sense of distance from normal everyday consciousness it becomes easy to confuse this with the sense of distance I described to John that day in the New Forest. One confuses a sense of isolation and distance from life with this attenuated stretched state of standing at the wall. In the true ‘standing at the wall’ there is a great **sensitivity and aliveness** where one feels that one is on the brink of something momentous. **I am now forever alert to the recognition**

that any sense of being cut off from life is a sign that I have veered into self indulgence.

From time to time John set tasks for people that required that they do something they thought difficult if not impossible. One obvious example is encouraging me to attempt this thesis, which I have experienced as requiring me to stick with insoluble questions. From time to time during this process I experienced periods of great clarity and awareness, at others I seemed to be stumbling along unsure of where I was going. With hindsight I feel that John provoked this process in me of dealing with the unexplainable, by asking me to write things. Sometimes he would ask me to let him have my impressions of a workshop or meeting which he conducted. Certainly when asked to produce a commentary I felt I had to dig as deep as I was able to demonstrate my understanding of what was happening. This intense self questioning often propelled one willy nilly to the wall. I had never thought of myself as a writer in the sense of being a person to whom writing comes easily. Nonetheless during the early stages of this research inquiry I also attempted writing fiction. The short story shown below is my attempt to convey better what John and Zen meant to me emotionally in a way that the rest of this thesis is unlikely to do. During its writing I felt in a psychological impasse, as I struggled to explain the basis of the relationship between James and Mary. But emotionally during the writing I also felt a sense of heightened sensitivity. It was certainly not a dead abstract place.

13.5 My Own Wall

Although in a sense this whole thesis could be regarded as my attempt to understand the central mystery that is Zen, by definition it is analytic in character. I did give expression to a much more intuitive attempt to express the inexpressible in a short fiction story entitled '*The Sound of One Hand Dusting*'.

In this story, which is total fiction, a Zen master provokes a novice into translating her intellectual knowing into practical knowing. (I find it interesting that I wrote this before much of the thesis yet it reflects many of the same pre occupations). The bulk of the story is told in an exchange of notes between James, the master, and Mary, the novice. The fictional mode allowed me to say what the novice was thinking and feeling, although I did not attempt to portray what the master was **feeling**. However I did have to attribute words to him. So its relevance here is that in this story I tried to create the feelings of the sort of psychological impasse which encounters with John engendered in me, but I did also role play the master and had to create him through dialogue.

I sent it to John and the next time I met him he playfully referred to himself as James and me as Mary. I took this, perhaps mistakenly, as evidence that John thought that my relative truth was recognisable. At the end of the story I had to express a moment of great insight that Mary experienced. I leave it up to the reader to decide whether Mary experiences kensho or not. Since I have not taken this step into Zen consciousness the description is merely a conception. (The alert reader may notice the denouement takes place on April 1st).

THE SOUND OF ONE HAND DUSTING

The Japanese master Nan-in received a professor of philosophy who came to enquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He filled his visitor's cup full, and kept pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he could contain himself no longer. "Stop! It is overfull". No more will go in."

Nan-in bowed and said "Like this cup you are full of your own opinions. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup".

Tuesday 27 November

Dear James,

I feel terrible. I finally got to see you at your home, and I behaved like an idiot. I don't know why I can never act naturally with you. Each time you ask me something it's as though my brain speeds through a whole set of responses discarding them all, and I finally say something fatuous. Inside I feel all speeded up, but outside I belatedly blurt out some nonsense. At least I try to be honest, but I suspect I must also have seemed terribly rude. Since you always seem honest to me and yet you are never rude there must be something I'm missing. Anyway thank you for seeing me.

Best Regards

Mary

Friday 30th November

Dear Mary,

Thank you for your letter. There is no absolute honesty. There are also no mistakes, so no apology is needed. Would you be interested in a job as cleaner at my home, one day per week. I suggest Friday. Pay would be £3.50 per hour, hours to be agreed.

James

Monday 3rd December

Dear James,

You always manage to disconcert me. Is this offer because I said I thought your house was amazingly clean? It's also quite a test of what I said about always trying to be honest with you. But you say there is no honesty in Zen. I suppose what I really mean is that I'm trying to be natural and not edit my responses.

My first reaction was that I couldn't possibly find the time for a 200 mile round trip just for a cleaning job. And the second was that it was a bit a comedown for a lecturer in psychology. But what does that say about my sense of values?

How did you know I don't have any lectures or seminars on a Friday? But cleaning lady to a Zen master has a certain style. You knew I wouldn't be able to resist it. By some chance (?) the payment you offer just about covers my train fare. I accept. When do I start?

Best Wishes,

Mary

Wednesday 5th December

Dear Mary,

Please start on Friday. The house will be empty. In order to minimise disruption to family routine please arrive any time after 9, and leave by 4. Please clean as appropriate. The number of hours you work is up to you. I enclose a key to the back door, please keep it safe.

Family members are responsible for their own bedrooms, so you need only clean the ground floor. Cleaning materials are in the cupboard in the cloakroom.

If you leave a note of the hours you worked, I will leave the correct payment the following week.

James

Friday 7th December

Dear James

I arrived at 9.30 as my train was late, and I took half an hour for lunch. so I worked 6 hours. I feel a real fraud though. Everything was immaculately clean already. There weren't even any breakfast things. You said to clean as I thought appropriate. I mopped and polished the kitchen floor, although it didn't have a single smear on it that I could see, so my main preoccupation was to make sure that it looked as clean when I finished as when I started! I also vacuumed throughout and dusted, although I couldn't see any dust. Perhaps it would be better if you told me what you wanted cleaned.

Best Wishes,

Mary

Friday 14th December

Dear Mary,

Thank you, £21 enclosed. Please clean as appropriate.

James

Friday 21st December

Dear James,

I'm humbled. I did rather suspect you of having deliberately cleaned up last week to disconcert me, and make the point that this job wasn't what it seemed. But even I cannot think you would carry it to this length. I decided that although the books seemed dust free, if I took each one down separately to dust, I would be bound to find some dirt. That's an operation I only do in my own flat once a year, if that, and I always wind up filthy after it.

But there was no dust to speak of. And the children's' books were not only clean, but tidy. The first thought I had was that your children could just be repressed. Now that is rude. (Especially since I don't actually believe it). This is where I have real difficulty with the Zen notion of being spontaneous. It can't mean just saying the first thing that comes into your head. You don't do that, you're unfailingly courteous. On the other hand you're not afraid to do it when necessary, or do I mean APPROPRIATE?

So I'm back where I started really, what is appropriate? 6 hours.

Mary.

Friday 21st December

Dear Mary,

Thank you, £21 enclosed. We will be away for Christmas, can you come next on the 4th January?

Please clean as appropriate.

James

Friday 21st December

Dear James,

What do you mean please clean as appropriate? Are you saying that I shouldn't clean something that I think is clean enough? I don't want to work myself out of a job already. However this isn't an ordinary sort of job is it? It's a test of some kind.

I've only been here half an hour, and some of that was writing this note, so you don't owe me any money. I didn't clean anything because nothing was dirty, is that appropriate?

Mary

Friday 4th January

Dear Mary,

Thank you, £1.75 enclosed. Please give your attention this week to a mark on the skirting board behind the kitchen door.

James

Friday 4th January

Dear James,

I've cleaned all the skirting boards. I got out the step ladder and dusted all the picture rails and looked in all of the unlikely places I could think of. What were you trying to tell me? That I only clean the clean bits and don't really look for the dirty bits. Is that what I do in life too I wonder, go over and over the things I can do easily and don't look for the bits out of normal view? This whole thing is driving me crazy. When I get home I look at my flat and realise that by your standards its pretty dirty. If I was able to be rational about this I'd either clean mine

more, or clean yours less. But if I cleaned mine more I'd spend my whole life cleaning! Anyway to be on the safe side I just kept on cleaning till my time was up.

Mary

Friday 11th January

Dear Mary,

Thank you. You didn't say how many hours you worked. I enclose £21 as before. If this is not correct we can adjust it next week. There is a brush with a long handle in the cupboard, suitable for cleaning picture rails. Please clean as appropriate.

James

Friday 11th January

Dear James,

OK. I suppose I over-reacted. And I cleaned the picture rails the hard way. That's hardly appropriate. When I think about it you didn't actually say I had missed something last week. Perhaps the skirting board was dirtied after I had been there last time. What does it matter anyway? Why do I take your remarks as a criticism when they aren't meant that way? What's your advice? As if I didn't know already - CLEAN AS APPROPRIATE.

6 hours.

Mary

Friday 18th January

Dear Mary,

Thank you, £21 enclosed. Is our accounting up-to-date?

James

Friday 18th January

Dear James,

This is ridiculous. I've been doing this job for 6 weeks now. Each Friday I arrive at your house and gaze in despair at its gleaming, aggressive cleanliness. I then have to decide which impeccably clean surface to clean again. The whole thing is spreading too. I've started spring cleaning my flat. I'm turning out cupboards and throwing away junk. My main problem is that I feel I'm being paid under false pretences, clearly other people are doing the real cleaning in your house (or is there a whole army of us, each worrying about what the other is doing?) When I accepted this job I suppose I hoped that it meant something more than just cleaning, so I suppose I shouldn't be surprised at what is happening. I've just thought - this is like a koan isn't it, Zen masters used to give their pupils a problem that couldn't be solved logically or rationally. How would it be expressed as a koan - what is the sound of one hand dusting?

Yes our accounting is up to date, and today I worked six hours,

Mary

Friday 25th January

Dear Mary,

Thank you, £21 enclosed. Your koan is clean as appropriate.

James

P.S. You may be interested in the following Zen story.

Tanzan and Ekido were travelling down a muddy road. They met a lovely girl in a beautiful kimono and sash, unable to cross a large puddle.

"Come on girl" said Tanzan, and lifted her over the mud.

Ekido waited until they reached a lodging temple, then said:

"We monks don't go near females - especially pretty young ones. Why did you do that?"

"I left the girl there" said Tanzan. "Are you still carrying her?"

Friday 1st February

Dear James,

What are you trying to tell me. What is it that I can't let go of? Not cleaning surely? Although this cleaning business is taking over my life. I clean everything I can find. I like to think when I arrive on a Friday that each mote of dust quails in dread. I even found myself dusting the table before the start of a dreary departmental meeting yesterday. I didn't half get some funny looks. People in the department think of me as a bit of a feminist, and they expect me to go out of my way not to do domestic things. Of course men like my colleague Luke try to show they're not sexist by rushing around serving the tea, and being careful to call the chairman "chairperson". But I feel it would be more meaningful in our department if it wasn't always a man in the chair. This week I concentrated on the windows. I'm getting dishpan hands. Six hours.

Mary

Friday 8th February

Dear Mary,

Thank you, £21 enclosed. There are rubber gloves in the cloakroom cupboard.

James

Friday 8th February

Dear James,

I've been trying to get a new perspective on my koan. I've tried to think of how I might feel if I were a real cleaning lady. She wouldn't spend all this time worrying about how clean everything was, would she? What would she be concerned about? If I were her I wouldn't want to lose a very cushy little job, so I would want to give satisfaction. On the other hand, a real cleaning lady wouldn't clean all the clean things over and over, or would she? Is that what a cleaning lady does? Perhaps she'd look carefully to see if anything really needed doing, and do it. But if it was all sparkling already, she'd relax and have a cup of tea.

Well that's no help really. I tried that. I had a cup of tea but I didn't feel in the least relaxed. In any case I've tried not cleaning and that wasn't appropriate was it? 5 and a half hours. I spent half an hour writing this note.

Mary

Friday 15th February

Dear Mary.

Thank you £19.25 enclosed. In what way are you not a real cleaner?

James

Friday 15th February

Dear James,

Your questions appear so simple, but I've got the feeling this is a tough one. Are you saying that when I'm at your house I'm just a cleaner and nothing else? OK, I confess that when I took this

job I thought it wasn't just about cleaning your house. Are you asking me what I did think it was about? I suppose I thought I would see you occasionally and you would find some way to make me think. Well you've certainly done that. I'm thoroughly confused. You've got me in a perpetual ferment with no effort at all, and you don't even have to be there. 6 hours.

Mary

Friday 22nd February

Dear Mary,

Thank you, £21 enclosed.

James.

Friday 22nd February

Dear James,

What happened! The kitchen looked as though an extremely dirty and ravening army had passed through. The floor was covered in dirty footprints. There were dirty dishes and crumbs all over the place. There were fingerprints on all the cabinets. Even I could see it needed cleaning, so I did. You did this deliberately, didn't you? I think I prefer it clean. 6 hours.

Mary

Friday 1st March

Dear Mary,

Some workmen came to demolish an old garden shed. Thank you for cleaning up after them. £21 enclosed.

James

Friday 1st March

Dear James,

You really know how to puncture my pretensions, don't you? OK. so I over-reacted again. It wasn't quite as dirty as I said, it was just the contrast between last week and how it usually is. I tried to find an appropriate task this week. The cloakroom cupboard was really quite untidy, presumably because I've been using it! (I'm surprised you haven't been on to me about it.) Anyway I've had a thorough turnout, so I reckon this week I can relax and enjoy a cup of tea. 5 and a half hours.

Mary

Friday 5th March

Dear Mary,

Thank you £19.25 enclosed.

James

Friday 8th March

Dear James,

I'm still brooding about my koan. I can't seem to think of anything except cleaning. Is that what you're trying to show me - that I should stop thinking about it and just get on and do it. 6 hours

Mary

Friday 15th March

Dear Mary,

Thank you, £21.00 enclosed. Please clean as appropriate.

James

Friday 15th March

Dear James,

I gave the ground floor its usual going over.

6 hours.

Mary

Friday 22nd March

Dear Mary,

£21 enclosed thank you. Next Friday is not convenient, can you manage the following Monday, just for this one week?

James

April 1st

At 9.00 am precisely Mary walks swiftly up the garden path. It is a sunny clear morning. She pauses to admire the magnolia, it's magnificent blooms blushing on bare branches. Inserting the key in the lock with the ease of familiarity, she steps into the pale blue and white kitchen, and looks round cautiously - immaculate as usual. She moves towards the hall taking off her deep pink coat as she goes.

"Good Morning Mary, how are you?" says James.

Mary freezes in an attitude of total shock. The moment seems to go on for ages and yet she knows that only a second has passed. She can feel her mind feebly scrabbling around, wondering what to say. She thinks of and discards about six different things. It's too late now just to say "fine thanks." Besides she isn't fine.

"Shit" she says forcefully.

"Where?" says James, looking around on the pale blue carpet. Mary giggles. Suddenly she becomes aware of a huge bubble of laughter deep inside herself. She sees the ridiculousness of all the things she worries about. What to clean, what to say, even how to be. How can she not be who she is? Sometimes she cleans, sometimes she lectures, but she always is – her being does not change.

"Have a cup of tea", says James.

Mary finds this exquisitely funny. She starts to laugh ... and laugh ... tears run helplessly down her cheeks.

"I'll put the kettle on", says James.

13.6 C Standing at the Wall

When writing his book 'The I of Zen' John included his own modern version of the allegoric Zen Bulls. Entitled Zen, Oxherding and the Trackless way, these describe stages in searching, catching and mastering a wild ox, which represents the enlightened mind or Buddha nature.

John asked C to provide appropriate illustrations to his commentary. When producing the line sketches shown overleaf she made hundreds of drawings, sending them off to John for his comments. John never told her what to do. It was she who decided the overall theme for a drawing. She would then make

dozens of attempts, sometimes producing the same drawing over and over again. She never knew the criteria by which John selected the final version, or even whether any criteria existed. Having seen many of these drawings at various stages of their development when C and I talked about this we assumed that John was looking for the spontaneity exhibited by classical Zen masters such as Hakuin in his drawing.

But of course C's problem as she went through the series was to portray not only pre-enlightenment phases, but stages 8-10 which denote enlightenment and after. I know from the discussions which we had at the time how finding meaningful images absorbed and immersed her in Zen. All the drawings are beautiful in an aesthetic sense, but it is in a Zen sense that her dilemmas arose. I particularly admire her resolution to the state of standing at the wall, shown in plates 6 and 7. In six where the ox has been found and attempts made to master it the image of the ox is shown only by its horns and the hand loosely guiding it with a piece of string. This is not only technically demanding but shows a beautiful delicacy of touch. Since the later drawings use the image of water as the source of all things plate 7 showing the ox's head dissolving under water illustrates the following text beautifully.

“ he understands finally that his idea of Buddha-mind was simply a projection of himself. He has been an ox in search of an ox.”

But it is in the next few drawings that the Zen crunch comes. These portray the enlightened adept returning to life and continuing in an *ordinary* way which is nonetheless *extraordinary*.

I find all the drawings beautiful and appropriate to the text. But I felt I knew the mental turmoil that C suffered in trying to express her understanding of these final states. Her final drawing is in fact a measure of her own inability to take the step into enlightenment. The Buddha's head shown in it is a drawing she did of an ancient wooden head held in the British Museum. John particularly admired the head and he liked her drawing so much that he often used it as the frontispiece of commentaries that he sometimes distributed at Zen meetings. When she could think of no other way to express the inexpressible she used this image. It is an ingenious solution as it is certainly appropriate as an icon of enlightenment. Indeed it would be universally understood as a sign of Buddhahood. From a Zen perspective I regard it as a magnificent failure as what was being demanded of her was more than that.

Just as when a Zen master asks a novice to demonstrate understanding of a koan he looks for some unique and individual expression – not necessarily in words – sometimes in action – sometimes in demeanour – but he looks for it in the present. Her Buddha drawing, however beautiful was from the past. I feel that resolution of this task demanded some more idiosyncratic and personal demonstration of understanding. It could have been anything a dot, a straight line, a cup of tea. What was needed was the **confidence to be**, after which any expression of this

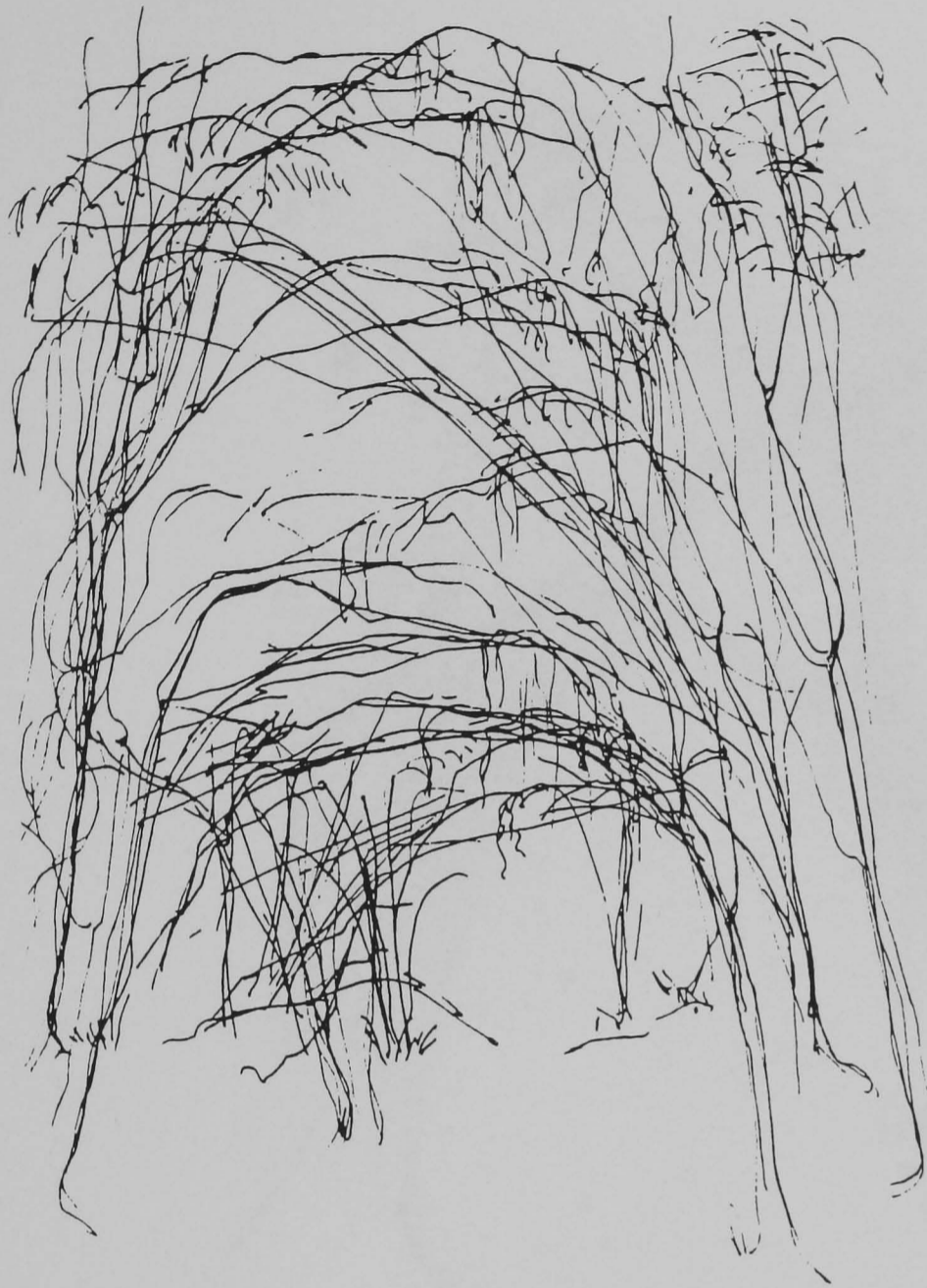


Plate I: SEARCHING FOR THE OX

Commentary

The search for existential wholeness begins in earnest. When the relative mind is no longer totally preoccupied with career, hobby, wife, family, bank balance, God, and so on, a sense of incompleteness arises. This is accompanied by an almost indefinable feeling that completeness is possible, but not while the sense of self remains rooted in the state of mind that perceives its own incompleteness.

This sense of incompleteness is more or less easily submerged by thoughts of attachment to people, things or activities. It may be fleeting or long-lasting. It may cause psychosomatic illness; it may so affect the individual's conventional life as to be diagnosed, and treated, as a serious mental illness.



Plate II: FINDING THE TRACES OF THE OX

Commentary

One sees ever more clearly the artifices of the attached mind in everything one does. At the same time one's image of what it would be like to be free of these artifices and limitations begins to develop.

It is still all too easy to become distracted and to allow this image to be displaced by other, preferred, images of self.

It is of little assistance to seek the help of more skilled seekers; one must develop one's own skill.



Plate III: SEEING THE OX

Commentary

Buddha nature is glimpsed hazily for the first time. It is as though a deeper level of awareness intermittently bursts forth. It may manifest as surprising and sporadic intuitions or as deep contentment in, for example, a cloud-strewn sky or a child's smile.

As with one's night vision, where it is easier to see an object by looking slightly to one side of it, so this state of mind is experienced most clearly when one does not concentrate directly upon it.

A major danger is that one will cultivate this facet of mind as an end in itself: many so-called 'spiritualists', minor muses and psychiatrists illustrate the seductiveness of this state of consciousness.



Plate IV: CATCHING THE OX

Commentary

The idea of the Buddha-mind is now fully developed. The individual adjusts his life to it. Aware of its native strength, he cannot resist using his relative mind to contain and control it so far as possible.

But what has he caught?

Start of the Ox
To the Master
Master



Plate V: MASTERING THE OX

Commentary

The notion of Buddha-mind is increasingly refined according to the wishes of the ego-mind. Its unpredictable power is harnessed and directed to worthy ends.

Saint or sage his mastery of himself is lauded by his fellow men. To the Masters he 'stinks of zen'. This is the master who is not yet Master.

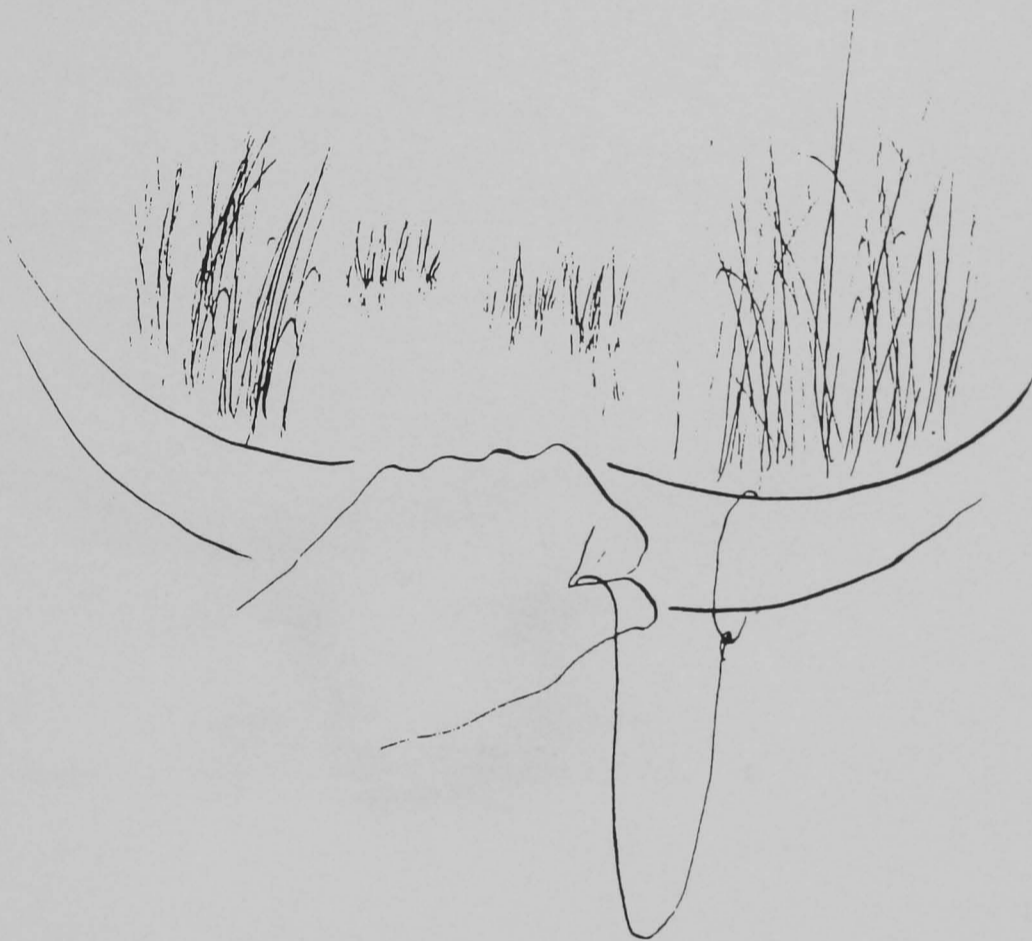


Plate VI: COMING HOME ON THE OX'S BACK

Commentary

Under the influence of the idea of the Buddha-mind, the urge to structure it and all aspects of one's mental and physical life become increasingly attenuated.

It is as though a wall of glass, transparent yet impassable, separates the sense of I from the I-less state of the Buddha-mind. Crossing this barrier becomes an existential imperative: nothing else matters. Outwardly, he is serene and calm, betraying little if anything of the slow-motion vortex within.



Plate VII: THE OX FORGOTTEN, LEAVING THE MAN ALONE

Commentary

At last he experiences the trap he has set for himself: he understands finally that his *idea* of Buddha-mind was simply a projection of himself. He has been 'an ox in search of an ox'.

Freed from this delusion he is left, finally, to face the emptiness of his own true nature. If he can avoid projecting other ideas to replace 'the ox', he will pass effortlessly into enlightenment. He may, however, experience again many or all of the earlier so-called stages in the mistaken belief that he has to do something slightly differently in order to turn the key. He may thus fail finally to see that it is this 'doing' that binds him to himself.



Plate VIII: BOTH OX AND MAN FORGOTTEN

Commentary

He has truly discovered himself: only to find that there is no-thing to discover. He has achieved supreme unexcelled enlightenment. He is Buddha.



Plate IX: RETURNING TO THE ORIGIN, BACK TO THE SOURCE

Commentary

The eye of enlightenment penetrates to the essence of things. His mind perceives without attachment. All taint of spirituality has left him. The natural man stands forth. It is a matter of supreme non-importance whether he treads the void or the void treads him.



