

Preface

Where does the Zen Master go to the bathroom? I suppose few people have ever asked themselves that question. I suppose fewer still would believe that there is a relationship between answering that question and achieving *nirvana*—a peaceful state of mind, a spiritual state of enlightenment and well-being.

One morning before sunrise, in the summer of 1970, while meditating in Daitoku-ji monastery in Kyoto, I asked myself that question. It became a kind of *koan* for me and filled my mind for many hours on many days. Finally, one morning, I decided to find out.

I followed the Master.

He goes in the toilet.

I began to wonder if there wasn't a relationship between how he had learned to go to the bathroom and how he had learned to achieve *nirvana*. At first this seemed like an absurd thought to me, a temptation of *makyo* (diabolical hallucinations). Yet, as I thought about it, I realized that certainly no one would disagree that the skill of learning to go to the bathroom can be taught. It seemed to me that similarly, there was an assumption being made in the monastery that *nirvana* could be taught. Now, this assumption was never explicitly stated. Quite the opposite. We were repeatedly told that the Master had nothing to teach; that Zen believes in neither teachings nor doctrines; that there is no goal, and that to seek a goal is already to lose it.

But then why was there a monastery to teach us how not to

rely on words; to *teach* us to learn to live in the moment, in a present centeredness, without striving for goals? And why were we taught techniques, such as meditation, to learn to achieve these goals? Likewise, I soon began to notice that the Master, by his everyday habits of eating, talking, walking, was really modeling for us the peaceful "right" attitude that we were all trying to acquire.

It became clear to me that a teaching process was occurring. This teaching was different from the rational, intellectual Western education I had received. But it was a teaching nonetheless. The Zen Masters, over the course of centuries, had developed precision methods for teaching individuals how to attain nirvana. This teaching of Zen and the Eastern tradition in general, have primarily emphasized techniques that encourage yielding, letting go, egolessness, nonattachment, present centeredness, and altered states of consciousness.

A dominant emphasis in Western psychology, on the other hand, has been the precision use of the intellect and rationality, the setting of goals, analysis, assertiveness, strong ego development, the search for causality, and the perfection of ordinary awareness.

This book attempts to combine the best of both teachings into an integrated whole: a *precision nirvana*. The essence of this book may be described as a Zen or transpersonal Behaviorism. This orientation results, in part, from my own personal and spiritual searching. This searching began nearly a decade ago, when I first read the existential writers. This reading, in turn, led to an exploration of my Judeo-Christian roots: travel to Israel, tracing Jesus' path through the Holy Land, and learning Hebrew and Greek to read the Old and New Testaments. The quest also led to the Orient, where my wife and I spent fifteen months studying Zen Buddhism.

Zen behaviorism draws from all these experiences, especially those in the Orient, and tries to integrate them with my Western psychological training in behavior therapy. Thus, the book provides a synthesis between Eastern disciplines and Western psychology. It offers a comprehensive, integrative approach to self-understanding that illustrates in practical terms ways in which the two traditions may be combined—in clinical practice, in educational settings—and above all, in dealing more effectively with our own lives.

In this latter capacity, the book serves as an owner's manual: guiding you in ways to make decisions for yourself, offering you

Preface

alternatives for choosing who you want to become; and providing you with specific helpful techniques for achieving your own self-chosen goals. Also, in the process of choosing yourself and your values, the book attempts to guide you joyfully in a self-celebration.

May this owner's manual teach you to work hard, have fun, and not know the difference.