

*Handwritten description*

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## *Qualitative Interviewing*

After much study of the evaluation masters, three youths came before Halcolm to ask how they might further increase their knowledge and wisdom. Halcolm sensed that they lacked experience in the real world, but he wanted to have them make the transition from the seclusion of their studies to the outside world in stages.

During the first stage he sent them forth under a six-month vow of silence. During those six months they wore the identifying garments of the muted truth-seekers so that people would know they were forbidden to speak. Each day, according to their instructions, they sat at the market in whatever village they entered, watching but never speaking. After six months in this fashion they returned to Halcolm.

"So," Halcolm began, "you have returned to us from your journey. Your period of silence is over. Your transition to the world beyond our walls of study has begun. What have you learned on this your first journey?"

The first youth answered, "In every village the patterns are the same. People come to the market. They buy the goods they need, talk with friends, and leave. I have learned that all markets are alike and the people in markets always the same. I have learned that all things are ultimately the same from place to place."

Then the second youth reported, "I too watched the people come and go in the markets. I have learned that all life is coming and going, people forever moving to and fro in search of food and basic material things. I understand now the simplicity of human life."

Halcolm looked at the third youth: "And what do you have to tell us?"

"I saw the same markets and the same people as my fellow-travelers, yet I know not what they know. My mind is filled with questions. I kept wondering where the people came from and where they went. I pondered what they might be thinking and feeling as they came and

went. I reflected on how they happened to be at this market on this day, who they left behind, and who came with them. I wondered how today was the same or different for them. I have failed, Master, for I am filled with questions rather than answers, questions for the people I saw. I do not know what I have learned."

Halcolm smiled. "You have learned most of all. You have learned the value of being able to ask questions. You have learned the importance of finding out what people have to say. You are ready now to return to the world, this time without the vow of silence.

"Go forth now. Go forth and question. Ask and listen. The world is just beginning to open up to you. Each person you question can take you into a new part of the world. For the person who is willing to ask and listen the world will always be new. The skilled questioner and attentive listener knows how to enter into another's experience."

—From *Halcolm's Epistemological Parables*