*Plate X: ENTERING THE MARKET PLACE WITH BLISS-
BESTOWING HANDS*

Commentary

The compassion intrinsic to his nature flows forth in his dealings with his fellow men.

He is beyond relative value-judgements; his actions, which are non-actions, are in perfect accord with the TAO because they *are* the TAO.

According to his nature, that he is: teacher, friend, lover, hermit, philosopher, bus-conductor.

On his death his awareness dissolves like a snowflake in the sunshine.

state cannot be other than appropriate. After writing this commentary I sent it to C for her comments, which she gave me in a lengthy telephone call.

C felt that my account was largely correct but that she disagreed with some of the details. Firstly she felt that the 'emotional turmoil' I mention seemed to her to suggest some negative state. While she was involved with a drawing she felt that she was tussling with a problem, but she felt alive and in touch with life and this struggle was therefore a very positive experience. From her description she was indeed standing at the wall. When John indicated which version he preferred she says she was never surprised by his choice. Although it would be difficult to give any rational explanation of why one of twenty similar drawings felt 'right' nonetheless he never chose a version that she too did not feel was better. So a great part of this experience for her was the opportunity to sense in some way the basis of quality in Zen.

C also suggested (correctly) that from my description she thought I had not fully understood what she intended in Plate 7. In this drawing the seeker is looking at his/her **reflection** in the water. The head is dissolving but it is a reflection which is disappearing. This reflection is of the Buddha nature. Just as the sense of the conditioned self is dropped so too the Buddha nature is also portrayed as something which cannot be grasped, and any sense of having a Buddha nature also goes.

C well knew in the final drawings that she could use any image. Plate 9 was actually produced very early in the series and she spent many hours drawing

running water from nature, before she produced that Plate. The final drawing of the Buddha she tried to make more appropriate by re-drawing it from her previous work making it looser and lighter than the previous version.

What struck C very much at the end of the project when she looked over the entire series of drawings in all their versions was how the ox had changed. In the beginning her ox was small and very tentative. By the time the series was complete the ox was in her words “*much larger and sleeker – I had started with a baby ox and ended with a much bigger animal*”. And did that mean, I inquired that she understood the ox better? She laughed heartily.

Chapter 14– Methodological Issues Revisited

*Being is not what it seems,
nor non-being. The world's
existence is not
in the world.*

Rumi

In this chapter I re-examine my attitude to methodology and ask myself whether if I had been starting the inquiry at this point I could now point to a methodology which might have better exposed the transpersonal aspects of Zen.

Certainly some of the methods I describe which aim at a less intellectual approach might appear to overcome some of the problems I experienced, but they give other problems of interpretation. Future researchers have to consider whether they are aiming at explanation or change, in deciding upon a method. My rather uneasy mixture created the paradox which led to a change in me, but as my account in chapter 16 makes clear, this cannot be attributed to a chain of cause and effect.

14.1 Research Freedoms

Bannister (1981) suggests that personal construct theory (from which SOL is partly derived) offers the psychological researcher certain freedoms. The main among these is that you do not have to spend time arguing or disproving

traditional notions, since the philosophy of constructive alternativism means that you can proceed directly to your alternative.

In fact in chapter 16 I have proceeded to my alternative, but I have left this rationalisation here to show the contrast. Throughout the inquiry I did try to see where the connections with my view of Zen and a scientific inquiry might meet. I was concerned with problems of integration. These remarks should be read in that light.

However, in an inquiry of this sort, which could be seen as at the limits of subjective inquiry, I decided to re-examine my methodology and attempt to place it within a perspective of new paradigm research. As Bannister also observes, the wisdom one gains from research exists independently of public demonstration, but it is better if one can also make a contribution to public knowledge.

14.2 New Paradigm Research

In a paper entitled *Why Educational Research Has Been So Uneducational* Torbert (1981) describes the differences between some aspects of collaborative inquiry and the (still) current paradigm of the social sciences. As he says

“Whereas at present social scientists neither engage in self-study as part of their scientific work, nor seek to encourage self study in those whom they study, such experiential self-study (using empirical measuring instruments where appropriate) constitutes the core of social science in the new model”

A collaborative inquiry is part of new paradigm research. However not all of the conditions which Torbert cites are exclusive to collaborative inquiries. I had not

regarded this particular inquiry as collaborative since I had not consulted participants about the agenda, nonetheless I had consulted other experts and tried to look critically at the data. Of the 12 differences in the collaborative paradigm that Torbert lists, some have relevance for this inquiry and are listed below.

The researcher's activities are included within the field of observation, along with the study of other subjects.

I have been concerned throughout the study to make clear my own personal concerns and where this affects the management of the data. As chapter 2 now makes clear the relationship of myself to the data is the central part of this inquiry.

The structure and variables to be studied are not merely pre-defined, but rather may change through dialogue between the initiating actor–researcher and others.

Although I started with certain questions the inquiry veered in a number of unanticipated directions in dialogue with others. Initially John made me realise that any dialectic method could not do justice to Zen. Since what I was looking at was not Zen itself, but the effect of Zen upon a particular group, I could have ignored this. However, the major difficulty members of this group have is in finding a way to realise Zen in an environment which does not share the same values. I felt that I had to respect this aspect of their quest, and not use a method which would deflect them further from it. The other major influence on this inquiry was the questioning of my examiners, particularly my external examiner.

My decision to relocate my original inquiry within a larger and more inclusive ethnographic project sprang directly from his challenges.

Interruptions are not simply viewed as irrelevant inconveniences, to be avoided or suppressed as far as possible, but rather are treated as positive shocks, symbolising all that is not included within the researcher's attention at the moment of interruption, inviting a more encompassing awareness of what is at stake.

I feel that this is a good description of what happened after my major crisis of confidence in what I was doing. Since this happened after and not during the LC's, I chose not to collaborate with the original participants for reasons already stated. I had come to see that this inquiry only had validity for me if I could somehow demonstrate within the inquiry how John actually impacted on other people. If I could show that clearly then this I thought was the closest I could come to answering my secret question *what is enlightenment?* since it was he who was operating to a different paradigm. **Using unsolicited data also has effects similar in some respects to collaborative data in that data generation is not under the control of the researcher.** This had the effect of freeing me to look in many new directions.

The interest is as much in knowledge uniquely relevant to the particular time and place of the experiment as in knowledge that is generalisable, in so far as the interest is not focused primarily on generalising to persons and

organisations outside the experiment, but rather on generalising to the rest of the lives of the participants in the experiment. Further, the interest in generalisation is not merely cognitive, but rather in ideas that vivify one's own and others' intuitive, emotional, and sensual experience – that is, in ideas that open beyond themselves to an interpenetrating attention.

I feel that this thesis does express others' intuitive, emotional and sensual experience, albeit a small number. And the components of their struggle to 'realise Zen' is generalisable to the rest of participants' lives in the sense that these are the problems which they continue to grapple with. This also has a value in showing the difference that the Zen perspective makes to fundamental assumptions about the nature of the self.

Conflict between different paradigms or models of reality is anticipated, welcomed as an opportunity to test the validity of assumptions, and explicated so far as possible. Such conflict will not only be intellectual, but rather will usually have immediate emotional and practical implications as well. Thus, the aspiring scientist is challenged from the outset to seek and offer information that is aesthetically appropriate and politically timely as well as analytically valid.

This entire inquiry tries to elucidate the difference in the Zen perspective both from SOL and from what might be regarded as the normative assumptions of everyday experience. When I redefined my objective as also trying to uncover the

immediacy and impact of the Zen experience, I used a wide variety of data sources from correspondence, fiction, art and dreams to illustrate those issues I thought important.

These are analytically valid in that they show how some Zen respondents reacted to events as they happened, in a way that would not have been possible within a structured inquiry.

14.3 Being and Becoming Seminar

Sheila, my tutor, and I discussed a number of emerging new paradigms in the physical sciences during the project. Such paradigms are now affecting the social sciences, although still very much on the sidelines. Descriptions of these paradigms can be found in Prigogine and Stengers (1984) *Order out of Chaos*, Gleick (1987) *Chaos*, and Krishnamurti and Bohm (1988) *The Ending of Time*. These discussions between Sheila and me led to a seminar being held at Brunel University about the differences in learning paradigms between Zen and SOL. The SOL position was presented by Sheila and Laurie, and the Zen position by John. The seminar was attended by postgraduates from CSHL.

The seminar ranged over a number of issues which are touched on in other chapters. However it also touched on issues affecting methodology, and it is these which are considered here. Sheila led off the presentations by raising some of the issues that the above books and others like them had raised for the sciences. She made the point that several new paradigms suggested that there were degrees of unpredictability and uncertainty which were intrinsic to systems under study. In

such paradigms classical methodologies could no longer cope with the effects of the observer on the system, and that new methodologies must be found in the social sciences. SOL had moved into a phenomenological conversational methodology, and Sheila hoped to explore with John how Zen and Learning Conversation methodology related to unpredictability and ambiguity in a system.

From a review of new paradigm literature she proposed two kinds of paradigms which could be described as either a **being** paradigm or a **becoming** paradigm. The world of becoming encompasses constant cycles of change, disorder, decay, death, refocusing and reconstruction. A **relative** world familiar to readers of both chaos and complexity theories. A world subject to the laws of time and space.

The world of being, on the other hand, is as it is. Sheila saw this as a reversible world in terms of time or perhaps should be regarded as atemporal. It is absolute, universal, outside time and outside death, and therefore, in her view (although not in mine), deterministic.

SOL, she felt, was in the **becoming** paradigm, the world of growth, personal and ego development, peak experiences and personal knowing. **Zen**, she felt was in the **being** paradigm of enlightenment, stillness, perfection, and compassion. She ended her presentation with the hope that the day's discussion might shed some light on how these perspectives affected the learning process.

Laurie addressed one of these issues further by presenting the implications affecting methodology of a specifically conversational science. **He raised the issue of what evidence we can ever have of what goes on inside people's**

heads, in other words of the private nature of much of the phenomena we wished to observe. He also wished to raise with John the difference between process and content. He saw both Zen and SOL as pointing to the necessity of being aware of both content and process of a conversational interaction. Since a self organised learner was a seeker after meaning he wondered whether when a seeker had learned a great deal about process and learned about learning, whether enlightenment wasn't the ability to live at the process level, able to move in and out of content at will. If that were the case then there might be a similarity between the end product of the Zen and SOL learning experiences.

John's response shows clearly the difference of the Zen perspective, where many of these questions, while interesting to science are irrelevant in Zen. His presentation is given in its entirety as follows,

“Imagine if you will a room containing a number of monstrosities but with human qualities. They exist in the room, they have sophisticated interactions, they even think, build models and build apparatus. Their aim in doing any of that is to find out what is outside the room they are within. The door to the room is open. Outside is a landscape peopled by human beings, who are not monstrosities. Why do they stay in the room rather than realise that they can actually walk out and become human?”

Throughout the discussion that followed some points arose which have implications for any methodology which wishes to look at Zen. John himself while interested in methodological points in an abstract way, was always concerned primarily with learning from direct experience. John's presentation

provoked a lively discussion, and a major theme of that discussion and of indeed of this project arose in the first few conversational interchanges.

Laurie recovered first saying,

Laurie - "In one sense what you are saying is why make a fuss about it, we are all free to be fully functioning"

John - "So what is it that stops you? Why attend with increasing rigour to the monstrous way of looking at that which is immediately around inside, depending only on second order information about what might be outside, rather than walk outside?"

Sheila - "I feel the learning conversation takes you out, because the first thing we in our evolution in psychology say to ourselves is that we have to get out of the laboratory. Learning takes place in the natural habitat of life, therefore if we are going to become learning conversationalists and help people enhance their capacity to learn, you cannot stay in a monstrous room, you have to go outside and learn together."

John - "From the Zen point of view I would say what you must get outside of is your mind which frees you from being inside the room, whereas SOL doesn't free you from your mind, it explores it with increasing precision and delicacy".

John is making the point that from a Zen perspective all 'thinking about' something is second order information which prevents one from directly experiencing the totality of what is actually happening in the present moment. **It does not matter from a Zen perspective whether this takes place inside or outside a laboratory.** Sheila took issue with this point of view since she continued to feel that any person who approaches learning in a sufficiently open

way will progress in surprising ways not predicted at the outset of the journey. She saw 'enlightenment' as a state which could be attained by an **open questioning outlook**. For her 'enlightenment' was a process which could occur naturally as a consequence of deep level conversations with oneself and others. As she said,

Sheila - "If you are treating it (SOL) as a complex system where unpredictabilities, chaos and constructions interplay there is a point in the system where it will bifurcate, evolve unpredictably into new realms and I cannot see that you have to go outside it, you can grow within it."

Sheila's point was that if one could converse with oneself at a deep enough level this process would generate a momentum of its own. If one went into provisionality deeply enough then the laws of chaos and complexity would take over and the process would itself transform the situation in unexpected ways. In some ways this appears to be what happens when one tries to resolve a koan. The process does take over and lead one in unexpected directions. However when a koan is used in formal training the student has to present their position to the master, who constantly tries to disrupt the intellectual process. The point at issue is whether exhaustive self observation using thought and the mind can by itself cause a major self transformation like enlightenment simply by its own process; which is the SOL viewpoint; or whether it is necessary to provide some major discontinuity like 'dropping the ego' which also means dropping reliance on thought, which is the Zen perspective.

My position now is that it is certainly possible to attain self realisation from anywhere, but it would be wrong to think of the particular path you followed as being responsible for getting you there. As John says in a sense everything you do is practice, and nothing is. Transcendence is surrendering. It means giving up all concepts and thus Zen, or Buddhism, or koans, or Learning Conversations all go out the window. So self realisation is not the fruit of studying Zen, nor is it the ultimate fruit of an inner Learning Conversation. These are simply expressions of the mode in which you feel comfortable, and choose to operate from, until you recognise that no operator is necessary.

Although not discussed directly at the seminar these differences have profound methodological consequences. If deep level examination of oneself in a **reflective** way can lead to surprising and unpredictable self transformation **then reflective learning tools have a powerful part to play in helping to uncover the mechanisms leading to such transformations in consciousness.** Sheila felt that in some ways SOL was Zenlike. Perhaps so, observed John, but not Zen.

This raises a point that I came to appreciate fully only after completing much of this thesis. Many people, myself included, from time to time 'borrow' from Zen and try to incorporate it into some other system. My own attempt had been to use a 'Zen' perspective therapeutically to relieve symptoms of stress. SOL although stating explicitly (Harri-Augstein and Thomas 1991) that some kinds of knowledge must always be tacit, and never fully knowable, nevertheless sees conversational methodology as needing a set of tools based on widely differing

cultural conventions (including Zen and the Tao) in order to allow the learner, as personal scientist to chart his or her progress through deeper processes of learning. And in Chapter 15, as I shall show, Kopp (1974) likens a therapist to a guru, using Zen analogies.

But tools cannot slither from one paradigm to another and remain in the same relationship to the whole process in a different setting. To ‘borrow’ from Zen may usefully illumine some facet of experience by analogy but once that happens it is no longer Zen. A similar point was made by John in talking about truth in Zen. All personal truth is relative, and therefore there is no absolute truth. So how useful is truth when used in judging the validity of data. As John said at the seminar,

“You are right when you say that in SOL you are looking for truth.....you are expanding your understanding in conversation with another, so it is a two way thing of the assumptions you have deeply embedded in your ego structure. Whereas in Zen you reach a point, having understood that as deeply as you can, you reach a point where baby and bath water both go down the plug hole, empty bath. So there is no truth (my emphasis) as an object or set of constructs to be reached in Zen”.

Truth is a relative concept, and as such can indeed be used as a criterion when assessing whether participants in a research inquiry regard the data generated as a plausible explanation of what transpired. Each person constructs their own meaning and their own relative truth. By checking findings with participants in a research inquiry, it is sometimes possible to arrive at some consensus of opinion, that those findings are a reasonable description or explanation of what transpired.

However as John's remarks make plain, this is not a valid criterion for assessing the validity of Zen. There is no way outside of direct experience to understand Zen. In a research inquiry such as this, while hopefully one is presenting examples of experience in a way which conveys the flavour of the experience to others, one has to bear in mind that this is but a reflection of the experience.

14.4 Would other Transpersonal Methods have been More Appropriate as Action Science?

Towards the end of the project I asked myself whether, if I were to start again, I would do it all differently. Was there perhaps some innovative methodology which would uncover more of what I had been trying to expose?

I knew of other transpersonal techniques which used imagery to gain access to unconscious processes, and which used koans to exhaust the mind. If I were starting again from scratch would I have been better trying to use some such technique? When I gave serious consideration to two very different techniques which initially I viewed as attractive, I realised that they had implicit assumptions which also gave problems of interpretation.

Two methods initially attracted me because I had extensive experience of both and felt that I could facilitate them successfully. One phenomenological method was a version of the guided fantasy technique originally devised by Assageoli (1975). I had experienced guided fantasy as a participant in many transpersonal workshops, and had also undergone some training as a facilitator in this technique. The

method requires participants to take a guided journey through their imagination, using symbolic imagery. For example a basic exercise is to imagine oneself in a meadow. One then finds and explores a house. Participants are encouraged to describe the house, its contents and the people who live there and express this in drawings. **It is important to the method that participants do not express themselves in words until they have developed graphic images.** They are then engaged in dialogue with their imagery before introducing them to the symbolism involved – where the house is a metaphor for the self.

Schneier (1989) has also developed a phenomenological technique whereby participants are encouraged to express themselves in drawing. They are asked initially to produce abstract art using colour. After elicitation and expression of imagery participants talk back the meaning the colour and shapes have for them. Over several sessions many people produce images which have deep creative meaning for them. **Both techniques thus use imagery to bypass the conscious mind.**

These sorts of exercises, as I well knew, have dramatic and highly emotional effects upon people. It often helps them to identify divisions and splits within themselves, which can be the start of a self healing process. Conversely it can open participants to creative experiences of great spiritual value to them. I had used guided fantasy in transpersonal exercises. I knew I could provoke dramatic material, but what would this indicate?

As already mentioned Suzuki (1983) states that the empirical mind and the unconscious studied by Western psychology and philosophy is quite different to the Unconscious (synonymous according to Suzuki with Mind and Self Nature see Chapter 1) which Zen novices try to reach. However there is no way to investigate the Unconscious defined by Suzuki, except as a personal experiential quest. What I had to keep reminding myself was that I was interested in the effect that Zen had had on the life experience of Zen novices. What many of the techniques of transpersonal psychology do is free participants to respond in a **different mode** by initially bypassing the medium of thought. Had I used a different medium would this have better shown what I was trying to demonstrate? I can give an example the sort of material engendered by this technique from my own experience; which comes from the first transpersonal psychology workshop I ever attended facilitated by Ian Gordon Brown. It made such a big impact on me at the time that I can still reconstruct it clearly. I make no claim that my recollections are 100% accurate, and are used here simply as an example of the type of data that can be generated.

I started off in the meadow and discovered my house (I had no idea when doing this exercise that this house symbolised the self). Mine was built very close to the side of a hill so that the left hand side of the house tended to be rather dark. As I wandered through this house I encountered a mother, a child, and a career woman who lived in the light part of the house and a strange veiled figure who lived in the dark part of the house. The house also had a basement and a man in a black

uniform and jackboots lived down there. Hardly surprisingly this latter figure interested the facilitator and I was encouraged to have a dialogue with this character. (Freudians would also have a field day with this data, weak father/strong mother etc.).

In this conversation I uncovered the fact that the male figure which obviously represented the masculine side of my personality felt scapegoated. It transpired that I was wary of the concept of power, hence the black uniform and jack boots. However when I engaged in dialogue with this submerged part of me I disclosed that this figure had the power and energy to get things done and thus had a positive side. The veiled figure was my spiritual self who was also encouraged to come out of the closet.

Now this material had great value to me at that time, and other participants had experiences they valued as providing insights into the splits and division in their psyches. But when I considered how I would react to this now, I realised that my own centre of gravity, while it might not have made the sort of shift I had hoped for, nonetheless had made a shift. **Zen might be a part of an overall transpersonal paradigm but much of the transpersonal paradigm was not Zen.**

I now had profound doubts about the validity of analysing the sort of material described above in terms of Zen – **who would be experiencing and commenting on what?** At the time that I was actively exploring myself through many different transpersonal techniques I was trying to know myself better. The above

description of the results of my own transpersonal exercise may appear to give insights into my personality structure. That is how I was encouraged to think about it at the time. Freudian analysts would also have a very different interpretation. The transpersonal objective (derived partly from a Jungian perspective) was to strengthen those aspects of myself that I regarded as positive, particularly 'spiritual' aspects, and if not reject the negative, at least recognise and integrate those aspects which were causing me difficulty.

The issue here is not whether that process has value for those who choose to undertake it, but whether it would have been more successful at illustrating the Zen experience by bypassing the intellectual mode. My problems here relate not to the elicitation process, but to the analysis of the material generated. In the above exercise I was exploring facets of self. But which self was I trying to know better? It seems to me after encountering Zen, that I had been exploring (or it could be argued I was reconstructing) different facets of my personality. The shift that has taken place in me is that I am no longer interested in the furniture of my mind. I want to transcend my normal mode of functioning.

If I used such a technique to translate what participants felt about their selves I could only present the material in its own terms as description, or analyse it from some other psychological perspective e.g. a transpersonal or even a psychoanalytic perspective. But explaining one system in terms of another did not seem to me to have any inherent validity.

Here it might appear that I had become very negative. I have given my reasons for rejecting a transpersonal phenomenologically based methodology as inappropriate. What's more I felt that essentially any technique which relied on elicitation, expression and talk back **whether based on conscious or unconscious processes still had the same underlying assumptions.** Using material which appeared to come from the personal unconscious might create lively and interesting data, but for me it was only important if somehow the data illuminated the Zen experience in some way. I realised that that the reason I did not want to try to analyse any transpersonal material from a Zen perspective was because I felt that any attempt to do so without the presence of John to interact and check with would be a travesty of Zen. Just as in the past I had taken some issue to its rational conclusion and been knocked off my rational perch by John, I felt that to present my own analysis, albeit a transpersonal one, as representing Zen would be inappropriate. **My conclusions represent my own relative truth, and in this inquiry my own relative truth is shown in a variety of ways.**

The material from the Zen Foundation archives and John's books which I had chosen to use in Chapters 4 and 12 mostly represented people in interaction with John. Each reader must decide whether or not they feel John was enlightened, but nevertheless it was his Zen I was investigating, and these experiences were examples of his Zen perspective. **When I compared these examples with the sort of transpersonal exploration of the personal unconscious described**

above, the Zen data I had used still seemed more appropriate for the purpose of illuminating the Zen experience I was exploring.

But what of a methodology which does not encourage participants to elaborate and construct symbols of self, but rather aims to exhaust the mind by using communication exercises incorporating a koan? This was a methodology which did not encourage analysis of the contents of the mind but rather aimed at emptying the mind of these concepts. Before meeting John I had been on five Western Zen Retreats in the 1980's conducted by Dr. John Crook. Crook (1980) details the format and methods used on these retreats including communication exercises devised by Charles Berner in the late 1960's.

Charles Berner's exercise has individuals sitting pairs asking each other a *koan*. One person asks the question and the other answers for five minutes, then the positions are reversed, so individuals take the position of questioner and respondent alternately. After a 40 minute session everyone takes a fresh partner and the process continues. There are several sessions each day starting early in the morning and the sessions run over 4 days. **Thus the communication exercises allow all participants to enact the roles of both master and student.** These sessions are interspersed with other activities such as zazen meditation and bioenergetic exercises.

In Berner's system the traditional *koans* of Buddhism are replaced with four core questions which are usually worked on in a series. These are *who am I?*, *What am I?*, *What is life?* and *What is another?* Additional koans are also used depending

on circumstances but the first is always *Who am I?* The questioner is required to attend alertly to all responses but no discussion is allowed. This forces the respondent into free association of themes related to the *koan*. **At intervals the participants are required to undergo a question session with the facilitator in order to demonstrate their understanding of the *koan*.** Crook (1980) states

“The retreat is so programmed that an individual experiences progressive realisations of successive aspects of his own identity. Introjected identity components are released through self-disclosures often involving a great deal of emotional expression. The structure of the process makes it safe for this to happen and the authority of the facilitator is firmly maintained to ensure an essential group security (my emphasis). Individuals often experience relief from inhibitions and tensions, renewed confidence and vitality, and sometimes a major shift in their attitude with respect to their existence in the world”.

Having undergone this process many times I felt that it did indeed allow participants to progressively explore aspects of their own identity, and that this process led to shifts in attitude. Such exercises did not ‘explain’ Zen, but could they better portray Zen in action?

In my own experience of this method when the exercises start there is much talking. After several sessions some respondents become highly emotional when dealing with those aspects of themselves which give them concern. Sometimes this is relationships, sometimes a feeling of worthlessness, it varies depending on the individual. The highly emotive and often cathartic uncovering of aspects of self often raises similar issues and concerns to those expressed in the psychosynthesis exercises described above. By the third day some people are still talking away, doggedly defining who or what they are, but others have begun to

fall silent and speak only sporadically. They are still working, but working in a different way. They have come to realise that you cannot **tell** anyone who or what you are, or what life is.

When I reached this conclusion in one of these retreats when working on *who am I?*, I responded in a way which I now see as rather childish. I had a highly charged emotional reaction, a real 'ahah' experience, where I realised that my self was fluid and changed from moment to moment. At any point in time 'I' was simply the contents of my consciousness at that time. This then was why the answers to koans seemed so impenetrable. Sitting in a farmhouse in mid-Wales answering *who am I* might be *the wind in the trees* or *the ticking of the clock*.

When I came to this realisation I felt that I could only **show** those people with the eyes to see who I was. Who I was, was the person sitting in front of them, and I went totally silent. I did not attempt to explain what I was doing to my partners, but merely smiled if they kept repeating their question. I probably seemed very smug, although no partner said so. Nowadays I would feel it necessary to find some more creative way of dealing with such feelings.

I feel that such exercises are very powerful and are in tune with John's Zen paradigm since they require respondents to work with their sense of identity. My reasons for not trying such an exercise with Zen respondents (or even with SOL respondents) was partly practical. Most of my respondents were scattered around the country, and in the case of two SOL respondents lived in the U.S. and only occasionally visited this country. John Crook feels that a full five days is

necessary for this sort of retreat to have any effect, and getting respondents together would have been a major problem.

I could have tried the format of the communication exercises in a one-to-one situation but these were unlikely to be as powerful unless they were repeated several times a day over many days, and this was simply not practical. And to a certain extent **one of my objections to the guided fantasy exercises also obtain here.** In Western Zen Retreats John Crook acts as the master when judging the authenticity of responses to the *koans*. He has trained in group facilitation and has been initiated as a teacher of ch'an (Chinese Zen). In acting as the master he operates from a somewhat different perspective than John, since, as far as I am aware, he lays no claim to enlightenment.

There can be therapeutic benefits to the koan exercise and the requirement that each participant acts out the part of master and novice in turn can lead to sudden insights, both during and after the workshops. Had I been able to use such an exercise with John present, or even check my own conclusions later with John, this might have been an interesting experience.

But at the stage when I was considering a further methodology Jonathan Hey was very ill. I was willing to play the master if I had to account for my conclusions to him. **I was unwilling to represent the Zen I thought he espoused without some way of validating it.** This may appear to an outsider that I had an exaggerated sense of awe of John and that I did not rely on my own feelings.

The latter of these comments is certainly true, one thing you learn to doubt in Zen is the reliability of your own thoughts and feelings, until you are confident that these spring from your true self. I could of course have tried to role play the master, and this might well illuminate a good deal about me, but not necessarily indicate the Zen John espoused. I have nothing against role play as a method of pushing oneself beyond known boundaries of the self, I have come to have profound doubts about it as a method of freeing oneself from concepts of self. However interesting the data, it would not have represented what I was trying to show which was the effects of interacting with John. I thought that all of John's actions sprang from some different basis from mine, and showing this difference, if possible, had become a primary concern.

To sum up my position at this stage of the inquiry;

- ❖ I felt that eliciting deeper thoughts and feelings of Zen participants about their Zen experience was desirable.
- ❖ I had doubts about how to analyse such new material in other than its own terms if I was trying to show it how it related to John. Any analysis which presented my own relative truth could not be regarded as definitive as representing the view of someone who was enlightened.
- ❖ Innovative methodology such as guided fantasy or koans could reach the first of those objectives but not the second.

