

Q: Hi, Robert. I first found you on youtube. I have read 4T and DONT and watched many hours of your videos. You seem completely clear and awake, but still I find it impossible to give up the idea of personal betterment. I was hoping to ask you about this personally at a Zoom meeting or even perhaps personally at the Gathering, but I see that the Gathering is cancelled, and you do not seem to be doing any more Zoom meetings. So would you please comment more on personal betterment, particularly spiritual betterment which you seem to deny.

A: Hi. Yes, I am sorry about the Gathering. Regarding Covid, better safe than sorry. I see self-improvement as a fantasy activity--an avoidance of the facts of the moment by promising oneself that things will be better later.

For me, open-hearted participation without goals is the key. As Alan Watts (an early influence) put this:

“We thought of life by analogy with a journey, a pilgrimage, which had a serious purpose at the end, and the thing was to get to that end, success or whatever it is, maybe heaven after you’re dead. But we missed the point the whole way along. It was a musical thing and you were supposed to sing or to dance while the music was being played.”

And:

“Same way with dancing. You don't aim at a particular spot in the room because that's where you will arrive. The whole point of the dancing is the dance.”

Or as Shivas Irons, the golf caddy/mystic in Michael Murphy’s “Golf In The Kingdom,” said:

“Ye're makin' a great mistake if ye think the gemme is meant for the shots...the gemme is meant for walkin'.”

From that perspective, living fully is a matter of openness to each moment, without focusing on what “myself” wants or doesn’t want, including wanting to arrive at something “better.”

But I am not selling that view. I am only confessing it. To live fully without hopes of self-improvement can be a challenge. Any life, no matter how fortunate, includes struggles on countless levels: physical, mental, psychological, etcetera.

No wonder we seek answers. No wonder we look for meaning in our daily rounds. No wonder we want reasons for hope. Many who say they seek spiritual truths really mean, "Give me hope, give me a goal, just don't let me fall into despair."

I'd planned a Gathering for this December, not to teach anything, but simply because I enjoyed the first one so much. Spending ten days schmoozing with my readers was a joy--good fun and good vibes that I found stimulating.

Unfortunately, the idea that seemed entirely feasible back in June, now does not. Here's the new plan, assuming there is sufficient interest:

A series of Zoom meetings in the first week of December 2021, the number of participants being limited at each meeting in order to allow freer conversation.

The meetings will be both live-streamed and recorded for later too.

Later, I will announce the dates and the method of signing up to participate. Feel free to join in.

Be well.