Chapter 15 – Therapist or Guru

*I have lived on the lip
of insanity, wanting to know reasons,
knocking on a door. It opens
I've been knocking from the inside.*

Rumi

There is a difference between a therapist and a master and I felt this needed to be made clear. There is often an expectation that a 'guru' is like a therapist. Therapy may 'borrow' from Zen, but its aims are different, and thus 'Zen in therapy' is deflected from its essence. Compassion in Zen is quite different from empathy. Having started this inquiry interested in therapy and trying to use Zen in stress groups this chapter makes clear why I didn't pursue that route further.

At various points in this inquiry I have tried to lay bare my own thoughts and emotions in as critical a way as possible. I have stated that I thought John was quite different from anyone else I had ever met, and that I thought he was enlightened. But since I have also stated that it is not possible to really know whether someone else is enlightened until you are enlightened yourself, my own attitude is as open to doubt as anything else. Over the years I have come across many people who did not see John as enlightened, because I think, their image of an enlightened person, is more like that of a saint or a sage. And John, while often wise, was also witty, irreverent,

and wonderful at deflating egos. I am aware that the fact that I was drawn to this says as much about me as about John.

15.1 The Therapist as Guru

L, in his comments on my analysis of the LC's raised the issue of motivation when being attracted to Zen as follows;

“T’s comments Are illustrative of the feeling that somehow there are deep seated weeds which one must be alert to – a more clinical approach might suggest that T is using Zen as a defence against some sort of self fear (fear of ego). I am not sure how far this analysis should be pursued and I would certainly not want to adopt a Freudian approach, nevertheless there may be some interesting questions to be answered as to why some people choose Zen and others SOL (and at least one person both) – perhaps they are dealing with different types of issue or are attractive to different kinds of people.”

Certainly I think we are all attracted to some processes rather than others. And thus get the guru we deserve. This is a perceptive comment about T given John's remarks about the darkness in T which John also remarked on. L feels reluctant to adopt a Freudian approach to this, feeling it to be inappropriate in the circumstances. In that also I agree. A Freudian approach would automatically assume that the problem was to integrate the irreconcilable parts of T's ego. John and any therapist (even a transpersonally oriented one) would have very different attitudes to what should be done.

Kopp (1974) in a book evocatively titled *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him*, entwines Zen and psychotherapy. The book opens in the following fashion;

“In every age, men have set out on pilgrimages, on spiritual journeys, on personal quests. Driven by pain, drawn by longing, lifted by hope,

singly and in groups they come in search of relief, enlightenment, peace, power, joy or they know not what. Wishing to learn, and confusing being taught with learning, they often seek out helpers, healers, and guides, spiritual teachers whose disciples they would become.

The emotionally troubled man of today, the contemporary pilgrim, wants to be the disciple of the psychotherapist.”

While I do not think many people initiate therapy as a spiritual pilgrimage, I agree that therapy can often turn to spiritual issues. Given the proliferation of transpersonally oriented therapists that situation is likely to increase. **But what does a Zen oriented therapist see him/her self as doing and is this similar to that of a master?**

Kopp makes a persuasive case for some similarities between guru and therapist since he sees the therapist as refusing to be drawn into the patient's concerns to be taken care of, and that his first task is to get the seeker to see that nothing can be changed without *struggle, surrender, and experiencing* how it is.

Kopp describes the guru, whether spiritual or therapeutic as follows:

“This special sort of teacher helps others through the rites of initiation and transition by seeming to introduce his disciples to the new experiences of higher levels of spiritual understanding. In reality, what he offers them is guidance towards accepting their imperfect, finite existence in an ambiguous and ultimately unmanageable world.”

The therapist's role he sees as that of an active listener and support. He avoids the patient's attempts to make him take care of them, and encourages change and

acceptance, and nurtures personal growth. But what is personal growth in this context?

A therapist encourages a client to change. During that process, usually undertaken because of perceived problems, the client is encouraged to look at the roots of their own behaviour. This experience, which will be emotionally charged, is likely to be highly meaningful to the client as he arrives at a new view of himself. Therapy is unlikely to be regarded as 'successful' unless some breakthrough takes place **in perception of self**. I would contend that from a Zen point of view this change makes it more, and not less, likely that the new personal view will **strengthen the attachment to self**, which a master is trying to weaken. The therapist is committed to nurturing and raising the client's self esteem, the master is trying to get the novice to unlink the basis of self esteem from the illusory ego self.

Is the Master/Pupil Role Healthy?

Given the material presented in Chapters Four and Thirteen showing the interactions of John and others, it could be asked whether the relationship presented here is a healthy one in terms of personal growth, or even one likely to help the seeker to enlightenment. The issue of the baldness of what is presented in Zen, in a take it or leave it fashion, which cropped up in the seminar on Zen and SOL referred to in Chapter 14 above, was raised when discussing the basis of authority displayed by the 'guru'. Some of those who had read *The Ending of Time* by Krishnamurti and Bohm felt;

“Krishnamurti is very assertive but you can't see on what basis. He asserts something is true or is the case and if someone disagrees with him, he says no, no, I don't want to talk about that.....David Bohm is much more hesitant and less sure but when he is asked to give an opinion he can give a reason. He has got a reason why he says that.”

This charge could equally be levelled at John. Some people stopped coming to Zen meetings because the same issues were covered time and time again in much the same way, and John was not receptive to changing the message to suit the seeker. For John much of what was presented to him by novices was both intellectual and irrelevant. Until some shift is made whereby one is open to the fact that Zen is simple (but not easy), and that second order thoughts about it are irrelevant the master will continue to appear difficult to understand. As Hey (1988) comments:

“The paradoxical, oracular comments that a master makes permit little or no conventional mental intercourse with others who have not undergone the experience and, it is argued, indicate an essential isolation which cannot be either pleasant or healthy.”

As John observes this critical viewpoint is based on intellect, dualism, and often envy. Certainly when trying to imagine what enlightenment might entail there seems a tendency for people to conceptualise it as a static, remote place which, once achieved, cuts off normal interactions with other people. A guru is often pictured as a saint residing in some benign nurturing place where no emotion but compassion is allowed. But Zen masters have never been portrayed like that. **If**

the 'guru' is regarded as an exemplar of the state he is advocating, it is the model of therapist, and not of master, which seems stuck in this empathetic, compassionate place.

Descriptions of Zen masters in classical literature seldom portray them as nurturing or supportive. Masters are shown as beating their pupils, mutilating them (cutting off a finger), and in the example below, killing.

Nansen, a famous master once seized a cat and said to his disciples 'If you speak I'll kill the cat and if you don't speak I'll kill the cat. No-one said a word and Nansen killed the cat. Later his most promising pupil joined them and was told of this. At once he took off his sandals and put them on his head. 'Ah, said the master, if you had been there I would have spared the cat.'

One can argue of course that a disregard for sensibilities, and even for life is a cultural feature of much earlier societies. Nowadays, it could be argued, cultural norms have changed and masters, like therapists, should be more sensitive to the needs of others, and their need for respect. But it is therapists who feel the need to present themselves to clients in a supporting, nurturing way. To a Zen master, what is being nurtured in this process, is what he is trying to expose as totally illusory - the conditioned self.

Masters in classical literature have distinct personalities. John never presented himself as saintlike and he had a very lively sense of fun. But he could also appear

very differently to different people. As is recounted in the next section, the difference between him and some therapists was profound.

15.2 The Differences between Master and Therapist

Many years ago, early in my relationship with John I chaired a workshop John gave at the conference on Eastern Approaches to Self and Mind held at University College, Cardiff in 1985. After the event John asked me to write an account of it and send it to him. In order to do that I wrote to some of the participants and the audience whom I thought would provide a range of views for and against the workshop to let me have their impressions of what transpired.

John offered to work directly with five "volunteers" in front of an audience. This event was described in the conference programme as a Zen Workshop, and it was described by one onlooker as "emotional terrorism". The workshop therefore provided a rare opportunity for professional therapists, among others, to view John in interaction with others.

The following account comes from an eminent academic and psychologist who had never met John before:

"Wearing an expression which, from where I sat, seemed cold, piercing, and devoid of much humanity. Jonathan turned his attention to each volunteer in turn, fixed his steely gaze upon them and threw out his piercing, probing questions. I remember the lady who was asked "what is sadness" bursting immediately into tears - it was just as if Jonathan's question had pierced her like a sword".

In general, from the accounts I have, it is quite clear that the audience perceived John much more negatively than the volunteers themselves. Here is the same incident as perceived by the "victim".

"I was feeling a little fear, perhaps, but much more excitement and anticipation. I was dying to get on with it. The fear was about as much as I often feel doing something for the first time, like jumping from the diving board into the pool - actually probably less than that, because then there is a real, though small risk, of some physical harm, whereas in fact I felt perfectly sure that apart from actually getting enlightened, which was, after all, what I was hoping for, the worst that could happen would be that I would make a fool of myself - a risk I am quite used to taking after several years as a sannyasin. I have found making a fool of myself actually doesn't matter in practice.

The five of us sat in a row. There was a woman on the end I didn't know, then Sue, whom I had just met, myself, and then two young men. I was conscious of watching Jon closely and being as open, unguarded and receptive as I could. His gaze is exceedingly penetrating. When he asked me "what is sadness?", he touched on the central issue for me: In my life, which is as happy and fulfilled as any could be, there is indeed a great sadness. The greatest in being unenlightened. This is the only sadness there is, ultimately for any of us, the root of it, that from which all sadness springs. The question was like a shaft which penetrated to my very centre, by-passing thought and language, and putting me directly in touch with the despair, so that I could only respond with tears. At that moment I was despair. I tried to find words, but failed. I was aware of his compassion and support as he held me and asked "what is joy?" with the same direct effect."

John continued to throw questions at the volunteers, never allowing time for reasoned response. Not all volunteers were as resilient as the one quoted above, and one who wrote afterwards to John said:

"I therefore tried my best thinking self to give truthful answers and was considerably baffled by your curt, cold and negating responses"

The same letter continues:

"I found the experience profoundly disturbing (if you remember I came up to you afterwards and we went for a walk in the garden). I felt as if my core of internal security and safety of knowing what my life was about had been jarred, stirred and jumbled, as if you had turned me upside down, shaken me and stood me on my head".

As her letter makes clear she had an opportunity to talk through her experience with John. He was well aware that it had been a disturbing experience and I know that he sought out the volunteers afterwards to make sure that there was nothing further they wanted to discuss with him.

In spite of this feeling of profound disturbance all the volunteers defended John's behaviour later, against hostile comments from the audience. As one commentator says:

"The volunteers maintained that they felt Jonathan loved and cared for them and had not perceived the lack of warmth which the audience had picked up"

But someone else in the audience had another explanation for the charity felt by the volunteers :

"One view is that the participants had their anxiety levels raised very high by the pre-action build-up and during the very tense session, anxiety levels must have been raised still further. Such techniques are not at all unusual, although Jonathan may be using them in all good faith. The participants were subjected to some badgering, or to use a more emotive term, bullying. All this in front of an audience, which no doubt added to the stressfulness of the situation. As I said at the time, research on the psychology of terrorism has amply demonstrated that victims feel very grateful and warm towards their aggressors when the ordeal is over. I felt angry during the session as what I saw was bullying and unnecessary harshness".

Many members of the audience clearly shared in this view that there had been unnecessary and even inappropriate harshness used. But appropriate from what point of view? The last speaker makes that clear:

"From the point of view of counselling (my emphasis) I think Jonathan breached some important ethical guidelines which exist to protect people from those who may unwittingly put themselves forward as having helping/facilitating skills which are potentially harmful. Whether or not Jonathan has skills which are useful is of course impossible to judge on the basis of one session. He did not abide by the principles of obtaining informed consent or entering into an explicit contract with the participants. Certainly he had their consent (my emphasis) but they had no information beforehand about methods or practice. This is difficult to defend.

This letter, which came from a friend of mine, gave me considerable difficulty. Just as he had been unprepared for John, so I was unprepared for the fact that people whose opinions I had previously valued, saw John as a threat.

During a later part of the workshop, allowing comments and questions from the audience, informed consent and an apparent lack of concern for the feeling of the volunteers became key issues. Informed consent may be an important issue in counselling or therapy, but it can hardly have the same force in Zen. Claxton (1987) gives a very clear exposition of what he sees as crucial differences between psychotherapy and Buddhism. During this article he states:

"The implicit contract between helpers and helped involves agreements about many such facets of what is normal, sane, and healthy, and

agreement also (or we would not be here, with money changing hands) that the client needs helping back on to the rails. They spend a limited time together, with a more-or-less clearly specified goal, and an expectation of progress towards it".

Now in counselling or therapy it may be possible to define limited goals, and agree on methods, but this involves, as Guy Claxton makes clear, collusion on the part of the counsellor/client. They have to agree the nature of the problem. But perhaps Guy Claxton has also put his finger on a reason for much of the hostility.

In the same article (1987) he suggests:

"Buddhism and the other spiritual traditions therefore offer formulations and practices that can powerfully assist psychotherapists in their professional and spiritual development. But because cherished beliefs are at stake in this training, therapists - who are deeply attached to the rightness of their own point of view, to an image of themselves as already competent, and to a model of therapy that emphasises cleverness, expertise and professionalism, are likely to find the invitation that Buddhism offers inimical.

If enlightenment is the issue then how can informed consent be possible? The point of a master is having someone you can't outguess, negotiate with or manipulate.

After the session with the volunteers the next stage was described as follows:

"Then came comments from the audience, most of whom, like myself seemed very concerned or angry about the way the volunteers had been treated - I described if afterwards as a combination of deadly accurate empathy with total lack of warmth, which seemed to me a very frightening combination The general atmosphere at the end, and among the people I spoke to was one of having witnessed a very powerful event which was disturbing and unsettling".

The panel of experts was appealed to, and had largely the same sort of reactions as everyone else, ranging from stunned to bewildered or angry. No one was able to give a reasoned account of what had happened from their own professional standpoint.

What strikes me now in re-dealing with that event that it is the therapist/counsellor who feels the need in such a relationship, to present a caring, nurturing supportive presence. This may well be appropriate for what they are trying to do. However in spite of Kopp's analogy of seeing therapy as a pilgrimage, it is not Zen. The Zen master is not concerned with protecting emotional sensibilities. But, it could be argued, couldn't the master cause emotional problems in the seeker? One of the expert panel wrote to John after the workshop asking whether there was not a danger of picking up someone vulnerable to schizophrenia. John replied as follows;

"It was kind of you to write about the Zen workshop and about your fears for the health of those that might be involved in such interactions.

So far as I know, none of the many scores of people with whom I have 'worked' over the last 15 or so years has developed schizophrenia as a result of travelling the Zen path. In fact, none has developed schizophrenia, which may itself be interesting. The Zen path to enlightenment is steep and hard. Those who choose to follow it seriously thus comprise a highly self-selected group of individuals with, in the main, very strong egos; they are thus perhaps less likely to develop schizophrenia. You may already know from published accounts of traditional Zen, that the 'teaching' is not a series of cosy rapp sessions: it is an almighty struggle TO BE. Those truly committed to this path are not deterred by the prospect of physical or mental pain, or even death. It is a master's task to assist them in using the enormous energy mobilised to transcend the everyday mode of consciousness they find so spiritually stultifying. He will use any means that seems appropriate to this, and if he is truly a master he will have the spiritual insight to know what is appropriate for each 'student'.

Against this background, you will see that the Cardiff Workshop provided no more than the briefest of glimpses – through the volunteers' interaction with me – of the shaky foundations of the everyday mode of consciousness. I was confident that none of the volunteers would take any harm and that, following this glimpse, they (and members of the audience) would either run for cover psychologically speaking or possibly begin to think of following the Zen path in earnest. As I expected, most – though not quite all – chose the former response!"

I do not know about Zen masters in general but I do know that John did not work with anyone whom he did not regard as psychologically robust enough to cope. He did not take on all comers, and I know of several people who wrote to him for up to 2 years before he would agree to see them.

15.3 The Relevance of the Zen Perspective

If one truly accepts that the central tenet of all Buddhism, including Zen, regards the self as illusory, then this should change our attitude to much of the normal cultural values of Western society. But since these attitudes are so ingrained in our habitual way of responding, the difficulties of making that change are considerable, as this research inquiry shows.

In an earlier version of the thesis I gave a complete account of this workshop, but I decided upon reflection that the main point of the account was to show how the ego perspective was imbedded in language and thought. The account below gives brief examples of how this struck me after the workshop.

I have stated elsewhere Thomas (in press) that it is very difficult to see just how embedded these self assumptions are, when language reinforces a sense of self so much. At a workshop jointly led by John and myself, shortly before John's

death, participants were asked to write haiku. The haiku form is a mere 17 syllables, but for me it seemed to sum up the problems of changing one's sense of gravity from a self referencing viewpoint.

When I analysed some of the haiku produced and compared them with those written by John or classical Zen masters, it showed just how difficult it is to change the basis of one's sense of selfhood. Haiku are traditionally written as a snapshot capturing a particular moment. Participants were not told how to write haiku, nor any of the conventions governing their writing, apart from the normal line format of 5-7-5 syllables per line. Participants were asked to choose a haiku from a selection offered (these included some written by John and a selection from classical Zen masters such as Basho), and write on the same theme.

As an observer of this process what struck me was how there was an implicit sense of self lurking in the haiku written by participants. (I realise that as a consequence of undertaking this inquiry that I now have a viewpoint which looks at most interactions from the perspective of who is experiencing what). Even if any obvious sense of self is banished from a haiku there is still an interpretation of the world, and such an interpretation implies a self who is interpreting.

An example of such a hidden interpretation is given in T's haiku

So obvious now
Among the leafless brambles
Tennis balls thought lost

There is no reference to self as such, but who is judging what has happened? John replied to this haiku with one of his own

Nothing lost or found
Perception is always now;
Ego seeks itself

In seventeen syllables John points to the interpretation involved, reminds us that perception should be of what is happening now, and that ego is gratifying its own viewpoint. In fact not only is this interpretation reinforced by language, but it is an admired facet of Western literature, poetry and art. The use of metaphor illustrates by analogy, and explains one thing in terms of another. In Zen what is shown is the present moment without any interpretation. To illustrate the simplicity of a Zen haiku, here is another of John's.

Now it is raining
Bedraggled birds are bathing
In spreading puddles

If we collect self concepts as we go through life and enshrine them as central to our sense of self worth, our critical values and our artistic aspirations **then this has profound consequences for Western philosophy, psychology, and psychotherapy.** Can any decision made by a mental construction be regarded as exercising free will and intentionality? Is the realisation that the self is mentally constructed a symptom of 'depersonalisation disorder' or the start of true personal freedom? If our past experiences condition out thinking, should clients be encouraged to dwell on them in therapy? As I found in my grief, unfinished business is very much the domain of the ego.

Most of these questions can only be answered from a scientific point of view within a scientific paradigm which emphasises the relative nature of truth.

Whether Zen has value in a personal sense, requires each individual to decide for themselves which model of themselves in the world they choose to ascribe to. In Zen one can only look deeply at one's own experience, in trying to find an answer.

But one of the ways in which the Zen perspective has value, both to individuals and to science is to raise questions about this most basic of existential truths – who and what am I?

However those who try seriously to answer those questions for themselves come up against formidable barriers, as what they are trying to understand seems to run counter to much that is regarded as common sense, and to accepted models of the self in science. To understand in therapy that one's concepts of self are not sufficiently accurate to get through life without problems is one thing. To take a step further and realise that **all** concepts of self produced by the ego are equally suspect is rather more difficult.

The pilgrim on Kopp's spiritual journey may well not have been seeking enlightenment and therefore both therapist and client can be pleased with a more flexible, or more robust sense of self. **However Zenlike this process might appear, it is not Zen.** Kopp can illustrate a point by analogy, but it can then be difficult to bear in mind that such analogies are not the experience – the map is not the territory.

Chapter 16- Resolving My Koan

*“Remember, your own experience is what counts
so while you read this, now,
look directly where this message touches,
and recognise THAT as your Self.
You are the Supreme Consciousness
Transcending the hands and body.
Free, ever fresh Presence
Here and Now”*

Satyananda

16.1 Discovering Silence

As I have related in chapter 2, I was working on revisions to version 2 of the thesis when Lynn called and told me I must come to meet Satyananda. I could sense a profound change in her just from the quality of her voice. The weekend she proposed I attend was in the form of a silent retreat, I was tired, and a weekend of silence seemed like a good idea at the time. I thought I might return restored and ready to complete my revisions. I had faced the fact that I would not be able to resolve the koan implicit in the thesis, but I thought it had other virtues as a record of a struggle.

The retreat was held at a youth hostel in Sussex, and was attended by 31 people, many of whom had met Satyananda before, and a few like me who were meeting him for the first time. The format of the retreat was quite simple. Each day there were 2 sessions of satsang (questions and answers with the master). In between one was encouraged to be silent, with no casual chatter. The hostel had beautiful walks on the doorstep, near a river which ran down to the sea.

The first satsang took place after lunch on Friday. We assembled and sat in two rows of chairs in a semi-circle with Satyananda's chair facing us. We sat in silence for some minutes, and then a young man, with long hair tied back in a pony tail entered. He radiated health and looked to me like a professional athlete. In spite of telling myself in advance to have no preconceptions, of course I had some, and found myself surprised, and relieved at his presence. Perhaps one of the reasons I was attracted to John's Zen was its ordinariness. It seemed to me to be about real everyday life, not special occasions. I have never been comfortable with gurus who wear long robes and radiate kindly beneficence. I prefer a sense of humour, and I was about to have a treat.

He took his seat, and unhurriedly attached a microphone to himself and made himself comfortable. Then he began a slow scrutiny of everyone. Starting at one side of the room he looked at everyone's face, and although I was facing him directly I could not tell when his eyes moved from one person to the next. When he looked at me, I felt as though his eyes were passing over me, missing nothing but not engaging with me. The silence was palpable. When he had looked at everyone he said:

'Welcome to satsang - feel free to ask.'

We sat on in silence for a full five minutes until someone said

'I know this is silly question.'

Satyananda grinned, *'Don't ask it then.'*

Questioner *'I have to ask.'*

Satyananda *'Then don't tell me the question tell me the answer.'*

There was gales of laughter and the questioner paused, and eventually answered
'It is the fear that won't allow me to let go.'

I remember thinking it couldn't have been a silly question if that was the answer, and wanting to know what the question was.

Satyananda *'This fear - you have it here now?'*

Questioner *'Yes.'*

Then for the next ten minutes Satyananda explored with the questioner what was being felt in the present moment. And one way he did that was by asking *who is thinking or feeling this?* This was the question that I had struggled with when trying to cope with the deaths of John and Viv and I felt an immediate point of contact. We never found out what the initial question was, nor did it matter. Whenever this questioner, or any other strayed into the past or the future they were gently returned to the now, to the present moment.

It reminded me of one of my favourite Zen stories.

A Zen student came to Bankei and complained: 'Master, I have an ungovernable temper. How can I cure it?

'You have something very strange,' replied Bankei. 'Let me see what you have'.

'Just now I cannot show it to you,' replied the other.

'When can you show it to me?' asked Bankei.

'It arises unexpectedly,' replied the student.

'Then' concluded Bankei, 'it must not be your own true nature. If it were, you could show it to me at any time. When you were born you did not have it, and your parents did not give it to you. Think that over.' (Reps 1957)

I bet Bankei did not say 'think that over'. I'm sure that was an addition by a chronicler or historian.

The difference in this situation was that participants thought that they did have their emotion with them. But like the student in the story, they were presenting the past. In the present people don't really have any problems, and they are able to deal more effectively with events in their lives if they do not do so from past patterns of behaviour. Whatever the difficulty that brought each person to express a question dissolved under the light of scrutiny. Those in real distress often broke down, and cried as they related their story. When this happened Satyananda allowed them space and encouraged them to express their feelings and then he would say '*this is excellent*'. The first questioners to get this response were jolted and looked their surprise. Satyananda would explain '*You see the problem – so you see the pattern*'. And of course not only did the questioner see, but many people in the room saw that all the questions were part of the same pattern. Satsang is an interactive experience no matter who is actually speaking. As satsang progressed more people were emboldened to speak, but increasingly they found themselves in a double bind. They could see that they were just presenting the same pattern, but they could also see that if they had the courage to express it, then Satyananda brought them to a point of peace.

Everyone felt this stillness in Satyananda, I prefer to call it silence, others prefer to call it love. They felt they didn't have this peace, and they wanted him to tell them how to achieve it. Then the pattern of the questions changed a little. Some people

stopped trying to present details of their past problems, and worried about the future. Yes they agreed, I don't have any problems in the here and now, but that is because I am here with you. When I go home this feeling will fade and I will be the same again, tell me how to really let go. This part all sounded really familiar, it could have been one of John's meetings. Of course this description is how the events struck me, and in that first session of two and a half hours the effect was that I became more and more relaxed. I felt myself in the presence of one who was an accomplished action researcher, and who was at one with himself, something I had not felt since John died. He didn't look like John, and he had a Spanish accent so he didn't sound like John, and he didn't use the terminology of Zen, but Lynn had been quite right, he was speaking from the same place.

I went for a walk by the river, had supper and went to sit in the satsang room early. There were one or two others already there sitting in silence with their eyes closed. I sat in a chair where I would get a good view, and waited. I knew I was over half an hour early and that the room would take time to fill up. People started arriving and I closed my eyes. The door kept opening and closing, and I could hear people arriving, my mind seemed lazy – it threw up a few thoughts - after all that's what minds do, but I didn't get involved. I could hear birds outside, and the chirping of some nesting in the chimney. When Satyananda's voice welcomed people to satsang I was totally surprised.

Time had stood still, where had I been? I suddenly realised that I had experienced silence, and it was not at all like my expectations. I had been longing for a silence

that was the cessation of thought, and of noise, that was in fact silent. For years I had read the words of Zen masters and I wanted to enter this peaceful place. But this was the discovery of a vastness that has nothing to do with noise. I did not enter it, it was simply there. I realised I could not leave it, what I had done in the past when I encountered it was ignore it. I had not understood what it was. Thoughts were still there, sounds were also there, business as usual in fact and yet not as usual. Sounds and thoughts were there, I could hear the sounds and see the thoughts arising, but they weren't me. It was as though I was listening to music, but, as Satyananda put it later, although the music was there, I didn't need to dance.

Satsang commenced, and questions were asked, and then a silence fell. Satyananda again said '*feel free to ask*'. I didn't have a question, I didn't even have a doubt, but I spoke and described what I had just experienced, I think in much the same words but I can't be sure.

Satyananda said '*You have made the most tremendous discovery, to recognise the silence that is beyond thought. Silence is the beginning of the end*'. I bowed. He bowed back smiling.

Next day, Lynn who was not staying at the hostel but at a cottage nearby where Satyananda was also staying, told me that he had invited me to stay also. So on Saturday after lunch I moved to the cottage. The afternoon was free between morning and evening satsang, and I sat outside with Satyananda for part of the time as he gently probed how I was feeling now. This was of course a form of validation. It seemed to me that he was assessing what lay behind my obvious elation. This too

I was very familiar with. In the past I had observed in myself and other people, the emotional rush that occurs during an insight. This emotional high, when the ego takes over the experience and gives itself a 'spiritual' outing, is just another thought, just another story. I understood what he was doing because I also understood how this experience was different from all the other times when I had had a kensho or enlightenment experience. Then I felt the elation of realising there was nothing to be done to be me, but I had not left this feeling alone, I had thought about my experience. I did not discuss these differences with Satyananda, there was no need. When you meet the real self, the formless self, the one who owns the mind, but is not the mind, then you are free. I had no need to convince him of anything. I found myself telling him instead of the great joke that I was trying to write a thesis about enlightenment. To my surprise I found myself telling him that I thought it was important that there should be a science that understood that there was mystery, and that not everything could be explained. And I realised that my uncertainties about myself had been reflected in my uncertainties of what I thought science should be. Just as I knew myself, so I also knew how that intersected with my own view of science, and this is discussed in Conclusions. He said that later perhaps we should discuss the difference between enlightenment and self realisation.

That evening when I raised the subject, he said that to think of one who is enlightened means that there must be an opposite one who is unenlightened, and this is dialectical. Whereas when you recognise who you really are you also see that you have always been that, there is no difference. That is self realisation. So in that sense

I have realised myself, and I have no wish for a state of enlightenment. And as all the masters have always said it is no big deal.

Sunday was the last day of the retreat, and I was asked very casually if I wanted to stay longer. My revisions of the thesis were waiting, and time was running out, but I had no hesitation in agreeing, who would not choose life over words. What I did not know, but he did, was that there was more to come. On Sunday evening, all of Monday and much of Tuesday he showed me how to relax and celebrate, not just my freedom, but my life. There were other people there, and I felt no need for personal attention, but sometimes we talked alone and sometimes with others. We walked and talked, ate and sang. My silence neither grew nor deepened, since it is not a state, but it flourished in his presence. I have given him a name which describes how I experience him. I call him 'Silence Like Thunder'.

16.2 But what of Zen?

But if I do not wish any longer for the state of enlightenment where does that place my koan, and the subject matter of much of the thesis? I cannot **demonstrate** the answer to the koan in a thesis. Were I to answer out of this present moment I might say '*the humming of my laptop computer.*' My thesis perfectly exemplified what happens when you try to understand the inexplicable through mind. I had no wish to change the thesis, because I had run my mind into the ground, and the thesis was a narrative showing that process. I decided I could best demonstrate my new perspective by inserting a commentary in a text box at appropriate points, showing how I now felt about some of the issues concerned.

Satyananda's words about the dialectic involved in enlightenment I did not interpret as meaning that John or Zen were mistaken. In Zen, enlightenment, or satori is used synonymously with kensho 'seeing into essence'. John often used the word enlightenment synonymously with the word Zen or the word self-realisation. It does not really matter which word is used, provided as Satyananda pointed out, that it is not thought of a state one enters. If one enters then one can leave. There is no coming or going, the consciousness that is you and is also the universe is always there, so it is not entered or left. Suzuki says (1962) says

“Satori may be defined as an intuitive looking into the nature of things in contradistinction to the analytical or logical understanding of it. Practically, it means the unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistically-trained mind. Or we might say that with satori our entire surroundings are viewed from quite an unexpected angle of perception.”

The problem with reading other people's definitions is that one then attempts to understand them. And that attempt is made by analysis and reflection. George Kelly and SOL philosophy provide a good description of how the mind (with no capital, which is thought) operates. Once you look from another angle of perception, you can see that the description is good up to 'standing at the wall', but not after the wall dissolves.

When I used quotations from Suzuki in chapter 1, I interpreted enlightenment as getting in touch with my Self Nature which in his terms is also Mind, and the Unconscious. Although I didn't realise it then, I saw it as a state, which I would then enter, or it would enter me. I thought that what prevented me from entering, or being entered, was the everyday mind of thought. And that a pre-requisite of entering satori was to drop

thought. My interpretation of much of Krishnamurti's writings also suggested to me that by observing my thoughts without judgement, they would quieten and die away. (I knew there was a contradiction here, a mind which was switched off or worked at a low level would not be very useful). But I suppose I thought that only happened in the state of satori, and then the mind switched back on again, but this time I was in control of it rather than it was in control of me. Now in fact that description isn't totally wrong, but I made two dangerous errors. First in regarding satori as a state, and second by regarding satori as the culmination of a chain of events. As Suzuki says some movement arises in the mind, which is not amenable of explanation. In fact I did not feel movement, I felt stillness, but in that stillness sounds and thoughts did not cease. I could see the mind functioning, hear noises with greater clarity than usual, but there was a difference in the angle of perception. For that to be so, some movement must have occurred. I cannot explain what happened, it is not possible to explain it without using a language of cause and effect. And it was because of my inability to see other than in terms of cause and effect that I also misunderstood Krishnamurti. Krishnamurti often says that there is no method by which to realise the self. Because people continued to ask for method, he suggested observing the movement of the mind without judgement. I heard that as meaning that the clarity of attention by which one observed the mind **caused** the mind to quieten, and thus enlightenment was more likely. In my experience the quietening of the mind came after experiencing silence, not before. No training is required or needed to quieten the mind. It may be that attacking the thesis as a koan helped to exhaust my mind, if so I regard that as a wonderful cosmic joke, but not a

method that is needful, or indeed that I would recommend. One cannot practice in order to be. Once a shift has occurred, the quietening then comes naturally, after the event and not before. The ego, meaning the individual pattern of organisation of the mind is not dropped, merely harnessed. From being the chairman of the board, mind is merely a shareholder. What is dropped are the constructions that the mind has made about ego mind being the basis of selfhood. As I try to express this I see the difficulties that whatever I say is likely to be misunderstood. It's no big deal, yet for all that it's so simple, it cannot be explained, it cannot even be understood, it simply is. Reaching this place doesn't make one all seeing and wise, in the sense of knowing everything. I used to struggle to understand the concepts of modern physics, and I struggle still. But since I wanted to know about such concepts in order to relate them to self realisation, I now have no need for such analogies. I can start from where I am, and as I explore this thesis as a narrative of my journey, much that was obscure now seems so simple.

What Suzuki terms the Unconscious, or Mind (with capitals) is Self Nature, and is formless, and absolute. But in dealing with the world of the relative, the formless is always there, it is not dispelled by dialectical conversation in the relative world. So Suzuki's statement below which formerly I had seen as a chain of cause and effect, now becomes a simple description.

“Prajna, which is the awakening of consciousness in the Unconscious, functions in a two fold direction. The one is towards the Unconscious and the other towards the conscious. The Prajna which is oriented to the Unconscious is Prajna properly so called, while the Prajna of consciousness is now called mind with the small initial letter. From this mind a dualistic world takes its rise: subject and object, the inner self and the external world, and so on.”

Suzuki was both an eminent academic and a self realised master. He presents descriptions with great precision of language. But this precision can have the effect of making the process seem more complex than it is. The world of form is dualistic, and I think and act as I feel appropriate in a dualistic world, but I also experience it from silence. Suzuki's Prajna he translates as 'transcendental wisdom'. I have also seen prajna translated as 'insight into emptiness'. When Satyananda talks about the process of self realisation the words he uses most often are 'consciousness' and 'living truth'. When I try to clothe my experience in language, I tend to speak at the moment of silence and emptiness. But that emptiness is not empty. As the Buddha said 'form is emptiness and emptiness is form'. One does not understand that better by deciding whether transcendental wisdom or living truth best represent the reality. They all do, and yet none do. It was only when I gave up all thought of Zen, that I 'attained Zen'. When I gave up all thought of understanding, then I knew.

16.3 How Was my Experience Different from Before?

But how do I 'know' that this experience is permanent, when I have had other enlightenment or kensho experiences which were not. When I resolved my first koan I stood at the wall, and I experienced that I simply was who I was and that the world was perfect just as it was. Then when joy at this realisation rushed in I went with it, and labelled it and identified with the label. As John said, I thought "what a wonderful experience I am having". I had the experience, but I did not change perspective, I still identified with my mind. Likewise it is clear from Austin's account that he presented his account of his kensho on the platform of the London

underground to his master as a state which he had experienced. A state in which he wanted counsel and guidance from his master on how to proceed. So he saw it as something he experienced **in order to** lead to further, greater experience. He had entered and exited. Had he stayed without judgement for a while longer he might have been celebrating with his master, rather than being told to drop thoughts about his experience. It is this stepping back into identification with mental processing that is the wall. Once one refrains from that, the wall is gone and one forever alters one's angle of perception.

I do not feel that there is nothing more to be learned. I'm at the edge of a vastness and as I experience the present, old patterns of behaviour constantly arise. But from my current angle of perception I see them from a certain distance. Not all who understand become gurus and teach. It is more a matter of deciding in freedom how you want to live. I certainly feel that I have a lot to explore. I find being with Satyananda helpful at present not because my experience will 'deepen' or 'lighten' but because his own stillness acts as a resonance to which mine responds. Satyananda has warned me that I may experience strange dreams, as past patterns come up. That has not happened, although it may. I have no fear of the future. As I recounted in my experience of grieving I found a method by which to give up suffering. When I felt anger or sorrow or grief I allowed them just to pass through me. Now that I know I am Consciousness I have not only given up suffering, I have given up happiness. Both are states. Joy and sorrow will come and go just as they

always have, but now I have no need of a method, to **allow** them not to turn into happiness or suffering. I am the method, and that is a profound difference..

17 Conclusions

17.1 Can Research be Transpersonal?

Polanyi (1967) observes it is a commonplace that all research must start from a problem, and good research starts from an original problem. But to see a problem is to see something hidden. It is to have an intimation that there is something there worth exploring. We take this for granted without noticing that searching for the solution to a problem is a contradiction. If we know the answer there is no problem, and if you don't know what you are searching for then you cannot expect to find anything. And yet all knowledge, including scientific knowledge is progressed because we know important things that we cannot explain. **When this is understood, then we can see that good science is always interested in the unknown.**

Good science should also be aware of and interested in mystery, in that which cannot be explained, because only in that way can the parameters of knowledge, or that which can be explained, be seen. This is the edge of Mind (with a capital) meeting the mind. Transpersonal experiences are those which have great value and meaning for those who experience them, they have axiological value. Braud (1998) calls these exceptional human experiences (EHEs) and suggests they might be mystical and unitive, psychic, unusual encounters, unusual death-related or exceptional normal experiences. In his view the research methods in inquiries such as these, as in any other research, are determined by the nature of the research questions. He suggests

that qualitative methods using in-depth interviews, narratives and stories, and methods derived from feminist, phenomenological, heuristic, and intuitive approaches might all be relevant. And that a mixture of methods might be necessary to do justice to the subject. I used a mixture of methods, including Learning Conversations, narrative, fiction, accounts of experience etc., and I think Braud is right that a mixture of methods is more likely to uncover the dimensions of extraordinary experiences. However I think it would be a great mistake to assume that some methods are more transpersonal than others per se. In some instances quantitative methods may also be appropriate. Many methods may approach the area of concern, but is the skill of the researcher which will determine whether the outcome is relevant to the subject of the inquiry. But by skill here, I do not necessarily mean skill in applying a technique. I mean skill in recognising a valid outcome. I came to this inquiry already having been pondering over the issues which concerned me for many years. Had I not been deeply concerned and immersed in trying to understand Zen I would never have started the inquiry. In a sense I came as an expert. Not an expert in how to do something, but an expert in detecting the parameters of my concerns, and that takes immersion in the problem. As I have made plain in chapter 2, I think that the skill I brought to the project was to look to the heart of a method, not to follow its technique.

I started out by arguing that enlightenment should be of interest to science in that it a goal of many hundreds of thousands of people from a variety of spiritual orientations. However it has been reached by a comparatively few number of people to date, and

so problems of validity arise. But that would be equally true when validating any quality. For example a superior whisky blender has skills that only another superior whisky blender can recognise. That doesn't stop whisky drinkers from appreciating a good blend, even if they could not blend it themselves.

Wilber's (1998) declared aim of honouring the entire spectrum of human experience and consciousness, without trying to reduce all modes to one, or claim that one approach is the only way, is the foundation of his reworking of epistemological pluralism. Thus he arrives at a model of a science which he feels could integrate science and the transpersonal. But he also calls for a scientific attitude to the transpersonal where some events are falsifiable, i.e. accounts based on direct experience should be confirmable by others who have tried the same experiment. The notion of falsifiability of scientific positions may be logically attractive, but I have always been fascinated by the scientific attitude to quarks described by Briggs and Peat (1984).

It was proposed in the 1960's that elementary particles were composed of three even more elementary particles called quarks. The properties of quarks were predicted and experiments were set up to detect them. No quarks have ever been detected, but the theory that quarks exist has not been abandoned. As increasing numbers of particle experiments were performed it became clear that three quarks would not explain all the results, so the theory was expanded to include six quarks instead of three. **In addition it was proposed that quarks are in principle unobservable.** Within modern physics quarks are therefore accepted as existing in principle, and it is

also accepted that they are not directly observable. But the reason why the theory that quarks exist was not abandoned, is that the effects of some particles with the theoretical qualities of a quark can be seen in the behaviour of other particles.

I believe that this can form a loose analogy of how an objectively subjective stance to self realisation might be established. Unlike quarks which were predicted theoretically, Self Realisation is not a theory, but an experience. This experience has been written on extensively by a small number of people, at any one point in time, but the history of self realisation extends back through many centuries, so if it is a delusion, historically it has cropped up in many traditions since records began. While all who have experienced self realisation have said that it cannot be explained or analysed it can be observed. John's difference in perspective from others can be seen in his conversations with others. However just as quarks affect other bodies, so the differences in attitude can be seen, observed and reported upon, just like any other experience. And the effects of my own shift can be seen in my own research by my attitudes before and after the experience. And that is where the real value of my inquiry lies in transpersonal terms.

So demonstrating a shift is not the problem, the problem is one of interpreting the meaning of that shift. If enlightenment like quarks, is by definition not directly observable then any method which seeks to explain it will have missed. Consciousness, or Self Nature or Mind cannot be explained. You can experience it, and it can change your perspective but this does not happen by intention or an act of will. Thus any methodology seeking to pin it down will not succeed. Just as self

realisation itself can only be approached by surrendering all concepts about its nature, so you can apprehend and appreciate descriptions of experience without explanation. But this stance requires a different attitude to verification.

In the **physical sciences** which aim for objectivity, this is done by creating theories about the nature of the 'objective world'. Skilled observers then agree about the nature of the data which pertains to the domain of the theories.

In **personal science** it is recognised that 'personal experience' is only accessible to the person experiencing it, i.e. to the 'unique observer'. Subjective perception is regarded as value laden and culturally biased, and these factors influence the meaning experienced by the person. These meanings inform the person's behaviour, and their perceptions of the consequences of their actions.

In **conversational science** it is accepted that all knowledge is value laden and that interaction between 'personal scientists' can enrich the personal knowing of each: but in ways that are uniquely personal.

When people collaborate, together they may, and often do, achieve shared meaning with shared values. But this is always at the expense of simplification. Selection of the features of shared experience is restricted to shared circumstances in time and space. Collaborative research recognises this and uses reflection to clarify the issues which arise.

Validity has a different meaning for each of these positions. Since this project was conducted in a personal science paradigm, validity in this paradigm is the equivalent of authenticity, what 'feels right' to the personal scientist. Reflection is

distillation process by which the personal scientist generalises from experience. Through reflection I tried to identify some of the characteristics of what made experiences authentic to me. Reflection is thus about understanding one's values, clarifying one's perceptions, and reflecting on one's personal meanings. This description is what others not sharing the experience judge from. In a personal science this authenticates the authenticity, and validates the validity. Each personal scientist draws forth their world and takes responsibility for their interpretation.

I contend that this project has life enhancing values, simply because of the importance of the subject matter, and that this can be apprehended. Validation that the shift of perspective I choose to call self realisation is not only a concern of science, it is also a concern of many spiritual disciplines, including Zen. Traditionally Self Realisation can only be confirmed by another who is themselves Self Realised. The logical consequence of this is that unless the scientist or researcher themselves become self realised then they cannot pronounce on the validity of the process. This is equally true of the example I gave of a whisky tester. Only another of equal skill can pronounce on the excellence or otherwise of the blending. However just as a whisky drinker can appreciate the blend by the result, so those who are interested in transpersonal issues can also judge the result by the descriptions of the experience supplied. Not in the sense of proving or disproving, but in the sense of whether this seems to have human values which add to our own appreciation of life. Does it have axiological value?

There is also one more way taken from physical science, in which validity in a scientific sense was shown in this inquiry. John was himself a scientist and started out his working life as a biochemist. His own PhD. was gained in the natural sciences. He believed that certain aspects of self realisation were amenable to scientific study, which is why he was so open to psychological and physiological testing. The tests reported upon in chapter 4 suggest that self realisation may be accompanied by a difference in brain functioning. Indeed it would be remarkable if it were not. Given Robertson's assertion (see chapter 4) that greater space in the brain is allocated to processing those parts of reality that concern us deeply, and Austin's erudite explanations of the differences in brain biochemistry due to different experiences, the different perspective that is self realisation might be expected to have measurable effects. Investigating this was beyond the scope of this project, but it is another avenue for suitably qualified investigators.

When you experience the silence beyond thinking it is unmistakable. One could argue of course that all people who describe this are deluded since they appear to inhabit a world which few recognise. But if agreement among a small number of participants is dismissed as a validation then much of new paradigm research would be suspect. What I found out very early in the inquiry was that no dialectical process can explain Zen. That of course includes SOL, and any other methodology or philosophy. I think Braud is correct in stating that only a method which itself displays transpersonal qualities can even describe the transpersonal, and it can never explain it. But this is the value of transpersonal studies. It is the when the relative comes up against the

absolute, becoming encounters being, and the relationship between being and knowledge can be seen. Not everything needs to be explained in order to have axiological value. We can celebrate as well as understand. By forcing myself to describe, explain, and interpret I finally forced myself to give up and simply experience the extent of my knowledge, then I found knowing. This project provides a record of the sort of misperceptions that can arise when the subject of Zen is examined intellectually, but it is a valuable record, warts and all, since the misperceptions I had are very common.

My original purpose was to consider whether Zen and SOL participants had different approaches to learning and knowledge. The Learning Conversations which I developed and tested succeeded in showing some of these differences, and the different views each had of being in the world. I have explored in myself and the other participants those things they value in Zen/SOL and how this affects their lives. By comparing and contrasting conversational accounts of experience I have shown how deeply embedded paradigmatic cultural assumptions affect our world view, even when we are committed in theory to some other position. I chose not to encourage respondents to rationalise their positions, by elaborating them. Instead I contrasted the Zen novices' reflective, conversational approach with me, to the different tack they often took to the same questions from John, and compared this with that of Self Organised Learners. As I said at the beginning of the thesis one of my concerns was how intellectual knowledge can outstrip action in the world. This part of the inquiry

represents an exploration of those factors which prevent greater intuitive knowing in Zen.

17.2 Who Am I Now - The Zen Experience

In the second version of the thesis I ended Conclusions by challenging my own beliefs as far as I was able by replying to some of the key questions I had asked others and role playing both expert and novice. I have let my original answer stand, and provided a further comment where this is appropriate in a different typeface.

Even if you haven't achieved Zen what impact has it had on your life?

It made me deeply dissatisfied with my life and made me distrust the basis of all my ideas and emotions.

That hardly seems beneficial?

To talk of benefits or gains is now as suspect to me as anything else. I don't look for happiness or enjoyment anymore. These come and go but they cannot be aimed at. What I value (and I see this is still a judgement) is clarity. I saw in John a sense of aliveness and awareness that I have never seen elsewhere. Somewhat paradoxically that seemed to go with a deep stillness. Since meeting him I no longer see anything in terms of absolute rights or wrongs, and I see that all my decisions, so long as they are still bound by an 'I' referent, are suspect.

Now that I am not bound by my former sense of identification with 'I' as ego, I feel that everything I did was part of my process, Zen, SOL, the thesis, Satyananda. Zen will always be special to me as the language which clothed a lot of my search,

but I am free of Zen. Paradoxically I feel that John is now with me in the sense that I see now that we never were and are not now separate.

Has Zen affected how or what you learn?

I feel that undertaking this thesis has made my Zen understanding somewhat different from that of the other Zen participants in that it has made me challenge my own beliefs in a more systematic way than I would have done otherwise. That combined with the deaths of John and Viv have combined to make me face up to the fact that all learning in the having/doing mode will not help me in my own personal quest. I concentrate now on trying to be aware of experience in all its aspects. Reflecting on this process I find that there is a tendency to oscillate between either being so much caught up in the moment that no reflection is possible, or being rather self consciously aware of being aware. Neither is helpful. If I can stay with this process without judgement then it may be that some level of change will occur.

I was right, but 'I' didn't do anything.

Has Zen helped or hindered your personal relationships?

It made me see that all my relationships are illusory. Love is acceptance without judgement and hard as I try I never achieve this. I became much more aware of my deficiencies when John and Viv died. I try to be aware that if my ego is illusory that this is true for other people interacting with me. There are still attractions and repulsions, but I try to keep track of the 'I' who feels the emotional pushes and pulls.

Just as one cannot practice in order to be, so one cannot 'try' to accept others.
From where I am now, no effort is needed.

How much insight do you have into yourself?

None at all

That's a copout answer - If you are watching as carefully as you say above how does that affect your insight into yourself?

I exist as a person in the world so I have a self which changes continually in reaction to events and that is the part of me which I contact when I try to be aware. Psycho dynamic or transpersonal explanations do not satisfy me. I did much work on myself some years ago via Reichian Body Work, Tai Chi, Psychosynthesis etc. etc. I see the concept of 'sub personalities' as clothing with imagination the contradictory parts of oneself which fragment our experience. These can sometimes be of value either therapeutically, or at some levels of self development, but they only help up to a certain point. I feel I have been stuck at that point for some time. I see the value of such techniques. I also see the value of the reflective process in getting to the 'wall'. But there is also some essential part of me whose being is absolute and unchanging. In spite of all my efforts I have no sense of aliveness about that part of me. That is what enlightenment is - to see into your own self nature and that is what has eluded me.

I was right, but I now have that sense of aliveness.

What, if anything do you think you either have to do or give up doing, in order to achieve Zen?

Well first of all I know that I can't think my way to an answer. I used to think I had to be more disciplined, stop my mind from chattering etc. The effect of doing this research has been to give me a much stronger sense that the 'I' who decides all this is the difficulty. I can see rationally that this self is illusory, but that knowledge in itself isn't enough. I asked John once why if I see clearly that the ego self which thinks it runs me is illusory that this knowledge hasn't taken me further. "Maybe it will" he said. It won't happen unless I have an intense need, but paradoxically it can't happen until I accept who I am without judgement - easier said than done.

Well we all create our needs in different ways. In spite of John's encouragement I never really thought a thesis was a useful component of self realisation. It isn't in the sense of being a route to get there, but since I got there, it was part of my route.

How strongly do you believe that you will achieve Zen?

I know the strength of my beliefs will have nothing to do with it. As Laurie said - "I am my knowing" For me that means I have to keep a constant eye on the 'I' who thinks it knows.

17.3 Who Am I now? - The SOL Experience

What impact has SOL had on your life?

Before coming to SOL I had long been interested in George Kelly's theory of personal constructs. I liked his model of 'man as scientist' and the notion that people could not be regarded as subjects in experiments as they had their own agenda. Interactions between researcher and participants were therefore a two

way thing. When I understood more of the SOL system I thought the MARS formula described very well how most people actually behave. I don't mean by that those people who spend their whole lives run by 'robots'. Rather that when people come to be interested in self development and learning in its widest aspect then the reflective MARS formula describes what people actually do. The reflective nature of the process is appealing. Overlaid upon that however is my Zen experience and 'I' now see the MARS formula as limited in helping me reach my own personal quest. I found the concept of 'learning conversations' very helpful when talking to participants, but I now see that John's conversations were conducted at a level I feel I never reached.

I now see SOL a bit like I see Newtonian physics, accurate within its domain. It is as useful a paradigm as any other in approaching the transpersonal, but it will not deliver the transpersonal as a consequence of using its methodology. But then neither will any other methodology. Indeed if you think that a particular set of techniques are transpersonal, you can be pretty sure you've got it wrong.

Has SOL affected how or what you learn

It has made me much more aware of the concept of levels or planes of knowledge than previously. I'm not sure now that I can directly compare what I learned from SOL with that from Zen. Like the rest of the SOL sample my initial interest in SOL was for a more instrumental reason than my interest in Zen. Having seen where Sheila and Laurie have reached by living with SOL it may be that SOL has a more transcendental purpose. I am personally convinced

that true change involves a difference in the mode of hemispheric functioning.

If SOL continues to evolve it may achieve similar results.

It is not evolution of SOL which could relate to transformation, but the abandonment of it when a certain point is reached. It is no different from Zen in that respect however, because conceptions of Zen also have to be abandoned to achieve Zen.

Has SOL helped or hindered your personal relationships?

Its hard to answer that. I feel that I used to conduct most of my relationships by reflection and negotiation. When I observe carefully I see that I have a tendency still to do that. I try to be conscious of that and think that I am changing to a more Zen mode although this is not complete.

I now deal with my personal relationships with no self consciousness. I'm looking forward to seeing the results.

How much insight do you feel you have into yourself?

By saying as I did above that I had none at all I was using the term 'self' in a somewhat specialised way. Seeing into my own self nature, as described elsewhere, has now so taken over me that I cannot think in any other terms. I am, in a sense, becoming my question 'what is enlightenment.' Everyday, in dozens of situations I ask 'who is doing, thinking, feeling this?' and that is now the major vehicle for my personal inquiry. In a sense I feel that using both Zen and SOL has cleared a lot of the debris away which was obscuring my view. Rightly or wrongly from a relative perspective I have now set up a process that would be hard if not impossible for me to reverse.

I had no idea when I wrote that that these were prophetic words. The difference now is that this is no longer a method.

What, if anything, do you feel you have to do, or give up doing, in order to become a better self organised learner?

This question would have a similar answer to that of Zen if Zen and SOL were agreed on the nature of the self. This has not been a central area for SOL. It is clear from Laurie's answers that he is not theoretically wedded to a particular concept of the self as purposeful and self directive. However in the way that most research students use the epistemology and techniques of SOL they do so as though the self were a central agent in charge of a community of selves. It may be that SOL could pay more attention to this area and that much of the apparent difference between Zen and SOL could be resolved. However a further sticking point, even if the self as a modeller of the world is dropped, is the role of purpose or intentionality. SOL believes in taking control of the direction of change, although it also allows for periods of provisionality. Zen is aiming at what might be conceptualised as permanent provisionality.

How strongly do you believe that you can transform yourself through SOL?

In terms of self development and moving towards a transpersonal view of the psychology of self I believe the techniques of SOL can be used to create a 'fast track' to get to the 'wall.' As currently conceptualised I don't think it can get me further, but then there is no evidence as yet that anything, including Zen, will do that.

I did not use repertory grids in my research because I felt that my own understanding was so imperfect at that time that they would have pushed me further from what I wanted to know. However I used them again in the workshop I led jointly with John before he died on stress and creativity, where he used the writing of haiku as a creative element. Repertory grids can show the components of the 'ideal' self, and if explored can show participants the basis of beliefs about themselves. SOL is not unique as a method to reach the transpersonal, but is as valid as any other.

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APPENDIX A

**Neurophysiological and Psychophysiological Investigation
Of a Zen Master**

Fenwick, P., Canavan, T., Anderson E. and R.

Neurophysiological and Psychophysiological investigation of a Zen Master.

by

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Introduction

For many years it has been the hope that changes in brain function might be detected in people who have reached enlightenment. It has always been difficult to persuade such people to take part in physiological experiments. We are fortunate in obtaining the cooperation of a Zen master who undertook a battery of psychological and neurophysiological tests.

Zazen has been widely investigated. Lesh (1970) had subjects practise Zen breath meditation, and reported that some subjects experienced feelings of concentration and detachment, some pleasant body sensations or vivid breathing, and a few, relaxation or dizziness. Lesh (1984) looked at the development of empathy in counsellors using Zen meditation techniques, and he describes in his paper Wienpahl's (1964) description of the Zen state. 'The Zen student is told to feel the force of the universe behind him.

One day he does. His intense concentration in Zazen leads him to this step. For it is a concentration of his energies.....Other distinctions between subjective and objective disappear. He feels at one with things and people around him, ultimately with the whole world. His growing strength is not dissipated by this realisation of identity. It is rather freed thereby: to bring himself out of the past and future of his memories and plans into the immediate present. The Zen student then increasingly has a sensation as of awakening abruptly from a daydream. The world about him is suddenly sharply in focus at these moments.....'

Kasamatsu and Hirai (19) showed changes in the EEG during Zen meditation. They found that practised Zen monks had increased theta activity, which they suggested related to a reduction of the cortical excitatory level, which is lowered by concentration of the inner mind. Malec and Sippelle (1977) showed small physiological changes in naive unpractised subjects carrying out Zen meditation.

Woolfolk (1975) describes Zazen meditation as 'The primary method by which the enlightenment or transcendentant state known as Satori is achieved.'

Yoshiharu Akishige (1984) describes the enlightened state as follows: 'The content of the historical present he is actually experiencing is in each moment changing in a thousand and ten thousand ways, stopping not for an instant. Yet no matter how much the content changes, the historial

present, possessing the features of the world of enlightenment, neither increases nor decreases, is neither pure nor defiled, right nor wrong, and neither life nor death.'

From general statements and specific comments made by our Zen master, which appeared to echo those recorded in the Zen literature, we were led to hypothesise that, at the moment of enlightenment, the cognitive structures that maintain our individual egos collapse. The mind is no longer dominated by an abstract 'sense of I', or by goal-seeking and time-dependent constructs of self. The Zen master's awareness is centred in the present, attending only to what is, and responding to his perception of what is in a way that makes no mechanistic distinction between self and not-self, cause and effect, social values and personal wishes. This hypothesis further led us to predict that in a right handed Zen master, the primacy for filtering the world through left hemisphere dominant cognitive structures had collapsed, and the master was now seeing the world from an almost entirely right hemisphere dominated viewpoint. This study looks at both the neurophysiology and cognitive structures of the Zen master.

The Zen master agreed to cooperate with both neurophysiological and psychological testing. A psychological test battery was given to assess the structure of his intelligence. Two dynamic tests were given, one, a level of processing test, described below, and the second, a modification

of the Stroop test. The Stroop test was given to assess his ability to focus his attention on relevant stimuli in the presence of the interference effects of discordant stimuli.

Neurophysiological testing consisted of a routine EEG and a standard alpha blocking experiment. A test of right and left hemisphere activation to verbal and non-verbal stimuli, using a CNV paradigm, after the method of Brown et al (1986, in preparation) and Anderson and Fenwick (1986 in preparation), was also given. A CNV differentiation test in a go/no-go CNV paradigm after the method of Howard et al (1982) was used to assess cortical excitation and inhibition.

Subject

The subject was a 66 year old Zen master of 15 years standing. He belonged to no specific Zen sect, but his enlightenment had been helped by Krishna Murti.

Method

The subject attended the Institute of Psychiatry in London on four separate occasions and St. Thomas's Hospital Department of Clinical Neurophysiology on one occasion. The subject was given a short form of

the WAIS - R (Canavan, Dun and MacMillan, 1986). The present form of the WAIS-R yields two distinct measures: a measure of general intellectual ability, and a contrast measure examining the relationship between verbal and spatial abilities. Similar figures derived from the WAIS have been found sensitive to neurological disorders involving either the temporal lobes (Powell 1979, Powell, Polkey and Macmillan, 1985) or the frontal lobes (Canavan 1983). Immediate and long term verbal memory were assessed using Weschler's digit span test, logical-memory passages, and paired-associate learning. Immediate and long-term spatial memory were assessed using the Corsi blocks, the Rey figure, and the Benton visual retention test. Some of these tests had previously been shown to be sensitive to temporal lobe damage (Powell 1979, Powell, Polke and MacMillan 1985), while the battery as a whole is currently being standardised on both neurosurgical and neurological patients. (Canavan, MacMillan and Polkey, in preparation, Sensky, Fenwick and Canavan, in preparation). The Wechsler logical memory test, the Rey Osterreith test for left and right temporal lobe function, Bentons visual retention test, a mainly right hemisphere test, the Wisconsin card-sorting test for frontal lobe damage, (Nelson 1976), left-right disorientation tests of map-reading for assessing parietal damage (Butters et al 1968), were all given according to the standardised instructions.

An experimental test concerned with levels of processing at the time of memorising, based on the work of Tulving (1981) was also given. The

examinee is shown a series of words, and required to make judgements concerning either the case of the lettering (upper case or lower case) the sound of the word (rhyme condition), or the meaning of the word (semantic condition). The examinee is not warned that words will later be required in free recall and also forced choice recognition.

Eye-blink conditioning

A standard eye-blink conditioning test was given. GSR electrodes were attached to the right forefinger and forearm. A puff of air given to the right eye was preceded by a tone, which was itself preceded by a light of different colours. The discriminative stimulus was a light of a particular colour. The GSR was measured throughout the conditioning task.

Hemisphere activation tasks (CNV)

A dynamic test of temporal lobe activation, which has been designed at the Institute of Psychiatry, was given. This test makes use of the CNV and consists of two parts. The first part is a non-dominant temporal lobe function test in which S1 is a pattern and 3.5 seconds later a further pattern is shown as S2. The subject at S2 has to decide whether the two patterns are similar or dissimilar and press a button in their hand. The verbal task consists of line drawings, presented as S1 and S2, and the subject has to decide whether or not S1 and S2 are the same or

different, using the categories of living and man-made. The EEG data was collected, using silver/silver chloride electrodes, from C3 and C4, with a time constant of ten seconds and a high frequency cut of 30 dB down at 70 Hz. Sixteen trials were averaged, with a random interstimulus interval, artefacts were rejected on line and an eye movement channel was averaged as well as the signal channels.

Go no-go CNV

For the go CNV, S1 was a tone of 1000 Hz, which indicated a mandatory button press at S2. If the button was not pressed during a reaction time window, then the subject received a six second burst of 90 dB of white noise. For the no-go CNV, S1 was a tone of 2000 Hz, which indicated no button press following S2. If the button was pressed in error during the reaction time window, then a similar burst of 90 dB of white noise was received. The reaction time window was set at the mean of 10 practice go trials, during which the subject was instructed to press the button as rapidly as possible after S2. Go and no-go trials were randomly intermixed. Sixteen trials of each type were collected and averaged together. Electrodes, amplifier parameters and data collection were similar to those of the spatial and verbal tasks above, but only C2 electrode was sampled.

EEG and alpha blocking

At St. Thomas's Hospital, a routine EEG was taken on a SLE 16 channel EEG machine and the alpha blocking stimulus was a flash from a SLE photic stimulator.

Stroop effect with cueing

A computerised Stroop presentation was given to both the Zen master and a control group. All subjects completed three tasks. Stimuli were presented on a VDU. Stimulus presentation recording of reaction time was controlled by BBC microcomputer. Subjects responded by pressing either a red or a green button for each trial.

Task A: non-Stroop control

Subjects were presented with two types of stimuli: rectangles, coloured either red or green, or words, either "RED" or "GREEN". The words were written in white on a black background. Subjects task on each occasion was to identify the colour of the rectangle or the meaning of the word.

Subjects received 100 trials organised into ten blocks of ten trials each. Each block consisted of either rectangles or words. The two types of blocks were presented alternately. Each alternation was signalled to the

subject by the word "SWITCH".

Prior to each stimulus, a warning signal "READY" appeared on the screen.

Task B: non-cued Stroop

The stimulus in this task were the words "RED" and "GREEN". For each stimulus, the word was written in the discordant colour. i.e. "RED" written in green, and "GREEN" written in red. The subject was told to begin by attending to the meaning of the word and ignoring its colour. However, when told to "SWITCH", they had to attend to the colour, and ignore the meaning of the word. Subjects received 100 trials, organised into ten blocks of ten trials, with a switch occurring for each block. Subjects received the warning signal "READY" prior to every trial.

Task C: cued Stroop

This was identical to task B, except that the warning signal "READY" was replaced by an explicit cue, either "COLOUR" or "WORD", depending upon the type of trial.

Results

WAIS-R intelligence test

The subject displayed no deficits in general ability (which was bright normal at 115), and no contrast between verbal and spatial abilities (the quotient being 100.8, i.e. almost exact equivalence between abilities). However, whereas the performance sub-tests were carried out efficiently, and without need of non-standard intervention, the verbal sub-tests proved something of a chore. For example, the verbal comprehension sub-test requires the examinee to answer a series of questions regarding hypothetical situations and to state the reasons behind a number of social conventions and laws. The subject was loathe to predict his likely behaviour under such circumstances, and equally loathe to recount social conventions. Correct answers were forthcoming only through the non-standard approach of allowing the subject to give the answers he thought the examiner would like to hear, rather than through giving his personal held views.

Similarly, on the verbal similarity sub-test, the subject was inclined to see only differences between items, and once again had to be coaxed into giving more conventional answers. The verbal vocabulary sub-test was completed somewhat more easily.

Frontal and parietal tests

The map-reading test for left-right disorientation was normal, as was the Wisconsin card-sorting test on which the subject showed no perseveration.

Memory tests

Digit span was well above average, at 9 forwards, 6 backwards, (scale score 14), as was block-tapping span, at 7 forwards 5 backwards. The latter is a more difficult test for normal subjects, and so the present attention span scores may be regarded as equivalent. Immediate verbal memory (for prose) was well above average with a mean of 13.75 items (normals average 9.5), while delayed recall was averaged at 73%. Immediate spatial memory was average, with 7 Benton figures correct and 3 errors. Delayed recall of the Rey figure was also average at 55%. Verbal learning was good with a paired associate score of 19.5. Memory testing, then, revealed no deficits, with only a slight superiority of verbal memory over spatial memory.

Depth of learning test

The experimental tests concerned with level of processing at time of memorising revealed an unusual pattern. As can be seen in Figs. 1 and 2.

normal subjects remembered best of all words about which they have been required to make a semantic judgement, whereas words processed at a rhyming level are less well remembered, and words processed at a visual level the least well remembered. While the semantic versus non-semantic distinction holds true for the present subjects, he appears to benefit equally from rhyme or case-processing. Under conditions of free recall, neither form of processing leads to much being remembered, and there is no rhyme advantage. Under recognition conditions, each form of processing leads to good remembering, with case words almost as plentiful as rhyme words. The subject displays a much flatter curve than normal controls. This would suggest either that the subject is better able to retrieve words, processed only to a shallow degree, OR that, despite the experimental manipulations, we were unable to affect significantly his personal manner of processing incoming information.

Eye-blink conditioning

The eye-blink conditioning tests were also unusual. We were unable to measure any reliable GSR to the various stimuli. The subject also failed to become conditioned to the discriminative stimuli. Although eyeblinks were reliably elicited by the tone, they were not reliably related to the colour of the lights. The subject, who was not warned in advance, was also unable to verbalise the sequential arrangements of the test, e.g. light, tone, air-puff. Under similar conditions, both amnesic and

Table 1 that the Zen master is considerably faster than the control subjects for all tasks.

Both controls and the Zen master showed a similar increase in reaction time for the non-cued Stroop task compared to the control task (0.37 sec and 0.41 sec. respectively.) However, while this represents only a 65% increase in reaction time for the controls, the increase for the Zen master is 114%. However, when performance on the cued Stroop task is compared with the control task, the Zen master shows only a 39% increase in reaction time, compared with a 52% increase for the control subjects. The effect of cueing in the Stroop tasks for controls is only small, leading to a 0.07 sec. saving (7%) between the cued and non-cued versions. In contrast, the Zen master shows a substantial reduction of 0.27 sec (35%) in reaction time with cueing.

Routine EEG

The routine EEG was entirely normal for the age. A normal alpha rhythm and background activity was seen. There was no excess of theta activity. With eyes closed, a standard alpha blocking experiment was carried out. The results of this are shown in Figure 3.

Temporal lobe activation tests

Figure 4 shows the result of the CNV laterality index for a normative control group (Anderson and Fenwick, in preparation). The laterality index for the Zen master is shown in Figure 5. It is clear that the verbal curve lies over the spatial curve, showing that during the verbal task there was no left hemisphere activation and that the right hemisphere was activated equally by both the verbal and non-verbal tasks.

CNV go no-go task

Figure 6 shows the CNV curve for the go no-go task. There is good differentiation between the go and no-go conditions. However, it is of interest that the no-go condition is at times positive. This suggests a very high level of cortical inhibition during the no-go trials and is an unusual finding in the groups of patients that we have already studied.

Discussion

It is not possible to know whether or not the Zen master is truly enlightened, or whether he is misguided by subjective experiences which have no correlate in the objective world and which are not verifiable. This Zen master describes in some detail his moment of enlightenment which conforms to those described in the literature, and his behaviour in an interview situation certainly suggests that he is unusual. There are

no features of mental illness which would lead to a psychiatric diagnosis.

The results of the WAIS-R show him to be of bright average intelligence and in no way outstanding intellectually. There is no verbal - spatial difference, and thus nothing to suggest an asymmetry of his abilities or the possibility of previous brain damage. This is confirmed by a normal Benton visual retention test, a normal Wisconsin card sorting test, a normal test of right-left disorientation, normal Wechsler logical memory, and normal block tapping span. The Rey Osterrieth results, although they can be accepted as normal at 55% delayed/immediate recall, do just raise the question of poor right temporal functioning.

What was significant about the **psychometry tests** was the inability of the Zen master to answer questions appropriately when they related to his possible future intentions or to society's values. He explains this inability by saying that the psychological construct which leads to the experiencing within him of his individual sense of I is no longer present, and thus there is nothing within him that can chose or predict his action at any future moment. He thus acts according to the situation. This attitude clearly presents difficulty when answering some of the more general sections of the WAIS, and may have lead to his I Q being estimated as lower than it truly was.

The lack of **eyeblick conditioning** is surprising, as was the absence of GSR

responses. It would seem that he is not able to be conditioned across three stimuli, light, tone and puff, as the conditioning occurred only between tone and puff. This result is sufficiently unusual to mark a significant difference between this man and other subjects tested in our laboratory. It is also of interest that he was unable to make the connection in the experimental situation between the warning light which heralded a puff and those which didn't. It is, of course, difficult to speculate, but one interpretation of this would be that he was responding to each stimulus individually, and thus the necessary connections for a conditioned response were not made.

The **depth of learning test** shows some differences from the standardised norms. While the semantic versus non-semantic distinction holds true for the present subject, with many more semantic words being remembered, he appears to benefit equally from rhyme or case processing. Under conditions of free recall, neither form of processing leads to much being remembered, and there is no rhyme advantage. Under recognition conditions, each form of processing leads to good remembering, with case words almost as plentiful as rhyme words. The subject displays a much flatter curve than normal controls. This would suggest either that the subject is better able to retrieve words, processed only to a shallow depth, or that, despite the experimental manipulations, we were unable to affect significantly his personal manner of processing incoming information.

The **alpha blocking test** was unusual in that habituation was delayed. This test was not given during a meditation practice, and so is not similar to that of Kazamatsu and Hirai (1967), who used sound clicks during Zazen meditation. However, the delayed blocking points to a similar result to that of the above authors, and taken in conjunction with the failure of conditioning in the eyeblink situation, does raise the question as to whether or not conditioning and habituation processes are different in Zen masters. If so, this would add support to the concept that each stimulus is seen as something new.

The **hemisphere lateralisation test** gives a surprising result. The activation of the right temporal lobe by both verbal and non-verbal tasks suggests that a non-verbal strategy was used throughout this test. It is clear that the results are not due to left temporal lobe damage, as other forms of psychometric testing indicate normal functioning in that area. This would seem to suggest that the Zen master does indeed use right hemisphere strategies predominately in this situation. The go no-go CNV shows a marked inhibitory component to the no-go response, which is also of interest.

The **Stroop test** suggests that in normal individuals their own internal strategies and cues in dealing with Stroop-interference are as effective

as that provided by an external verbal cue. It is parsimonious to assume that the internal cues which they are using are also verbal. In contrast, when the Zen master is left to his own spontaneous strategies, he is less efficient at coping with Stroop interference. However, when forced to use a verbal cueing strategy, he can demonstrate the ability to inhibit this interference effect. The implication is that the internal strategy for dealing with this specific type of task is, a) non-verbal and b) less efficient for this type of task than the possible verbal strategy used by normal subjects.

In conclusion, the Zen master certainly showed some differences in his neurophysiological and psychological responses in test situations. He appears to have tackled the tests using non-verbal or visio-spatial strategies. This is clearly seen on the hemisphere lateralisation test, and it is also apparent to his disadvantage on the Stroop. He also clearly shows differences in habituation and conditioning. These facts, taken together with his unusual responses on the WAIS, give support to his claim that at the moment of enlightenment the psychological structures supporting his personal sense of 'I' collapsed, and he is left continually present in each passing moment of time, responding to what is.

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Go/Nogo

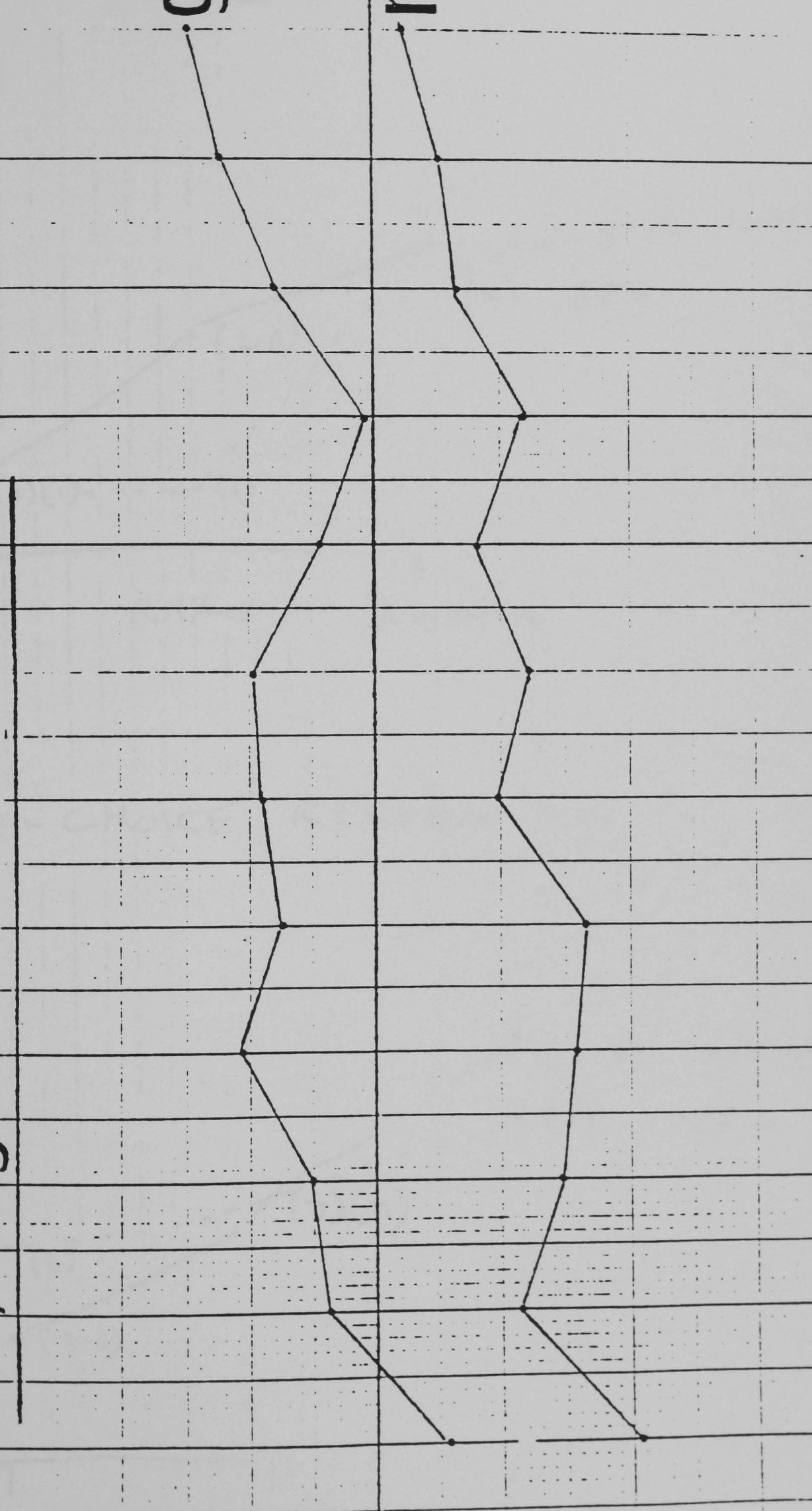
Index

6
3
-3
-6

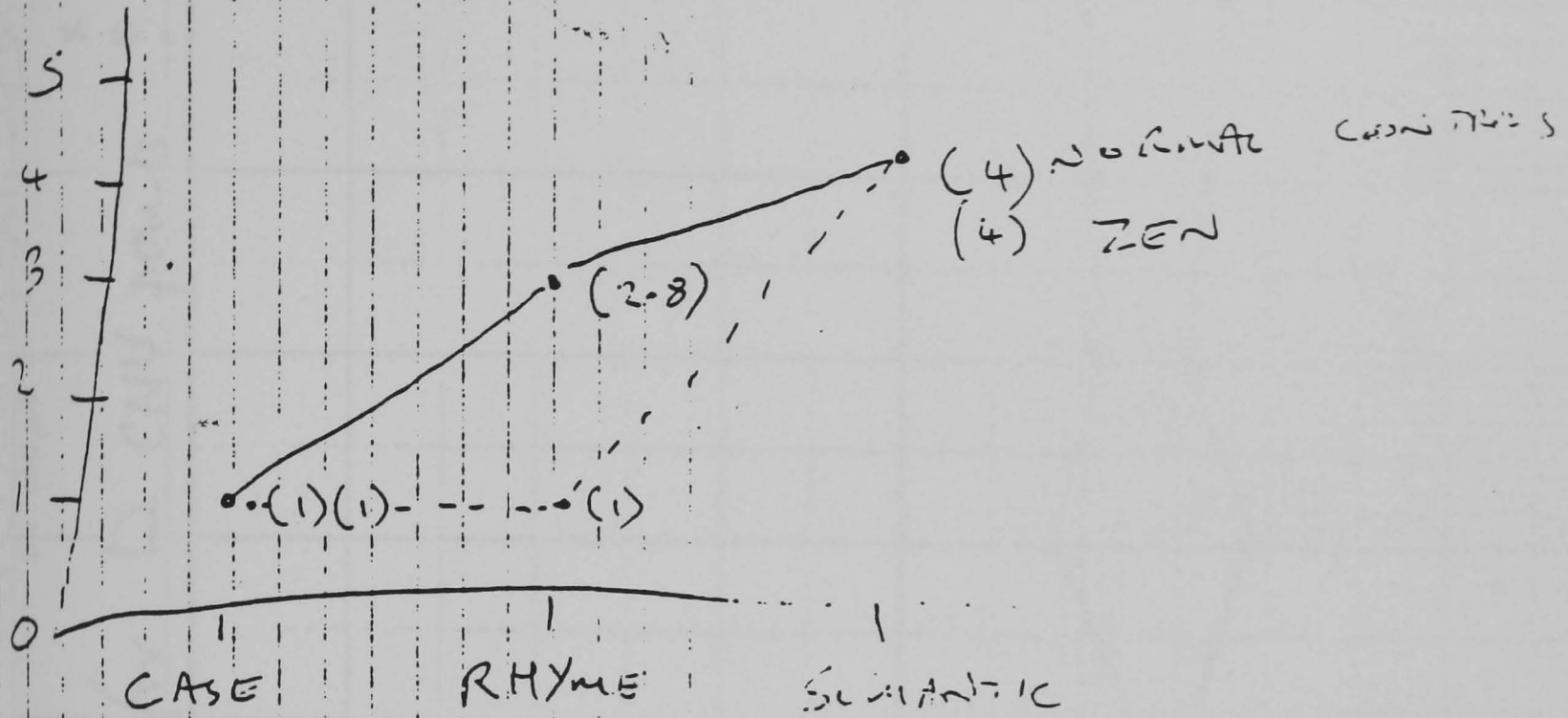
go

no go

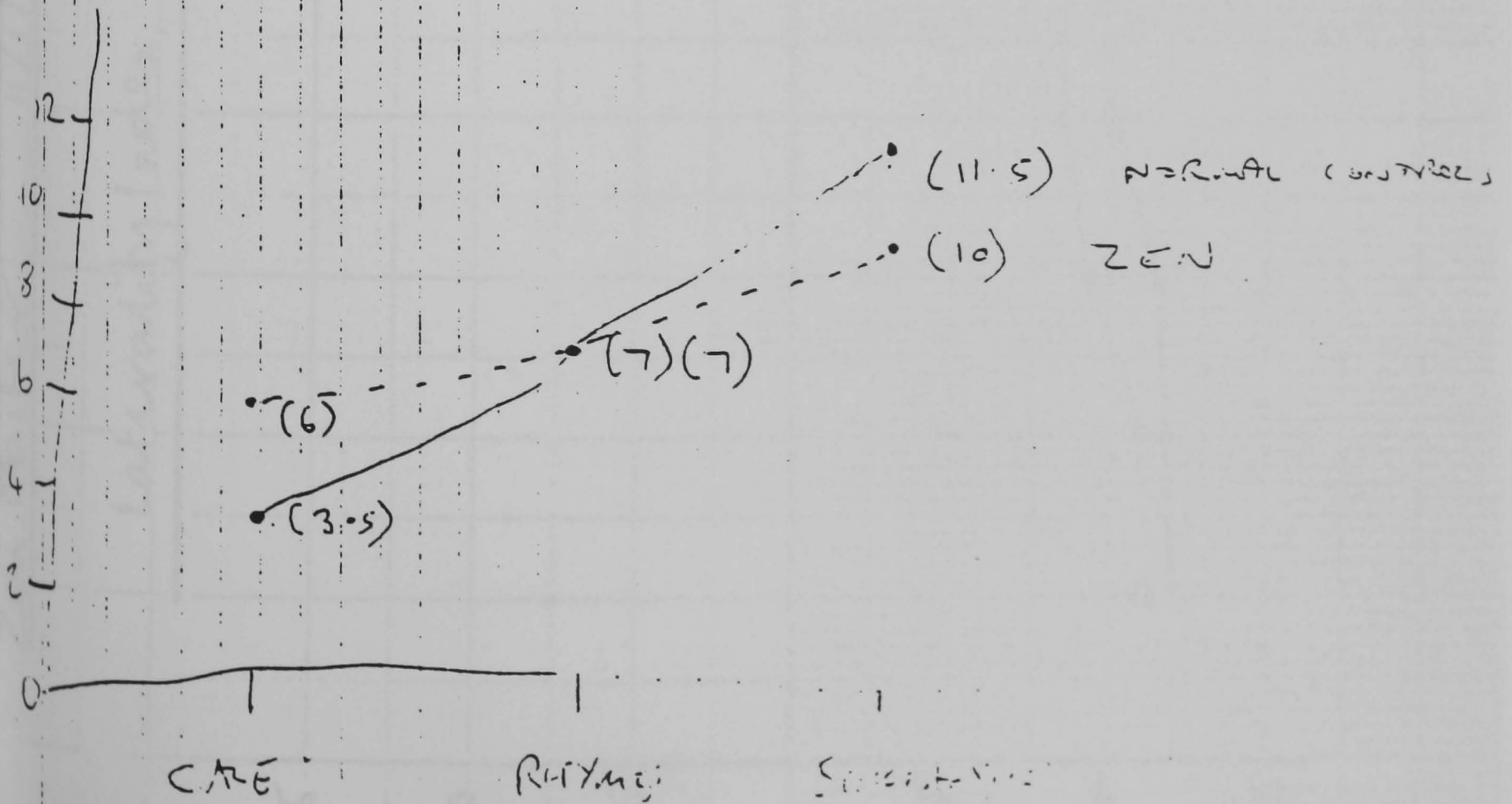
ZEN MASTER



FREE RECALL



FORCED-CHOICE RECOGNITION



Level
Number

588

Reflection light
4 20pt

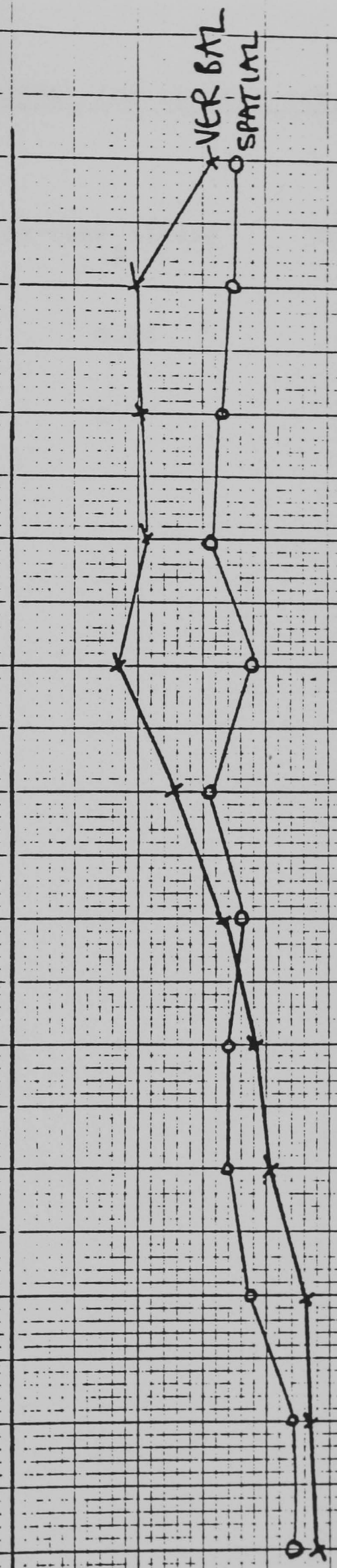
Zen Master 11/1/86

x - verbal
o - spatial

Laterality Index, Calculated for 12 CNV points

15
10
5
0
-5
-10
-15

mV

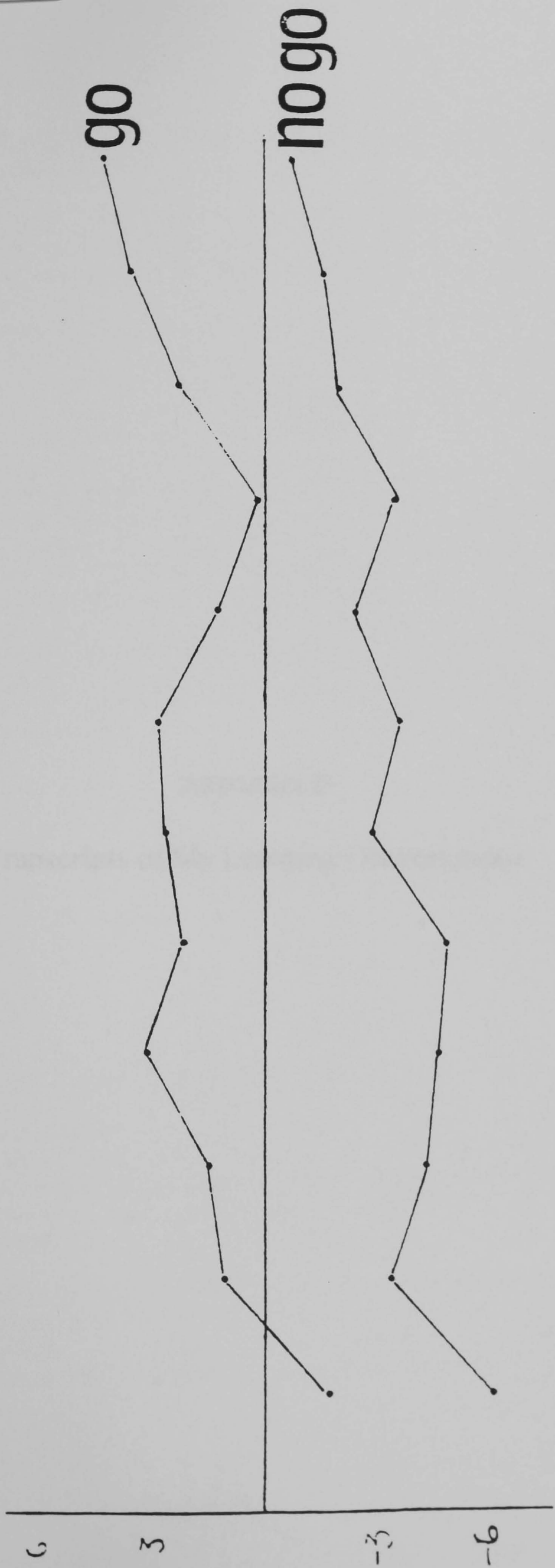


VERBAL
SPATIAL

Table 1. Mean reaction times (seconds) for control subjects and JH for the three tasks

	Control Task A	Non-cued Stroop B	Cued Stroop C
Controls (N=4)	0.57	0.94	0.87
J.H.	0.36	0.77	0.50

Go/Nogo Laterality Index



ZEN MASTER

Appendix B

Transcripts of My Learning Conversations

Q1 - Even if you haven't achieved zen what impact has it had on your life?

B - It has had **real milestone effects** - it has made me more comfortable with the mould that I'm in - **it occurred in spite of trying to understand at the time.**

M - I've had experiences through zen which have enabled me to overcome my negative aspects. Probably because of zen I've noticed in myself when things are not quite right. It's trying to do something about it - zen gives you the opportunity to do something.

T - **Quite a shattering impact.** I've been belonging to one or another philosophical association. Zen put that firmly in its place. You find you'd made quite an accommodation with it, it's very comfortable. Zen was a sudden sharp shock - I'm actually going nowhere.

S- A massive impact. Until I met John I was very insecure. It gave me a purpose, and he gave me confidence because he seemed to think I was worth bothering with.

Y- You can see from this room what an impact it had. (Y lived in a bedsit which was decorated in a minimalist style with Japanese posters) I had always been interested in things Japanese, but meeting J was different. He seemed to be true zen without trying to be anything in particular. He made me think about a lot of things.

Q1 - What impact has SOL had on your life?

R - A **massive** impact. I was a very conventional person, most sportsmen are. It was a revelation to me that my opinion was important. The other thing was that **SOL integrated my personal knowledge with objective knowledge.**

L - The initial impact was to change my perspective of knowledge and trying to develop some criteria to evaluate knowledge. I moved from other organized prescribed knowledge to - what am I going to use this information

for..... The initial impact was at a research level. At a philosophical level I'm still dissatisfied. What I wanted was some notion of transcendental purpose and its not there..... **OK there's more reflection - being conscious of it is a let's say superior state - a better position to be in. I'm better at achieving what I want to achieve - it doesn't actually explain to me why I want to achieve it.**

R2 - **I've been a Self Organized Learner all along but (until I came to CSHL) never sorted out what it meant in my life, for example in my relationships.** I was particularly concerned about my behaviour and the way I experienced my partner's behaviour. I have found a way to integrate that in my value system.

C - A very big impact. It not only influenced my working life but also my home life. At work it initial helped me to organize and develop roles and responsibilities for myself and others. **It influenced the way I progressed my ideas and developed coping models.** At home the stress of extra work placed stress on my family life. In the long term my wife has developed a new understanding.

D - Well I discovered Kelly's things about the mid 70's and never really got into the hard core technical side of grids.....so when I came across SOL it was more a matter of recognition of something I already had as a frameworkI didn't suddenly discover something and say wow this is a whole new way of looking at things.....it was nice to find that there was already a community which existed.....something I could get a Ph.D. in rather than my long frustrating attempt to invent one of my own without having support..... when you are able to make explicit, or **if someone else can make explicit for you in some way, something you have been doing implicitly, it gives a deeper understanding and also provides a way of doing it more precisely.**

Q2 - Has it (zen) affected how or what you learn?

B- It (zen) left me with a suspicion and disrespect for learning based on methodology - if you do this and this, that will happen. Zen learning is frenetic activity followed by a sudden shift in gravity.

T - The quality of attention is much sharper when ego isn't present or when it's loosening its grip.....zen is the absolute awakening of now. **My learning would improve immensely if there's nothing to get in the way no judging, commenting etc.** Not abandoning critical faculty but not having it operate randomly.

M- I don't know about that. It's difficult to know how I would have been if I hadn't met John. I think I've changed, but whether that's zen is hard to say.

C - Yes, it has. It's very much been tested this year in the way I've gone out, and learnt, it's as though I'm doing it for myself, not for anyone else. It's not second hand, it's first hand it's very much a real thing, a zen thing. I know I haven't achieved zen, but there's a sharpness about how I'm going about things at the moment which I feel is direct and in contact with whatever it is. Whether zen made that happen or whether that is a reflection of what is in me....I suspect it's a reflection of what is present in me now, being direct and not learning for any other reason than the learning itself. I think I've learned well.

S - It's affected what I learn a great deal because my idea of starting therapy was to get my awareness much more tuned in. It was also to try to help Ted who refused to go and ask for any professional help, but that bit hasn't worked either. I don't know that it's affected ...I was never taught how to study at school one just picked it up, I left school when I was 16. If one's interested in something one learns it, but I didn't make any deliberate effort to change.

Y - I was already interested in martial arts, when I was 7 there was an abbot from a Zen monastery who actually lived in our house for a year, so I was introduced to things Japanese at an early age. So I've been interested in the aesthetic side of zen for a long time. Having met John and having pursued the matter further my interest

in the martial arts increased a lot and my interest in Japan increased a lot.

Q2 - Has it (SOL) affected how or what you learn?

R - When I'm reading I try to be in conversation now (with what I'm reading). I can now skim read and take what I want rather than being pedantic.

R2 - I started recognizing patterns, not necessarily in relationships but in the way I interpreted relationships. **The monitoring, reconstruing and spiralling on (in SOL) made me realize how I structured meaning - gave me a meta-perspective.**

D - I guess one of the principles I have evolved out of the work that I have been doing is that in an interaction in a complicated situation whoever is the most flexible in that situation gets to decide how things proceed. ...Whether I'm dealing with a poorly designed chair, a poorly designed institution or a person who has fixed ideas about things it just simply becomes part of what I have to work with - that's much easier to deal with than my own inertia which is related to the robots that run you that are spoken of round here.

C - **It hasn't affected my attitude to learning but it profoundly affected the way I deal with people.** It now takes into account personal construct psychology and organizational psychology.

Q3 - Has zen helped or hindered your interpersonal relationships?

B - Yes and no. On the one hand there are things I'm better at managing but on the other many of feelings of insecurity are still there.

M - I think its helped but it's difficult to know how I'd have been otherwise? You discover the fact that everything is under the microscope - it gives you a sense of what the situation actually is - it can be frustrating at times.

T - It brought matters into the open. Accommodations made with one's partner - it was difficult to proceed with them. I was no longer able to pursue comfortable accommodations. When one is attentive love comes. When ego isn't present love is a natural behaviour mode.

C - I think it's helped. Particularly now. I think I'm responding much more directly to people in both positive and negative ways, I think I'm responding directly, quickly, immediately to people and that it's helped, I feel I'm on direct and real ground. I may be lousing things up all over the place but I feel I'm here now and that I don't have a hidden agenda. I'm risking being, and standing my own ground. It's helping but it doesn't necessarily make it more comfortable. I'm letting myself out - not trying to keep myself under wraps.

Myra - What is this self that you are letting out?

It's how I really am not how I would like to be - the protective skin is no longer there - I feel directly in contact - I don't know how I could be more directly in contact.

S - It's helped enormously. Being more aware of what interaction is going on - John would love to hear that MORE aware I said and also being aware that things which really upset one, then that's an issue you should be dealing with.

Y - It's made me more aware of my relationships to other people and sometimes that has been may be a hindrance in the conventional sense, in that I've become more

reclusive not necessarily applying zen in the correct
way but it's certainly made me aware of the
superficiality of relationships sometimes.

Q3 - Has SOL helped or hindered your interpersonal relationships?

R - I came to SOL through George Kelly. That made me think conversationally because he wrote so beautifully. Then I came into contact with Laurie (SOL tutor). He treated me as an equal and that has given me confidence in all my relationships.

L - It hinders to the extent that I tend not to be judgemental.....I seem to be in a state of provisionality far too often.... There's this contrast between this ever purposeful being that really isn't and this really purposeless being that seems to exist when I'm not being purposeful.....I want to drift sometimes, it's pleasant, I'm looking around, I'm seeing what is.

R2 - I've learned to understand my construing based on my knowledge. **I've taken on the notion that everyone has those feelings - I don't record criticism as dislike but as another value system confronting mine - not a cause for breakdown of a relationship.**

C - I feel it has been an immense help at work. **I understand better how people think. I'm much more tolerant and patient with other people's points of view.**

D - It certainly helped I don't think there's any question about that. Its difficult for me to imagine an interpersonal contact in any context that isn't affected by that (i.e. that I'm the one who has the choice in determining things).

Q4 - How much insight do you feel you have into your self?

B- At an intellectual level it's easy to play around and think this is insightful.....I can see retrospectively the changes within me - there's a level of involvement in personality that I'm more aware of before I met J.

M - Until you get there you don't know what the difference is. You can compare yourself to other people you know but.....I couldn't really grade that.

Y - Well I think I find myself preoccupied with myself most of the time anyway - it's made me aware of my preoccupation with myself, but as far as insights go I don't really think I value an insight unless it's like that (snaps fingers) I don't think I value insights of well I'm like this and I'm like that and it's nothing more than everyday cuds wallop really - the usual banter.

C - A lot more than I used to have I think. I'm much more present, more direct. Experience is more raw, more abrasive, and more real.

S - I don't know. The more I go on the less I am sure of anything.

Q4 - SOL - How much insight do you feel you have into your 'self'?

R - I really don't know. I'm more at ease with myself I'm less hard on myself. I wouldn't say I know myself but I can live with me better.

L - I'm now capable of redefining myself. It's content free - in that sense it is helpful - I'm much less confined by predetermined judgments.

R2 - Quite a bit. I began with a self-reflective approach and saw the pattern of my feelings - I became much more self-aware.

D - On what sort of scale do I answer how much, compared to what? No, I'll answer that cryptically. I have a very

clear sense of levels of my own functioning and opinions that I am not letting myself appreciate because if I did I would have to let go of many of the opinions I still hold of myself - and I imagine it would be different from what I am.

Myra - What is stopping you do you think?

I think the human avoidance of unfamiliarity more than anything else. I operate mostly on a model of who I think I am based on my past experience and I can make predictions based on that and they generally come pretty close. If I went and changed I'd have to find a whole new basis for making predictions or give up making predictions at all. That is what attracts me to Kelly's theory - giving up any attempt to make predictions..... The irony of it is that the things we need to give up trying to predict are things that we are totally incapable of predicting anyway.

C - Well personal construct theory helps me to understand myself much more, especially how I arrive at judgments.

Q5 - What, if anything, do you feel you have to do, or give up doing, in order to achieve zen?

B - The question itself just poses the dilemma and to answer is just to be drawn into it. I'm aware of myself and an intellectualization that says this is what I have to give up - I wish it were 2 sugars in my tea.

M - I've always found it useful not to be too abstract about what is going to happen. Don't worry and get on with it.

T - at my level, that of a novice, it is giving up, becoming aware of all the old bad habits one has indulged in and even fed. It's a silent observation of these things until they loosen their grip. Not like doing like letting old clothes fall from me.

C - I think I have to ...I'm not quite sure what I have to do or not do because I don't know how much more present I can be at the moment. **I think I have to become wiser as to my emotional pulls and pushes.** I think that they pull and push me beyond the bounds of straight reality of life. I need to understand more clearly where these are coming from and what they are.

Myra - And how could you do that?

C- By being in touch with John more, and **being more instantly aware of how I'm responding to life.** I feel as though I've chucked myself in at the deep end and there's an awful lot of stuff coming and going.....I feel as though I've risked it all and I'm feeling it all in a very unprotected way.

S - **I have to give up thinking about doing something and actually do it.** I have to be in a sufficiently quiet frame of mind to allow something to come from the inner self that has been squashed and flattened out a bit - well out of my awareness anyway. It's just the awful paradox that whatever one does seems to be wrong. John said I'd no need to read any more books which absolutely threw me. He also said before that that I should be reading things every day. But I suppose he thought I was relying too much on them, he does that to switch the

mood. Everyone says it has to come from within but I haven't found what's within yet.

Y - Well that's a very pressing issue I think. But I don't think it's really in giving up a particular habit like not taking sugar in your tea any more, because that's just another form of habit. As long as the attachment remains to giving up something then I don't think it really makes a difference, to give up or not to give up. The awareness of all that is what is important. To be aware of it while you are in the process of being attached to something

Q5 - What, if anything, do you feel you either have to do, or give up doing in order to become a better self organized learner?

R - It's not a question of doing something more but of exercising what I already know....it's a bit like athletics - you're only an athlete while you're in training. You're only a self organized learner while you are continuing to search for more knowledge - more personal development - being more reflective about what is going on. I've always felt an outsider. I want to stay in training as a self organized learner.

L - I need better determination of my long term purpose. I need to create a structure of purpose - either a time scale or a target.

R2 - I need to accept the input of others from a less argumentative stage - I'm becoming a better listener. I construct a sense of meaning rather than construct a defense.

C - I have to give up being prescriptive. You have to learn to be a very good active listener. You have to put other people first and recognize that the path has to be constantly modified to take account of people's attitudes and feelings.

D - Give up trying to know ahead of time what the answers are going to be. I have a construct of anticipate versus expect that I use where expecting is trying to operate as if I was already there and know the answer. Looking back

from there I not only know what the answer is but I know the framework in which the answer has meaning. Whereas anticipating is much more elusive than that.....it doesn't have the same sort of fixity so it's a much more **flexible stance**. Holding on to something I'm doing, something which is my idea of the right thing and in order to be self organized that's what I aim to give up.

Q6 - How strongly do you believe that you will achieve zen?

M - I don't know whether I will or I won't.

B - The process itself (zen) is most attractive. I'm drawn to the process - that's what I need to stop.

T - That's impossible to judge. I'm most nervous and anxious that I won't - that I don't have enough dedication - but that is ego. Zero without J. With him an average chance.

C - I actually believe I will - I don't know how - but I actually believe it's a possibility, yes.

S - I think he (J) did, I'm not too sure that he does. I think that I'm thinking that less now. I presumed that John thought so or he wouldn't have talked to me as he did. At one time he built up my confidence but now he's pulling it apart. Every now and again he says some quite extraordinarily nice things to me but I suppose I can't really believe it.

Myra - Why not, do you think he lies?

S - Well I know he does at times (laughter) only too well. And then he waits to see how long it will take you to pick it up.

Myra - I'm still not clear about the answer to this question. Do you think you will make it or not?

S - I have a feeling that if I do it will be on my own because the more upset he makes me the more the clarity of my response goes and that's absolutely damning.

Y - Well I think that future speculations of that nature are completely futile. And the more I think there was a period when I held it as a sort of goal, but the more I involved myself in thinking like that the further away it was really becoming - to hold that as a kind of objective. I think you have to hold a kind of faith always or a kind of doubt, but to really hold to enlightenment is ... it depends how you really hold it. I've read a lot about Zen masters like Bankei where their

one ambition, their total ambition was that. It's definitely the most important thing - to see into my true nature but as to success and so on - that's futile.

Q6 - How strongly do you believe that you can transform yourself through SOL?

R - People can transcend nature and that certainly applies to the mind. The mind is just another muscle.

L - SOL helps you to make sense of what you do in the world - it doesn't make sense of the world as a whole.... SOL has a validity in terms of helping people to reflect on their own performance and behaviour.

R2 - I believe that you can change absolutely by reflecting on your own experience. The MARS cycle means you can extend this reflection to any area.

C - My Commander says the effect of what I'm doing is to motivate people who would not be high achievers into taking responsibility for themselves. But in order to transform organizations which are authoritarian hierarchical systems you need more self organized learners to make more progress.

D - Utterly. That's an easy question. I think more than I can possible imagine from where I am now.

Q7 - If you achieve zen, what impact will it have on your day to day living?

M - I don't know - I can't imagine

T - Great and dramatic. It would have a shattering effect on my normal psychology. To always do what is appropriate, and not be predictable. It would have an effect on family life - I would not fit in with their expected patterns any more.

C - I'll be clearer I suppose, more direct. I don't know that I can be more in touch with life but I could louse it up less, mess things up less by understanding my own responses. I can see I'm running away with myself I'm letting myself run away with situations.

S - I don't think I can answer that one. I have no idea. As far as I could envisage it there wouldn't be vast changes but the people I see would be infinitely better off. I can't imagine myself ever wanting to run anything. I don't know one would be so different.

Y - Ask me when I do.

B - You don't expect me to answer that surely. How could I know?

Q7 - As you progress as a self organized learner, what impact will it have on your day to day living?

R - I'm willing to let it happen now. The biggest effect is on other people

R2 - It affects my understanding of my partner's understanding. Her constructions are something I can learn rather than challenging mine. It makes me a better communicator.

D - I used to be much more contracted than I am now, that's not really physically (respondent is an Alexander teacher) in lots of ways there were inflexibility's in the way that I did things which I was not even aware of, let alone the possibility not to do so.I use a sort of computer software analogy sometimes in my

lessons. It's like a default setting on a set of software where when you turn it on you get what's in the default. If that's what you want that's great, if you don't care that's fine, but if it isn't what you want then you have to consciously choose and select from the menu. I get better at knowing when I want to choose, and also it's like a bit of intelligent software that if I choose something more suitable often enough then the programme changes so that the default thing is a bit more flexible and a little higher quality than the default setting used to be.

C - It makes me better able to negotiate with people at work.

L - I don't know

Q8 - Has your zen made you more or less sensitive to the feelings of others?

M - More sensitive. It goes back to the other questions. I don't know how I would have been otherwise. Its positive all round as far as self development is concerned.

T - Without zen I'm not sensitive to others at all. One was more self-consumed, more concerned about one's own progress, and not with that total freedom that zen would bring.

C - More I think, I see more clearly how people are functioning, I'm more aware of where people are, I don't necessarily want to spend time with them, but that's OK that's all right to react like that I think.

S - I think it's made me more sensitive. I don't know sensitive is the right word. I'm much more aware of ego games than I ever used to be, I suppose I didn't even know of their existence at one time. Do you mean by sensitive more compassionate?

Myra - It's whatever you feel that it means.

S - I think I'm more aware of their feelings. I always feel that I can answer these questions in two different ways I found a big increase in awareness when I was seeing John frequently and whether that was just such a change from what happened before and I've got used to it I'm not entirely sure, but I think it was a heightened awareness then.

Y - I'd say I think it's made me more sensitive to my own feelings consequently to those of other people.

Q8 - Has your SOL made you more or less sensitive to the feelings of others?

R - I don't know. The early stages of my life made me conscious of other peoples' feelings - the early days of athletics made me conscious that you have to plan hard to do those sorts of things. Now I'm not so sure about anything.

L - It varies. Sometimes my purposefulness cuts me off from other people - at other times I'm sensitive to rubbish.

R2 - I think I've already answered that.

C - I feel I was pretty sensitive anyway but SOL enabled me to confirm that certain approaches are right to take. (More personal responsibility through Personal Learning Contracts)

Q9 - Has the study of zen changed any of your habits or routines?

B - Not one iota and yes quite fundamentally.

M - I'm more inclined to adjust myself to being tidier. I go back and do things correctly. I'm not sure about that reaction - it may be neurotic.

T - I used to be a rigid meditator. Half an hour in the morning, half an hour in the evening. Meditation is being present. I don't any longer seek out a half hour here or there. I'm a more easy going person.

C - It's made me much more aware of them. I still have a bath every day and I still drink tea first thing in the morning but it's the awareness of things, not letting them be routine.

S - At work it certainly changed things an enormous amount because the only thing that was important was the contact with John and what he was writing and I just used to rush through the work so that I could get on with that in the evening before I went home. In a way from having been the weakest of the family before I met John I now feel the strongest. I can see that I have an enormous strength that I don't think they do have - none of them. Sometimes I am aware of strength and sometimes I'm not. I'm never aware of strength with John but often I am apart from that. It's the only thing that matters. I go on going on courses but I think they're very ego based but in a way its to increase one's level of awareness and whether it does in the right way is a moot point.

Y - Maybe on Sundays.

Q9 - Has the study of SOL changed any of your daily habits or routines?

R - I'm not certain I am a self organized learner - I want to be - but I haven't arrived. I reach it

occasionally and sometimes forget and sometimes go back to it. My aim is to be a self organized learner but I'm not in any way near to it full time. I'd like to think I'm always changing, I think I've changed radically since I met Laurie.

L - I'm a bit more self organized generally. I'm less belligerent than I used to be. I try to see other peoples' purposes as well as my own and I'm slower to make judgements.....I'm trying to be more reflective and less purposeful.

R2 - I'd learned behaviour that was robotic - I associated movement with being busy. **For years I'd worked in an environment where I was criticized for being too efficient and in order to coexist I learned to look busy without doing very much. Now my conscious belief system has made a shift to be more efficient.**

C - It refined the art of planning - made me better at project management. I had to cope with study, work and the implementation of research in the work area. You have to become better at time management.

D - Oh it's well it's almost the other way round. well no, it's not the other way round it's inseparable, because as a self organized learner within a sense of a whole self then it is a physical difference. So, yes, both in the sense of how I carry things out muscularly and how I carry them out in daily activities it has made a difference.

Q10- Do you think zen has some form of higher morality?

B - It's not moral. But I feel drawn to attain it as something I want to do. That wanting to be something other than I am, to take the moral high ground is just another software routine.

M - Yes. You basically can't make any mistakes because you're operating from your true self and that is the morality. Its when you haven't achieved - there's a lot of doubt in these answers - someone who's achieved would be a lot more positive.

T - It's not moral in the conventional sense. Ego is immoral, zen is amoral but never evil. When you're free, you are free of the wish to harm.

C - No not a higher morality. It's different. It just clean and clear and to itself. A little bit of true zen will go out like ripples.....I'm not talking about changing the world as a whole, but it changes things one person in one country and makes a difference because it's clean and clear.

S - Well I certainly think it could if more people achieved it but in a sense the morality isn't always obvious to us. Some of the things that John does, some of the things one reads that zen masters do is not quite what I would have thought of as moral behaviour. I think it would make an unbelievable difference to the world but not in the way that many people imagine. As Krishnamurti has said it's not the differences between us but the way we feel inside that matters. The feeling of love and compassion - it would be a completely different world.

Y - Definitely not (a higher morality). It's clear that all the problems are due to over boiled egos striking out on each other and everything around them and if more people were enlightened there would be a lot less conflict.

Q10 - Do you think SOL has some form of higher morality?
In what way could it change the world?

R - You can be a Self Organized Learner and be highly immoral. Knowing how to set about doing things and the means to evaluate them after is very useful but neither moral nor immoral.

L - No you could be a self organized mass murderer. You can incorporate SOL into most belief systems - you can learn to be a better atheist.

R2 - It opens up the possibility of examining long held beliefs. Years of public policy on blacks has treated them as though they were inferior (particularly academically). SOL means your own perceptions and values and not taking on board 'other organized' values.

C - I think SOL can bring about a lot of change. Morality is about perception and as you change constructs it affects morality.

D - I think it's inherently humane and so in that sense I think it does carry a sense of ethics if not morality.

Q11 - Do you think zen masters can make a difference to the fate of the world? Do they have a duty to do so?

B - In the same way that a magnet attracts iron filings or when you pour water on something it gets wet - then zen masters have a duty to do something.

M - There's not enough of them to make an impact.

T - I don't think that is their business, the fate of the world. They are concerned with individual development. If enough people were affected it would perforce make a change. They don't have a duty.

C - Yes. By their very being, whatever comes from that being will be perceived whether consciously or unconsciously it will be perceived as clean from top to bottom. They don't have a duty to set out to do that it just happens.

S - I think it would depend on the numbers, but I think that John must have made a difference to anyone he has met in a zen way. But I think that the sheer numbers and the way that we are without zen would make it very difficult to change things. I don't think duty would be the right word for it, they will do what they do anyway.

Q12 - What particular powers does a zen master have that others don't?

B - The range of human skills are no different than that of other human beings - the difference is the realization of them.

M - A zen master is able to respond to things clearly and cleanly. To a person not operating in that way it is confusing. It can seem quite spectacular. The way they interact - it makes you feel special as a friend of theirs, something very close, very warm. It can be worrying - being so close and warm goes through your barriers at his whim. It's spectacular..nice ..uncomfortable.

T - I've only ever met 2 illumined people and only one on a regular basis. They have clarity, a still presence, an ability to act appropriately to the needs of the moment rather than in any predictable conventional way. One is able to convey a great deal of love just by his being. Another is reserved, still and is always aware when my mind wanders in his presence and can call me back. Sometimes verbally or simply by raising an eyebrow, totally aware of my psychology.

C - He really knows his own power. They can see what there is, the awareness is so big, so open, they can see a drop in the ocean as well as the ocean.

S - The openness with which he listens to other people, anything I say can get contradicted. He can get very angry but he can also be open in a way that is very unusual in anyone with an ego rearing itself up. I suppose it's the clarity of the reaction that is so very different.

Y - I think they are maybe in tune with the world around them and really very simple people and the so-called magical powers that they have seem to be magical powers because other people aren't in tune with the world around them. And because they don't see themselves completely they find it something absolutely amazing to meet someone who is in tune with everything that is going on."

Q13 - What do you see as J's role in your own progress towards zen? Do think he is necessary to your progress? Do you think he feels responsible for your progress?

B - Yes he is necessary. (much laughter) I don't think he feels in the least responsible.

M - He has been very useful up until now - he's a good prompter at putting you on the straight and narrow.. .we have a great capacity for imagining things, he soon puts you right. He doesn't feel responsible - he'll help you out if you're interested.

T - A lifeline. An open door. Essential at the moment. Yes he is responsible. Once he has accepted a novice, student friend - he feels responsible.

C - Vital. It has been vital. I can apply to him and he can answer me directly. Whereas without him going to a book is not the same thing the book can only feed me what it can feed me but it can't answer me back - it can't do what John can do which is answer me directly and reflect me directly now. If there wasn't somebody to reflect that human to human interaction which is special. Not to have somebody who could reflect that and in whom I could see that wholeness well.....although I do see that while I am looking at John for that reflection I'm not looking here (in my heart) I do see that that is so but he has been there and absolutely reflected me in a way that no-one else has. No I don't think he is responsible. He takes responsibility for everything he does, his actions - he might be responsible for putting the kettle on but he is not responsible for whether he kettle boils.

S - I might never even have thought of zen without him, I got as far as Gurdjieff, those sorts of ideas. Totally dissatisfied with Christianity. I don't know. Progress is another word that sticks in the gut. I don't seem to be able to stand up to the challenges he puts, until I find a way of doing that I don't know how I'm going to meet them honestly enough. No I don't think he feels responsible for my progress. I have difficulty with these words in connection with John. I think it would mean a great deal to him if any of us made it.

Y - A pointer on how to get there. It's certainly necessary to have contact with someone who knows what they are talking about, and up until now John is the only

person I've met that I feel that way about. I don't know how he feels (about being responsible for my progress).

Q13 - What do you see as S or L's role in your own progress towards SOL? Do you think she/he feels responsible for your progress?

R - Laurie is always willing to listen and then to add things. He treats me as an equal but he is the expert - and I listen.

L - They are useful and helpful but I don't see them as necessary.

R2 - They're very necessary but not from a standpoint of being dependent. I think it's important that they engage Self Organized Learners in Learning conversations in order to expand SOL in other areas. There are those who think there is only one correct way. L always says 'what do you think'.

C - Laurie has been brilliant. He has tested, suggested looked at my work with a fine tooth comb to a degree I find extraordinary. He has been very necessary to my progress.

D - (Conversations with both facilitate a process)...in requiring me to clarify the relationship between my general self organized learning in terms of the development of myself and the development of my work and the relationship between the two. They are people who I can talk to and who understand some aspects of what I'm doing better than I do.

Q14 - If zen is a different way of being how do you dare converse with a zen master as an equal?

B - I have no trouble at all and I have all the trouble in the world.

M - The big test is to converse with J to the level of that zen being - until you do converse with J at the deepest level of your own being you're not getting anywhere in zen.

T - I've never thought of myself as J's equal in any way. I feel trepidation with him but at the same time I want him to know my failings. I'm anxious not to let him down.

C - Because I somehow know that I am that also and that gives me the gall and the audacity to go and speak to him as a friend. I can only presume that it is that I resonate with what he is and that which is me that which is here.

S - I don't think I do as an equal. Well if he offers me the chance to see him I leap at it. But you don't ask, why not? He says if there is a burning issue people will beat a path to his door, but I have never reached that stage I'm afraid.

Y - I think the problem is really that people tend not to converse with a zen master as an equal and put him up on a pedestal consequently it reinforces another illusion about a zen master. Such as having magical powers. If they were really communicating with a zen master on equal terms they would be better off.

Q15 - Would you have expected zen as you have studied it so far to have changed you more than it appears to have done?

B - A lot of the questions have a word in them that makes me smile and the word expect makes me smile. The questions you've asked force the person you've asked them to consider the dichotomy that for me addresses zen

M - I did have great hopes when I was younger. My hopes have been dashed a lot since then. My initial interactions were filled with my own imagination and I know now they were incorrect. There's a lot that can't be said in zen. It's a very private thing.

T - I honestly do try not to expect anything any more. If I do this I will get that. Love is not my love - freedom is not my freedom. I do not honestly seek for any accretion of talents. I would like to stop end-gaining.

C - No... apart from... well yes I was expecting it to have changed me as far as enlightenment is concerned and it hasn't done that to me but that's ... I can't say it's changed me, I've responded to it. **John can't change me but zen has been a reflection for me and a very profound one it's reflected that part of me that is the enlightened part, the nearly enlightened part.** It has been an agent for change being present and alive now, I don't know what else I can do. I stopped functioning the way that I was functioning,I can hardly imagine that I would be as I am now without John's laser beam. I think I'm being a lot more honest than I was. I'm not cut off from life as I was, but there is something more I need to understand.

S - No because I'm still ego bound and that's the change that would make the difference.

Myra - If John were to die do you think you could achieve zen without him?

S- I doubt it. In spite of saying earlier that if I did achieve it would be on my own. I told him once that I was hoped that I might die before him and he said I would, that was a great comfort. It should be possible without him but.....

Y - I'm sometimes surprised for instance now having been back in England and having known John since I was about

18 I'm sometimes surprised to be delving in the same quagmire as I was before. But at the same time I realize it's not really the same quagmire. Superficially it is because it's still passing through my mind but it's the attachment to that quagmire that is maybe less defined.

Q15 - Would you have expected SOL as you have studied it so far to have changed you more than it appears to have done?

R - I'm satisfied. The school report continues - needs more application.

R2 - Not really. I realized I was always a Self Organized Learner but hadn't thought about applications. When I saw how I learned by experience, that reflective cycle caused me to change my models. It's a tool set for personal growth.

C - Not really. What it has enabled me to do is look at those areas of psychology which fit the world as I see it.

D - Not based on my other past experience. Just because you can see the mountain doesn't mean you can walk there in a day. Just because I knew things doesn't mean I was ready or able to put them into practice. Knowing about self organized learning, even being able to carry on a conversation (with myself) in those terms gets you where it gets you. It might have gotten me further if I'd done things differently, if I'd actually drawn up a grid or had a conversation once a week.

Q16 - Now that you have some idea of the sorts of things I am interested in, is there anything I should have asked you but didn't?

zen

T - It's difficult to convey the total unexpectedness of his answers (when conversing with J). I once asked him whether he meditated and he said 'not unless I have nothing better to do'. Many of the things he said would be painful- if a friend said them one would be deeply wounded. But his comments are said without criticism the spirit in which it is given is not to wound. This could be taken impersonally as though one had a virus or something. To sit with him for an hour or so is quite a terrifying thing - there is no comfort - and no conversational gambits. He trails something across one's path and it is only later that it innocently explodes.

Y - I was actually thinking about one of my replies to your question does zen have a higher morality and I said definitely not, but then again I'm not sure.... zen from a true master of zen is definitely a very clear understanding of the world and of people and if morality has anything to do with that then I would say yes it does have a higher morality but morality is a word that is, difficult.

SOL

R2 - I suppose you could have asked what are the things you believe that you haven't found in anyone else.

Myra - And the answer to that?

R2 - I can get a sense impression that I'm willing to act upon- people I know with a spiritual perspective say you shouldn't characterize people without knowing them.....Its the acceptance of my own Self Organization There aren't many mechanisms which encourage people to trust themselves - they're usually giving you advice and get very upset if you don't follow it.

C - Perhaps the greatest strength and greatest weakness of SOL.

Myra - Which is?

C - Its greatest strength is the opportunity to explore, for the individual SOL can be brilliant - there are no boundaries. Its greatest weakness is in organisations you need organisational commitment to be able to change things and drive it forward.

Appendix C

Transcripts of John's Learning Conversations

1. J: Even if you haven't achieved zen, what impact has it had on your life?

M: I think I remember answering that question after Myra asked me, that I thought it was quite difficult to answer that because I wouldn't know what my life is like without zen, even though I do feel, after saying that, that I think that if I had gone on without meeting you and finding out about zen that I would have been quite a lost soul, and would have been full of neurotic impulses, and I think not a very happy person, and I think that meeting you and finding out about zen has given me a goal in life, and made me feel that I can solve my problems. Whether that would have happened without zen I don't know.

J: To what extent do you feel centred in your life, and just sort of waiting for that final last step into zen, or do you, perhaps, feel there's still an awful lot still to do?

M: It varies considerably that feeling of thinking that you're getting somewhere, at other times thinking that you're floundering and not really centred. You're feeling low, for instance, and not feeling as happy as you might feel when you're feeling good. Normally, in the past, my feelings as far as feeling good about myself, have revolved around zen, and thinking that I've discovered something about zen that's possibly given me an ego boost, or balanced me out for a short period of time, and maybe when I come to the realisation that this isn't lasting that's when I go down and get depressed.

J: Do you think a zen student, of many years standing, should go through such swings of mood?

M: I don't know. (Pause). In my case it's happening.

J: Are you happy about it?

M: No.

J: So you don't really think you should go through such swings of mood?

M: It seems that way, yes, I don't think I should.

J: What should you be like if not actually in zen itself, what should you be like rather than swinging from one extreme to the other. elation and high to depression and low?

M: I think the low is connected with - I'm not sure what it's connected with actually, I just have them, and I feel that there's something negative about them, The only thing, I think, that makes me feel I shouldn't have them now is that in one of your pieces that I've read you actually said you were euphoric in all states, whether you were angry, sad, happy - there was always a feeling of euphoria behind it, which makes me wonder about that actually, exactly what you meant by that?

J: How then do you cope with your lows, things you call depressions? Do you just let them pass with time, or do you throw yourself into family, or other activities, to divert yourself until they've gone, or -

M: Sometimes they will just pass if you leave it alone, other times I will sit down in my room and sit in an upright position and try and just watch my thoughts, and do that sort of thing, or I'll read a book by Krishnamurti or

Suzuki and try and get some inspiration from them giving me another outlook.

1a. J: So how has zen affected how and what you learn, not just from books, but from life?

M: I think in the zen way, as I see it, there's a very definite feeling towards other people, and doing things the correct way. You won't necessarily be bad mannered, you will try and preserve the etiquette of society, you treat people appropriately in they way you keep appointments, and do your work, you'll try to do it to your best ability, and you'll take into consideration other people's personalities - whether I'm doing that all the time I'm not sure, I think sometimes I might put my foot in it, but I am capable of learning from that. I think there is definitely a moralness about zen.

2. J: So has zen helped or hindered your interpersonal relationships?

M: Going back to the first question, it's difficult to know that for definite, but I feel it has. I just find it difficult to see myself developing without something, if not zen, something very similar to zen coming into my life and helping me to look at it, and to learn about it, and make me feel I was aiming for the right way of behaving.

J: So you mean, even if it weren't zen, you'd want some guiding ism or ology to help you with life, and interact with others? Is that what you mean?

M: I think that looking at it, in a sense, from an ism or whatever, could give the wrong impression because it's almost as if you're in need of being part of a group, that calls itself this, or that, and I don't think it is that.

J: A fixed set of rules.

M: Having a set of beliefs. It's something that you have come across in your life that you just feel is leading you somewhere that makes you think.

J: So what ways has zen helped your interpersonal relationships? Has it deepened them, has it made them less turbulent, has it led to less inhibitions in your interpersonal relationships. How has it helped?

M: I think it's led to less inhibitions, I used to be, when I was younger, a very quiet, and in the background sort of person, and I think it's brought me out of myself in that sense, and it's made me realise that there is something else about interaction with other people, and I'm sure the way I interact with people is not correct at the moment, and I think there is a way to feel that is correct.

J: So, if you could wave a magic wand what relationships in particular would you change, and how would you change them?

M: Interestingly enough, I don't think I do need to change them. I need to look at them in a differ way, and I need to experience them in a different way.

J: So, although you come out with a lot of nice sounding statements about behaving morally, in the general use of that word, towards people, in what way would you say that zen had actually hindered your interpersonal relationships? Has it, for example, caused you to become so internally

introspective and internally pre-occupied that, in fact, people pass through your life, your acquaintance ship, even those close to you everyday, as though they're strangers, not really yet in close contact? Anyway, in what way has it hindered your interpersonal relationships?

M: I think that what I've said in reply to another question of yours, is connected with the answer to this one in the sense that I feel there is something still not quite right in the way I'm relating to other people, and it might be this introspectiveness that you mentioned, it might be that that's causing that and, perhaps, zen might be a part of that introspectiveness, which is quite interesting actually, that what you're using to try and help you deal with your relationships is, in fact, contributing to their not being right, which is something to think about, definitely.

2a. J: So how much insight do you feel you have into your 'self'?

M: I think my self as such, as far as insight is concerned, is something that's very vague, and I think it will be very vague because I don't think your self is actually made up of very much, apart from something that comes about in interaction with whatever situation you're in, so from that you can't really get that much as calling yourself a self, because if you do it means that whatever future interaction you are going to have you're going to be holding this image that you think is your self. But I think I know what you mean because there are aspects of yourself that come about through interaction with other people, and I am noticing now things I think clearer than I have done for a long time.

3. J: So what, if anything, do you think you either have to do, or give up doing in order to achieve zen?

M: I think that to achieve zen you have to be aware of a thought as it's happening, and carry it out, and I think that in more difficult situations that you might conventionally find yourself in, from a conventional point of view, you might have quite a feeling of release if you can actually do something that you actually really do want to do at the appropriate time without being afraid to do it, and I think that that could be quite a catalyst.

4. J: How strong do you believe that you will achieve zen?

M: I think I have to achieve zen.

J: Why?

M: Because I think if I don't there will always be areas of my life that I will have regrets about when I look back on it in the future. And I really do think that being able to carry out your emotional responses to life, fully, is the only way to do it, and I want to be able to do that.

5. J: So if you do achieve zen, you imagine it will have quite a large impact on your day-to-day living, do you?

M: Not necessarily, but maybe.

J: How do you mean, not necessarily? You don't think achieving zen always has an immense impact on your day-to-day living?

M: Yes, I see what you mean, and I think that -

J: I mean it may not mean one picks up a suitcase and wanders off to the top of the nearest mountain, leaving one's wife and children behind, but there would be impacts apart from that.

M: There could be repercussions, yes. Perhaps there could be, yes, if it does mean that you are changing from what you have been in the past, and people notice the difference, then it will be having an impact, I suppose.

J: And perhaps the other way around, you have been used to feeling yourself in one particular way -

M: I think it also makes you see other people completely differently. That's true, yes. I think you see something much stronger.

J: Do you expect to be happier?

M: Yes. Perhaps I'll be sadder as well though.

J: But the happiness won't be conventional happiness, and the sadness won't be ego type sadness.

M: No.

J: So it isn't just that one will go into more extreme versions of the same emotions, but that the very basis of the emotions were changed? Is that what you mean?

M: I think so, yes, because you are actually interacting in the real way that you're fully capable of doing, then when you are interacting with someone that you are having a good time with, then you would be experiencing something very good without the hindrances we have with our egos and feelings of keeping up the momentum, and all that sort of thing, wondering where you really do stand in a situation. And then also there's the sad aspect that you will be able to see people more clearly, and feel quite sad about some things that you see.

6. J: Has your zen made you more or less sensitive to the feelings of others? Your zen, as it is now, not as it will be when you achieve zen?

M: I don't actually think it has, when I think about it, because I've always been quite sensitive from a personal point of view, which has made me sensitive to other people as well. I've tended to reflect my own sensitivities on to other people and think that they are going to feel the same as that I have. And I suppose I have been sensitive to other people in that way. As far as my sensitivities are concerned, I think they've always been there, even though at times I think I have thought I was becoming more sensitive, but I'm not sure I was actually. I think I am still quite capable of insensitivity.

J: So you don't think your zen, as it is now, has made you more or less sensitive to the feelings of others, it hasn't significantly changed it?

M: I feel now, even though I have just said what I have just said, I do feel now that I'm more sensitive than I ever have been before.

J: And does that mean that your skin has become thinner, therefore more easily damaged by impact from other people, or that your feelings have become finer, better able to sort things out, and to see things clearly, rather than just more sensitive in the increased brittleness?

M: No, they've become finer.

J: Do you feel you have a better understanding of where you and another person, when you interact together, are each coming from?

M: Yes.

7. J: Has the study of zen changed any of your daily habits or routines? Has it changed what you eat, or how you carry out your job, or whether you do or don't meditate, or health?

M: I suppose as far as my job is concerned I have applied a zen aspect to that, in the way I relate to people doing the job, but I'm not sure it's necessarily the way I would relate to people, it's more the way I see the work I'm doing without seeing it with such an ego motivated stamp on it, but I now realises that, like we were saying earlier, that replacing my original more competitive, or ego motivated ways of looking at the way I do my job have been replaced by more of a zen way of looking at things, and that has not necessarily been to anybody's benefit either, so I'm not sure that's a benefit.

8. J: Do you think that zen has some form of higher morality, and in what way might that change the world, if you do believe it has such a thing?

M: I think that talking about morality as far as changing the world is concerned is difficult to apply to zen because I have a feeling that a world full of enlightened people would not need to look at the world in those terms, as far as having a higher morality, or levels of morality, because I think that people in a zen world would be perfectly able to look after themselves, and would accept their own conditions much more readily than people do in our present set-up of the world, and therefore the actual problems we have in the world, as far as wars and that type of thing are concerned, I don't think we would have them, because people would be individuals, and individuals don't join other individuals to fight other individuals. I think in a zen world it's individual, as you told me, J, a long time ago, one to one, and that's something I do understand and appreciate very well. And this does change the moral set-up completely.

9. J: Do you then think Zen Masters could make a difference to the fate of the world, and if so, do they have a duty to do so?

M: I don't think they have a duty because they are interacting as they will do with people. I don't think they have a choice as far as how their interactions go, they just do what they do and that's the way they do it, so duty doesn't come into it at all, but it would be nice, I think, if there were a lot more Zen Masters, definitely, and there would more opportunities for people to experience interaction with them then, and I think as far as our world's concerned, the more the merrier.

J: You think only if there were enough might it have an impact on the state of the world, but with present numbers not likely?

M: As far as the world is concerned, the world as a globe and all the people in it, yes I think so.

10. J: What particular powers, or abilities, does a Zen Master have that others don't?

M: A Zen Master has one of the most important abilities, that springs to my mind immediately, and that is the ability to stop you dead in your tracks, and think "There's something very different going on here, I haven't experienced this before. I'm meeting someone for the first time, and he's

putting me in a difficult situation, backing me up against the wall and I can't seem to get out of it, I don't know how to respond." I think that's one good way of knowing whether you're up against a Zen Master, if you have that feeling, but also with having that feeling, and knowing that it's something that's good, not something that's bad.

J: You mean you're not being cornered by something malevolent, or evil, or dangerous?

M: It doesn't come from a sense of danger, or malevolence, or evil, it's something that's for your own good.

J: But it may be painful.

M: But it may be painful, yes.

J: But it's an ability, did you say, to stop you in your mental tracks?

M: Yes, in your mental tracks. You feel a sort of pressure that makes people react in various ways, at various times of the interaction with a Zen Master, you either start sweating, or shaking, or clam up completely, or get hysterical, or do something that they're not normally used to doing. (Laughing). But something positive coming out of that as well.

J: And you think that pressure is because of the quality of awareness that the Zen Master brings to the interaction, or what do you think it is?

M: It's a quality of awareness from yourself in the interaction that's showing you that you're not interacting appropriately, there's something wrong with the way you're - , it's coming through interaction with a Zen Master, but it's you that's being aware at the same time knowing that you're suddenly in this position, and that's your awareness that's telling you that.

J: Any other powers that you think a Zen Master has?

M: They seem to be able to know a lot about you, and other people, just by looking at them, looking at their eyes, they can tell a lot about a type of personality, or a problem that someone might have, just by looking at them. And I think for that reason they also have the power to know what people are thinking as well, to a certain extent.

J: You mean mind prediction, rather than mind reading?

M: It's mind prediction, I think, rather than mind reading, yes.

11. J: What do you see as J's role in your own progress towards zen? Do you think he's necessary to it, do you think he feels responsible for it?

M: I find J necessary, yes. I like being able to interact with J, and ask him things, and have that experience of interaction, which shows me a lot in my own make-up and my own feelings. And whether he feels he has a duty towards my development, I don't know. I think that just comes from him, whether he wants to do it, or not, it's up to him to decide that, and I don't think that can be seen as a duty, it's just a response to the situation.

J: So what do you see as his role in your own progress towards zen?

M: Purely as a bounce off, as something that I have been able to bounce off and trust, as well. I trust J's opinion and know, through my long association with him, that I can learn a lot from him.

12. J: If zen is a different way of being how do you dare converse with a Zen Master as an equal?

M: I only dare to converse with J as an equal because he allows me to. Even though I am allowed to, I do realise that for some reason I have inadequacies that means I always have in the back of my mind a feeling that I'm not actually coming up to scratch, as far as this equalness is concerned, and part of my interaction with J, and one of the whole reasons for it, is to experience the moment when I really will know that this doubt at the back of my mind isn't there any more, and the equalness really is totally equal.

13. J: Do you think Zen Masters suffer?

M: I think Zen Masters do suffer in the physical realm, and I think they also suffer in the mental realm too. But I think the quality of suffering is different. I think, as far as the physical suffering is concerned, they can be very brave. Also, ordinary people can be very brave as well, of course. But I think more importantly it's the mental type of suffering that makes the difference because most ordinary people, when they suffer mentally, tend to become angry, or bitter, or repetitively complaining about their condition, whereas a Zen Master will feel mentally sad, or sorrowful perhaps about something, but I think this will be something that happens, and then is replaced by something else. It won't be something that's long lasting, and it's gone, and that's it.

14. J: If a Zen Master asked you why is a mouse when it spins, what would your answer be?

M: Red hot coals.

15. Would you have expected zen, as you have understood it and studied it so far, to have changed you more than it appears to have done?

M: Yes, I think I expected to, at times anyway, to be on a high chair in front of a crowd, singing the praises of zen, and doing my thing like a high flying Zen Master. Yes, I definitely had those images floating through my mind in the past, when I've been on a zen high, or a mini enlightenment experience, but I think now I don't have that sort of wish fulfilment, any more. I feel my feet are more on the ground than they have been for a long time, and I hope I don't have any more of those images floating through my mind.

1. J: Even if you haven't achieved zen what impact has it had on your life?

T: A dissatisfaction with my life without zen, for sure. A degree of frustration that I haven't achieved it. A continuous looking at my life, possibly from a negative point of view, but I'm checking, and I'm aware that my ego is checking my ego but on the other hand, on the positive side, I often have days, and moments in days, of great clarity. I feel my heart warming, and relationships within my family are good, and improved.

J: Most of those seem essentially ego-based, would you agree?

T: Yes I would, definitely. I would say that until I have achieved zen, everything in my life is ego-based, and that's the frustrating thing about it.

J: So essentially, it's new lamps for old in that the impact it has had on your life is still within the domain of ego which, as it were, governed your life before you came. I saw very early, after meeting you across zen, and still does now?

T: Indeed, looked at from a spectrum of ordinary behaviour, the lessening of moments of depression, and what one could call out of control behaviour, moving on round the dial to warmer hearted behaviour is to be welcomed but I am only too aware that they are just different shades of grey, and one is exchanging a coarse jailer for a more subtle, and a more clever one.

1a. J: So, how has zen affected how or what you learn?

T: It has allowed me to see the coarser snares of ego and, on good days, the more subtle ones. There are indeed very rare moments when the seer is seen and therefore the learning is learnt, as it were, and there isn't anything more to learn.

J: So, what evidence would you adduce to refute the suggestion that the only thing that is learning is your ego? Learning how to be less snared, less entrapped, a little freer as it may feel, what evidence is there to show that the learning is reaching any deeper than into your own ego?

T: I find that there is very little evidence that I can put before anybody, or a court of justice, to convince myself, whatever that may be, when the knower or the seer is alone at those moments, when there is no time, and there appears to be no me either. There is just knowing and seeing. Those very rare moments really convince me that the job is worth carrying on with.

J: So, ego has learned a little about how to generate those refreshing moments of apparent egolessness in order to temper its own stultifying sense of itself?

T: I assume that must be so because you have said that once it changes, it changes for good, and it hasn't changed for good for me, so even my most silent, extended time, or timeless moments, still must be the snare of ego although I haven't been able to see it at work at that stage.

2. J: How has zen helped or hindered your interpersonal relationships?

T: On the coarsest of ego levels one may say "Isn't life difficult, one's wife and family are not at all interested in this. I am, therefore there is alienation". On a more subtle level, when one endeavours to see a person totally freshly, and to give them all the attention that is there, even though one suspects the ego is motivating this, there is nevertheless a response

and a warmth, so that within the confines and restricts of ego relationships there appears to be more warmth and togetherness - it's certainly much more pleasant.

J: So that is how you combat the - or how your ego combats the feeling of loneliness which has dogged you throughout your life, in terms of interpersonal relationships?

T: Yes, I would say that is absolutely true, that it's just another clever ploy, once again, like the most subtle forms of ego behaviour with the timeless moments. One hasn't seen it, and one becomes sort of grateful for small mercies like if the jailer gave you a slightly bigger piece of bread, or a nicer piece of cheese that evening, though, as I said, I haven't seen it like that till now.

J: And you really think zen has helped in interpersonal relationships?

T: I believe it has, yes, I very much do believe it has, that when I first came to you I think there were very, very great problems with personal relationships, which had been shown to me and just the seeing of them has lessened their pull. One can still be awfully caught out, and one suspects they're sort of lurking very deeply, but nevertheless my relationship with my wife, and with my children, they have improved, appear to have improved immensely.

2a. J: How much insight do you think zen has given you then, into yourself?

T: Whenever one uses the word "oneself" in zen, one has to be jolly careful about what one's talking about. If you mean the physical and psychological set up which I have inherited and grown, and personality as well, and the sort of mythical ego which has grown with it, then at moments that can be seen with far greater clarity than ever before. But as I said before, one suspects there are deep seated root weeds in one's personal behaviour which still snap up and grab one if one isn't very aware.

J: So, is that a change other than in kinds of reaction? (There is an overlap of conversation here.)

T: Yes, one is certainly more temperate more often, one is given just a little more time to see it coming, and sometimes to let it go, not to grab hold of it.

J: So do you feel you understand the core of your being better through your having come across zen?

T: Intellectually I certainly and totally accept that what I called myself is not myself, that everything I used to take personally is not me, is not my true self. Intellectually, I totally subscribe to the view that oneself is everywhere, but as I must be aware already from this conversation a fixed sense of self still manifests itself in me most of the time.

J: And what of the darkness at the core of your being, how much light has zen been able to help you shed on that ?

T: Not a lot at the moment, I would say. There's still something awfully afraid, somewhere, and I don't know what it is. It's clinging on to the window ledge with all it's strength. However, there are moments and days of great joy, and real gratitude.

J: Towards?

T: Nothing. It is grateful, it's just a manifestation of being grateful for being alive.

J: So it congratulates itself for giving itself a day off? (Laughter from T). Gosh, we weathered that one chaps, let's have a good day today. The dragons of ego have been banished back to their cave, without ever fully being allowed out, I can breathe a sigh of relief and go quite light headed with joy and bonhomie?

T: Well, it seems pretty coarse, the clarity of seeing in a less ego state, if I may put it like this, of seeing a bird drop in the sky and then up again, folding its wings in an arc, one can see these momentary beauties. There are moments, but it must be relative, that's all I can say, because if I haven't, and it doesn't seem that I have ever achieved a totally ego free state, then it just must be relative, it must be finer, the snares, and that's what I can't see of course.

J: But you do see that you're ducking the issue of the darkness at the ore of your being?

T: I honestly don't know what the core of one's being means, even intellectually. I don't know that I have a being. There is a fear lurking around somewhere, and there is a darkness somewhere. I don't know if it will do any good to look for it.

J: Consider the simile of the head of a Gorgon, there was an ancient myth that the snakes could be killed one by one, but there were always more. But in it's most antique and purest form the myth went a little further. It actually said if, with one blow, all the heads could be severed simultaneously, then that which was in the mind of the Gorgon would be clearly seen by the hero who managed to achieve this task, and I think therein lies a curiously apt zen truth, that ego pushes and pushes, and ramifies, and moulds, and flows, and adapts, and goes through an immense variety of subtle shape changings and mood states, and so on. One needs a force, generated within, though occasionally, in the later stages, helped from without. One needs a force sufficient to avoid being entrapped by any, or all, of those fluid changes of ego, then one can see below, both into the depths of ego itself, and through it to one's true self.

3. J: So what, if anything, do you think you have to do, or possibly not do, to achieve zen?

T: It's hard to see what more I can do, and I'm afraid if I could see what I need to do, then I think I would have achieved it, but I can't see that. If one were to write down one's efforts, they would seem laudable.

J: To (overlap of conversation)

T: To room (?), yes. It seems to be what one is told to do. One does sit quietly and watch for the next thought coming. Sometimes one sees them rising, and before something reaches out to get them, they fall again. I guess I would do that everyday, often twice a day, for reasonably long periods. In other words, when I say laudable, I mean in inverted commas, I understand there's self congratulation in that. One tries to accept the invitation to silence throughout the day whenever it seems to come, yet one is also aware that there's a great deal of energy being lost in there, and one finds oneself greatly tired, often too tired for any manual work one could possibly have done at the end of the day. It comes with a certain degree of anxiety, of looking over one's shoulder all the time. It also brings with it a degree of remorse that one should get caught up. All this help, John's conversations, and still you get caught out like that.

4. J: So, how strongly do you believe that you will achieve zen?

T: I have to say I seem to be running on a parallel path, at the moment, and it's hard to see where the intersection will come. I totally believe now that it is possible.

J: It's infinity, isn't it, if the paths are parallel?

T: Yes, I'm afraid so. In one of your Talks in "The Zen Game", you talk about people who pretend to be playing the game, who have reached a connivance with themselves, for the world manifest many of the attributes, which are not unwelcomed by the world, but they can be greatly deceptive for the person, and even worse for other people if it is pretended that they have actually achieved something. And I would say that could very easily describe myself at the age of 57. And something very different needs to happen because I am in a repetitive phase at the moment, one day is much like the next, and it varies only according to the outside stimulus. If something very nice happens then it will be a nice day; if something rather shattering happens, then one has to pick oneself up again, equanimity is absent in that respect.

J: Why does any of that matter?

T: It wouldn't matter at all if I knew what not to do. I can't get round to who generates the force. Is it the ego that does it, is the ego wanting it? Without the want nothing will happen, but the ego wants it, therefore it can't happen, and I'm caught in that paradox.

J: Not quite. You haven't immersed yourself in it sufficiently, endlessly, with sufficient determination and commitment. The metaphor, or simile, I've used of the dog chasing its own tail, lets go of its own tail only when it has been chasing its own tail in its own mouth so strenuously that it falls down exhausted and opens its mouth and the tail then, of course, comes out, and it realises it was its own. One must not end up in limbo in zen, it's very easy to do that, but it's a failure of resolve, of commitment, and essentially saying something quite deep about one's assessment of one's likely, or unlikely, prospect of achieving it.

T: Yes.

J: If one really doesn't believe that one is going to achieve it, give up. If one really wants to achieve it, and is determined to give it whatever it takes in order to achieve it, then one avoids limbo. It's uncomfortable in the early stages, it becomes less so, though totally absorbing, not to the exclusion of the outside world, but totally absorbing inwardly until one does it. So, it's a failure of resolve.

5. If you achieve zen, what impact will it have on your day to day living?
This question was not asked.

6. J: How has zen made you more, or less, sensitive to the feelings of others?

T: I am certain that it has. Here again, we are speaking of - loud shout - of movement. We are speaking of relative movements.

7. J: Has the study of zen changed your daily habits and routines, health, eating, drinking, meditating, creating, being beastly to others, (T laughed at this point), engineering people to be beastly to you?

T: Before I met you, of course, there were at least twenty years of fairly routine school behaviour, meditating twice a day, yoga, some , there were days, there were weeks, particularly in my twenties when five or six nights of a week would be taken up with some activity or another. I saw very early after meeting you, that these were diversionary and one must judge, and do, what is appropriate in the moment, and eat what is appropriate, and behave appropriately, and not to any fixed precepts of what one would think was good, or religious or kosher type of behaviour, according to one school or another.

J: So none of that matters any more, it's just an outer skin of the onion?

T: I still find that sitting quietly is a great way to begin the day, and a wonderful way to end it, but I wouldn't find, as I used to, my day ruined, or prejudiced by such a thought if I hadn't done it, as though I hadn't washed in a ritual way. I'm totally sure that it's the content of the activity, and not the activity, yet I've worked hard to give up advertising to have total time for writing other things, so I still obviously feel that other things are better than some things.

J: Indeed.

8. J: Do you think that zen has some form of higher morality?

T: No, I don't think it has a higher form of morals which could be written down like English law, or biblical law, but I do believe that a person in zen could not hurt another.

J: What do you mean by hurt?

T: Act in such a way that that person's, or one's own, chances of achieving zen are hampered.

J: So the historical anecdote of the Zen Master who let out a shout to bring to attention the mind of his pupil, who had such a shock that he died, that was not prejudicial or harmful to that individual?

T: I would prefer to be given a bloody nose, or have my ear tweaked, or my face slapped, or tea poured over my lap. A Master who killed his pupil seemed to be over egging (?) the pudding, to me, so I can't see that.

J: Seemed to be - ? How do you mean?

T: Seemed to be putting too much octane into the petrol tank. I can't see why he would do that, unless he thought it appropriate and that pupil was about to do great harm to others.

J: This is all sounding very much like a higher morality. Why should such considerations of whether the pupil was likely to be about to do harm to others, lead him in so consequential a way to let out such a shout that he killed the pupil?

T: The point is to kill the ego, not the pupil.

J: Really?

T: Yes, surely, what is the point of killing the pupil? I can't see -

J: Why should there be a point in killing the pupil. The pupil died, he was not killed. What is the difference between a pupil dying physically and suffering a mental anguish because, having put up some agonised plea to

the Master for instruction, whatever, he got a stony face or a buffet around the ears? What is the difference?

T: A chance to work on, a chance to learn.

J: But that's not, from a Zen Master's point of view, relevant in that he is not comparing against some concept of - the individual should be this, should be that, should be handled this way, needs to be handled that way. The act that killed the pupil arose within the Master from the deepest actualised level of his being. It killed the pupil. So what? (Pause) I see you do believe there is some higher morality about zen.

9. J: Do you think Zen Masters can make a difference to the fate of the world? Do they, indeed, have a duty to do so?

T: I certainly don't think they have a duty to do so. I sort of believe that they don't have an interest in the fate of the world, because that would be judging it one way or another.

J: What is the world? (Pause)

10. J: What particular powers do Zen Masters have, do you think, that others do not?

T: It's a very difficult question for me to answer, because I -

J: They all have these(?)

T: Yes. There's great insight, there's great clarity. This amoral attitude, though, I can't say that other Masters from other traditions, don't have this because I haven't met them.

J: Though you've read of their doings, and -

T: I have, so far as they have been correctly represented, but there's so much obvious sentiment written around the gospel, and self-fulfilling wishes, that it's difficult to say, about Jesus, for example, or the Prophet.

J: Do you think they can read minds?

T: Yes, I do. I do think they can, whatever mind is, that they can see through it, they can see what is passing over the face of the water.

J: Do you think they control the minds of others?

T: I can't imagine that they would wish to. I sort of can't see that there are others, somehow.

J: Do you think they experience the same emotions as other people?

T: Yes I do, but they're not identified with them, they see past them, they don't get ensnared with them. Whether they're the same - I used to think, of course, that they didn't at one time, that they wouldn't feel grief, or rage, but I see -

J: What about jealousy?

T: Ah! (a big sigh)

J: Grief and rage are things which may, or may not, be ego-based.

T: Yes. Jealousy seems to me to be 100% ego-based. I can't believe that they would ever think they could own another person, therefore they could not feel that they could lose that person.

J: Possessiveness?

T: What can they possibly own, I can't see that.

J: But grief and rage - you can?

T: Are good ones (laughing). Acceptable, are they? Yes, I can see that, that if -

J: Perhaps if one were to say, sorrow and anger, which makes something of a difference from grief -

T: Yes, it does.

J: From grief, and rage?

T: Yes, sorrow and anger.

J: Which, perhaps, purifies it of ego.

T: Yes, it does. But you can't purify jealousy, can you?

11. J: So, what is J's role in your progress towards zen. Do you think he's necessary to your progress? Do you think he feels responsible for your progress?

T: (And that's the)? question. He is essential, and necessary to that progress, or I would continue on parallel lines, or indeed diverging lines, because I have repeated it now for many years. Does he feel responsible? I think he cares for me.

J: Is that the same as responsible, for your progress?

T: For my progress, no, I don't think so. I don't think he would feel that. My progress is up to me.

J: But in so far as he might be aware of your commitment to zen, and your view that he, somehow, represented a path, would he not feel some responsibility to giving you access to that path, and a nudge along it wherever and whenever possible?

T: I certainly believe he behaves in that way, so judged from the behaviour, yes.

J: But is that being responsible for your progress, rather than simply performing certain actions that may assist?

T: I sort of see a perfect, absolute justice in this, somewhere, which I can't describe. What happens will be totally fair, and totally right and appropriate. I will get out of it what I put into it. And if I don't put enough into it, I will be despatched, and that would be perfectly right, and there mustn't be any moaning or weeping about it, because it would be my fault, I wouldn't have taken advantage of -

J: That might well be.

T: I would have been unworthy.

12. J: If zen is a different way of being, how do you dare to converse with a Zen Master as an equal?

T: Zen is the only way of being, there's no other way of being. I don't for a moment consider myself as equal.

J: So, how do you dare to converse? Conversation, after all, is exchange between equals, isn't it? (End of side A).

T: I know of no other way to approach you, except sitting silently in a room with you for hours, I would be happy to do that.

J: How would you dare to spend such time next to somebody so different?

T: My need is the dare, which dares.

13. J: Do Zen Masters suffer, do you think?

T: Not fools gladly.

J: Could they suffer in the sense of becoming ill?

T: Their bodies can become ill, but I don't think they would suffer, as I seem to suffer a cold or 'flu, because they do not identify with their bodies. So, no, they don't suffer in -

J: You mean, this isn't my body?

T: It's a very good body (laughing). It is your body but you don't say "I have a cold", I think, or if you do, you don't mean it like that, or "I have a bruised leg". It isn't a personal thing with you, it's something which one observes and treats accordingly.

J: And the fact that, nearly three years ago I was given six months to live, hasn't led me to suffer, do you think?

T: I think you have received great pain, and in fact I know you have, and I know also the privations and the inconveniences of it, to put it at its mildest, but if there is suffering, you see it. What is suffering? There is suffering, it isn't yours.

J: *Vim non patior?*

14. J: If a Zen Master asked you, why is a mouse when it spins, what would you say?

T: I would have no answer to that whatsoever. I would need a long while to - I could not come close to it. It's obviously -

J: Obviously good copy for an ad for BMW's, or something, Volvos.

T: Yes (laughing).

15. J: Would you have expected zen, as you have studied it thus far, to have changed you more than it appears to have done?

T: (Laughter). I do not expect of zen now, but that's dodging the question. Until I've changed, I won't have changed, so I don't expect it to have -

J: So why not change?

T: I can't think why not. Because I don't commit myself to chasing the tail enough? Obviously I am not persistent enough.

J: Why not?

T: I must be diverted by -

J: After all, if a dog can do it?

T: (Laughter). In answer to the question, I don't expect it would have been more manifest in changing me, and I would highly suspect any subtle act that I'm putting on in physical ways, or posture, or whiteness of the eye, or largeness of pupil, or kindness of deed.

J: That marks the end of this session with Tony.

J: Even if you haven't achieved zen what impact has it had on your life?

S: Most other things have gone into the background; well, I suppose almost everything has gone into the background now.

J: What do you mean by "background"?

S: Less important. There are all sorts of contradictions there, aren't there?

J: Are you saying that nothing matters other than zen, and that everything else has been de-fused of interest?

S: No, I don't think one can say that when one still has an ego. I meant other things matter less than they did.

J: Is that good or bad?

S: I find that question difficult, good in what sense?

J: Promoting your advance towards zen.

S: It no longer seems there is an advance towards zen - either one gets there, or one doesn't.

J: But you seem to be implying in your first answer to this question that it was rather good that the impact it had had in your life was to push other things into the background so that they no longer mattered. Are you now saying that wasn't what you meant?

S: I don't think I meant to say that this was good, more that other things were less important than they were.

J: They may be less important but if they are still important, is that good or bad?

S: If you mean things that the ego likes to do, then obviously it's bad if one is hoping to achieve zen. I find these questions about being good or bad very difficult.

J: Why do you find them difficult, they are straightforward questions, even if you haven't achieved zen what impact has it had on your life? You implied in your first answer that it has a considerable impact, and that it has pushed many things into a state of less importance, that being better than if things were still of high importance as they may have been before zen came along. And yet you now seem to be saying that you're not sure that's what you meant. Perhaps you could clarify your answer to that question - even if you haven't achieved zen, what impact has it had on your life?

S: I don't know that I'm saying that it's better that other things are less important, I was trying to imply that other things, apart from zen, are less important than they have been, and whether that is good or bad I don't know how to answer that question because as long as the ego is there then zen isn't, and in that sense it doesn't make any difference if they are less important than they were, or not.

2. *J interviewing S, using MT's questions, 10.9.94*

J: So if it doesn't make any difference, then zen has had no impact on your life?

S: It depends from what angle one is speaking. It has had a large impact on my life as I experience it.

J: So, would it not be easier to say something along the lines of - not that things have been made less or more important, but that you have been made more aware of certain aspects of yourself, and that that has had an important impact on what you do and how you perceive yourself, and how you react in life. [This is exactly what I would have liked to have said.]

S: Well, that does seem to put it infinitely better than I did.

J: But perhaps it's not correct, it didn't come from you?

S: The whole sentence was too long, I got lost in the middle of it. I think I am much more aware now than I was before I met you. [The sentence was only too long because I was so nervous.]

J: Is that good or bad?

S: This is the bit I find difficult, is it good or bad.

J: Well, you seem to set a value by zen. You seem pleased that you are more aware of things now than you were. There is a clear indication of value and benefit, and yet when I ask you, is it good or bad, you seem unable to answer. Why is that?

S: One of the ways that I have understood from you, to achieve zen, would be to increase one's level of awareness to a point where one could leave the ego behind, so in that sense it would be good.

J: But that isn't quite the question, that's if one makes the leap. I am talking about now, as you are. Is it good or bad, the impact it has had, which you seem to insist it has had?

S: Well, it's possible to detach oneself from certain loops that one gets caught up in, if one can stand back and look at oneself more clearly.

J: Is that good, or bad?

S: It's much more comfortable to detach from these negative loops.

J: So zen, thus far for you, has been like a mental aspirin?

S: That would imply that the differences were only noticeable for negative events.

J: I was simply repeating what you said, you made it clear that it helped with negative loops.

S: Yes. I prefer to be more aware than I was. I still find your turning things into good or bad a very difficult concept.

J: Is that anything more than a wriggling ego?

S: Probably not.

3. *J interviewing S, using MI's questions, 10.9.94*

J: Is it? (Pause) How are you going to resolve the conflict you have raised between the ego senses of value, which you attribute to it, and the fact that you know that nothing short of zen itself is worth a fig?

S: Well, I think they are irreconcilable.

J: But you seem to have reconciled them except when the hook is dug under your chin.

S: The fact that I go on living in much the same way, you mean?

J: You say that it's good and you value it, and you do, and yet you know theoretically that it's not worth a fig.

1a. J: So how has zen affected how or what you learn?

S: It has probably affected what I read, and in that sense it has affected what I learn. But I am not sure about the question if it means how I learn, how I sit down and decide I am going to learn something.

J: How you approach the task of learning?

S: I don't think it has affected that at all.

J: So motivation to learn has not been affected by your studies of zen?

S: That's not the same question, is it?

J: These questions are intended to test the depth of the answerer's understanding, not just quick answers at surface level.

S: It has changed my motivation.

J: So it's affected how you learn. Isn't motivation part of how one learns? The drive to learn, rather than the actual mechanics of running one's eyes along something . . .

S: I was thinking of the actual mechanics before.

J: Too limited. So, how has it affected how you learn, if not what you learn?

S: In the sense of the motivation, you mean?

J: And anything else you think is part of how you go about learning something?

S: I don't know if this is relevant, but I seem to be aware that something is going on all the time, a sort of attempt to understand what you have been saying to us for so long.

2. J: Has zen helped or hindered your interpersonal relationships?

S: I think it has changed the people I want to have relationships with. [I meant to say that, because of zen, some of the people I want to relate to would be different, not that I would change them.]

J: Zen may have, or the change in you brought about by zen has had a 'knock-on' effect on them, do you mean?

4. J interviewing S, using MT's questions, 10.9.94

S: Any change in me will have a 'knock-on' effect on those I interrelate with.

J: What did you mean by saying that some of them had changed, in response to the question "Has zen helped or hindered your interpersonal relationships?" Whence comes about the change in them, that you just mentioned?

S: I suppose the subjects I talk about now would be different from those I would have spoken about before.

J: How different? (Pause). Do you, or don't you, find yourself still reacting to certain people in the same way that you always have?

S: I don't know if I remember clearly how I always used to react to people.

J: Would you say that zen has made you less ego centred in your interpersonal relationships?

S: No, not yet.

J: Not yet, so how has it helped or hindered?

S: I think that the main difference is that now I am more interested in different people, people that are perhaps searching for something through zen. [A much more accurate answer would be: The main difference is that I am more aware of how I am reacting to other people, and *vice versa*. Also I am very aware that my relationships with other people are just one ego reacting to another ego, so I can stand back more now and be less involved in them.]

2a. J: How much insight do you feel you have into your 'self'?

S: I think I have a lot more than I used to have, but it obviously isn't very deep.

J: Why do you say "obviously it isn't very deep"?

S: From time to time you point out things I haven't noticed. I do notice a great deal more than I used to but there are obviously all sorts of things I am not aware of, that you pick up instantly.

J: Is that an encouragement, or does it intimidate?

S: I don't think either of these are what I feel; I just think it's about time I didn't keep getting caught out.

J: Caught out?

S: Not noticing what I am really thinking or feeling about something.

J: You seem to feel that you have a sort of structure and *modus operandi* which can be "caught out"? That sounds rather defensive. Would you say zen puts you in a defensive mode?

S: I suppose I do feel a bit defensive with you, but I think I feel less defensive with other people now.

J: Isn't that the wrong way round?

S: Probably.

5. *J interviewing S, using MT's questions, 10.9.94*

J: Probably? Not good enough. Is it, or isn't it? Why should you feel defensive towards that against which there is no defence, and not defensive against that where your defences stood you in good stead for decades?

S: I suppose I feel a lot more confident in interpersonal relationships on a comparatively superficial level.

J: Isn't that the wrong way round, I say again?

S: Yes.

J: If one cannot open one's mind to a person who already sees so deeply into your mind, what hope for zen is there? One must positively welcome the search light of a Zen Master's awareness and allow the rays of light to shine on every aspect of self, whereas with other people you decide which areas are illuminated and chose which ones will put you forward in the best light. Isn't that the wrong way round, I say again?

S: Yes.

J: Why do you do it? Why do you feel defensive towards the one person against whom you should never feel defensive, and not defensive so much against others?

S: I am picking up what my ego is feeling because it, by its nature, feels defensive if it's seen through, doesn't it?

J: But if one's deeper self welcomes that, and knows that that is a process one has to go through in order to achieve zen, why should one shrink from it? Surely, all the more need to put one's best foot forward and stand full square in the path of that search light?

S: If I could find my deeper self . . .

J: Everybody has a deeper self, that which impels them to zen.

S: If I could be aware of it, I mean.

3. J: What, if anything, do you think you either have to do, or give up, in order to achieve zen?

S: I obviously have to give up what I am doing.

J: Obviously. That's negative, what about positive? To do, or not to do?

S: Find a way to stop this endless internal dialogue.

J: What about simply stepping into the spot light? You have heard me say on innumerable occasions that the final step requires a certain nerve, that dipping one's foot in and out of the pool is going to get one nowhere. One has just got to jump in. It's an act of will, and yet not of will because it emanates from somewhere deeper than will, the deeper impulse to zen. Surely that's what you need to do, rather than bothering about the negative of not doing what you are doing. That's a rather negative way of looking at it, rather than the positive, forward thrusting

4. J: How strongly do you believe that you will achieve zen?

S: I don't know if I believe it, I hope I will.

6. *J interviewing S, using MT's questions, 10.9.94*

J: What is hope? Does it simply mean profoundly desired, or . . . or is it something different? Many people go around hoping that they may win a million pounds on Ernie, or that their wife might leave them, or that their hair were a different colour, their body a different shape. It never happens, apart from Ernie, occasionally. What does hope mean here?

S: I'm wondering if you're saying if you hope for something that is, in a way putting it out of your reach?

J: I am asking if that is the sense in which you were using hope?

S: There is probably an element of that, but I think it's much more than just that.

J: Then what's stopping you achieving your hope? After all, you are an old hand.

5. J: If you achieve zen, what impact will it have on your day to day living?

S: I expect it would be vast, but I don't actually know what it would be.

6. J: Has your zen made you more or less sensitive to the feelings of others?

S: That sounds as if you're implying I have zen.

J: No, your zen.

S: I think I am more sensitive than I was to the feelings of others.

J: More sensitive, in a sense that because you have understood more about yourself you have understood them a little more, or more specific than that?

S: You speak about awareness so often. When you first spoke to me about it many years ago, it had almost no meaning but it seems to have much more of a meaning now, and in that sense zen has changed the way I . . .

J: So you feel yourself more sensitive to the feelings of others?

S: More sensitive than I was.

J: And what about peoples' feelings towards you? Are you more sensitive to them, too? Not necessarily more reactive, but more sensitive?

S: I was going to answer in the reactive sense to begin with. I think I am probably more aware of their feelings towards me but it is a very relative thing because when I hear what you pick up that is in another dimension. But I know that I do pick up much more than I used to.

7. J: Has your study of zen changed any of your daily habits, or routines apart from, of course, your diabetes; you need to adhere to a strict routine for that? (Health, eating, drinking, meditating).

S: I stopped meditating, but I don't think it has changed other habits or routines. [On reflection I am aware that most of the things I do are diversionary tactics. I no longer need to be so actively engaged in doing things with other people. I am able to be alone and remain contented for

7. *J interviewing S, using MI's questions, 10.9.94*

many hours, although I would hate to live alone. I am much less worried about my health.]

J: Well what is the difference between what one does, and what one is?

S: You say one is what one does.

J: Do you believe that, and know it to be true for yourself?

S: (A plane blocked out what I said., but I think I would have said "not really for if that were all I was, why would you bother with me?")

8. J: Do you think that zen has some form of higher morality of the sort that could, perhaps, change the world?

S: That's another question that I find awkward. Do you mean a set of rules?

J: Perhaps something that transcends mere rules, in that rules are very much a product of ego, but a mission, a viewpoint, a self-produced morality of some special and unique kind?

S: I think that each person that experiences zen would inevitably change aspects of their immediate world, and the people they met, but I don't think the ideas as the ego understands them would make a vast difference.

9. J: Do you think Zen Masters can make a difference to the fate of the world? Do you think they might have a duty to do that?

S: I think that if there were enough of them they could make a difference to the fate of the world. But "duty", that's another loaded word. I think that because of their nature, they would change people with whom they interacted to a certain extent. I don't think it would be done as a sense of duty, it would just be done because that was the way there were.

10. J: What particular powers does a Zen Master have, that others don't have?

S: I have trouble with the word power. I think their level of awareness is in another dimension all together, as I said before.

J: Is that not power?

S: It's not what I think of as power.

J: Is he not as an eagle among pigeons?

S: Yes. I'm probably just thinking of power in the wrong way.

J: In what way are you thinking of power?

S: In an ego sort of way, tyrannical.

J: Exploitative?

S: Yes.

J: So what you are saying is that he doesn't have exploitative powers, but he has abilities which are different from others?

S: Oh certainly, yes.

8. *J interviewing S, using MI's questions, 10.9.94*

J: Abilities is a synonym for powers then?

S: Yes. [I said this, but it no longer seems a good synonym for powers, it's far too limited.]

J: What abilities then do you think they have, apart from their awareness? Do you think he can foretell the future, or levitate, or - ?

S: I think he can have an idea of the possible future, but not the actual future, because all the interactions of the web cannot be foreseen. I think you are aware of trends, more than the actual detailed future. And sometimes you are absolutely spot on, but not always. [I don't think Zen Masters can levitate.]

11. J: What do you see as J's role in your own progress towards zen? Do you think he is necessary to it? Do you think he feels responsible for it?

S: In answer to your 1st question, what is your role? I might never have found zen without you, [and even after you had drawn my attention to it I might not have persevered with it as it was so alien to other ways in which I had been searching to find more meaning to life] so your role is pretty fundamental.

J: So, do you think he is necessary to your progress, or do you think the machine, having been kicked into can get there under its own steam?

S: I know you have said that it need not be necessary to have your help. However, if I am open enough at a time when I am with you, it could happen, whereas it might not happen without you.

J: Do you think he feels responsible for your progress?

S: Responsible is another word I have trouble with in this sense, because I think you have said that ultimately we don't have responsibility for each other.

J: Do you think he cares?

S: I think he must, otherwise he would not put up with us for so long.

J: It's love.

12. J: If zen is a different way of being how do you dare converse with a Zen Master as an equal?

S: I converse with you because you give me the opportunity to; I don't think it is as an equal.

J: How do you dare look me in the eye with all that is behind your eyes open to my gaze?

S: I suppose because I don't know what is open to your gaze.

J: More than you could possibly imagine.

S: I don't doubt that.

13. J: Do Zen Masters suffer? Why do they become ill?

S: I'm sure they suffer.

9. *J interviewing S, using MT's questions, 10.9.94*

J: You're sure they suffer, suffer in what sense?

S: Well, at the things they see when they look around.

J: Is that a great defeating burden that they crawl around on their psychological hands and knees, being crushed by, or - ?

S: No, I don't think so.

J: What do you mean, suffer?

S: Perhaps that's another word I should query. I was thinking of when Krishnamurti died. Perhaps sadness would be a better word [to describe what I thought your feelings were].

J: Perhaps a better phrase would be, do Zen Masters care?

S: Yes, I think they do.

J: Why do you think they become ill?

S: I think it's a part of their genetic inheritance, and maybe interactions with their environment before they became Zen Masters.

J: They're not immortal, or supermen, in that sense?

S: No, I think because of (and of Side A of tape)

J: You were saying that because they didn't get tied up in stress -

S: They avoid all sorts of stress related diseases, so in that sense they do remain much more healthy than other people, but there are still genetic weaknesses that they can be subject to.

J: They can catch colds?

S: And 'flu [and any other infectious disease].

J: So they're not blessed with immortal or other worldly health, they can suffer illness like other people, or of the same type as other people, but there is a big difference, you're saying, in the psychological component . .

S: An enormous difference.

J: of their susceptibility to, and the extent to which they experience such illness?

S: I have been aware, for many years, of the way you seem to be able to rise above illness on most occasions, and to function, from my point of view, brilliantly and with very little difference from the way you normally do. I don't know if that is a universal characteristic of Zen Masters, or whether that is something peculiar to you. Most other people are knocked sideways by things that you seem to be able to rise above.

14 J: If a Zen Master asked you what is a mouse when it spins, what would your answer be?

S: I have no answer at the moment.

15. J: Would you have expected zen as you have studied it and understood it so far, to have changed you more than it appears to have done?