

Chapter 16

Death and Passing Through Zero

Rose has made some disturbing comments, based on his own experience, about the final phase of the path. After years of dedicated and honest search, and an ascetic lifestyle, he had expected the heavens to open up one day and strike him with a lightning bolt of exaltation, carrying him up into celestial glory. This is undoubtedly how most seekers anticipate their spiritual quest to culminate. It did not quite happen this way for Rose. Instead, what he found was death—absolute negation of all that he had known and all that he was. He claims that a mood of despair and oblivion precedes the death experience, as all of one's efforts and hopes seem to lead to nothing. There is even the sense of being on the edge of insanity; of losing one's mind. God remains silent and aloof. One wonders if the commitment had not been conceited foolishness all along. Although many interpretations have been put forth over the centuries, perhaps this was the inner meaning of Christ's statement on the Cross as he was about to die: "My God, why have you forsaken me?"

I had once remarked to Rose that his written account of the experience of entering into Realization (see Chapter 17) conveyed to me a feeling of profound trauma and anguish. I wondered of its significance in relation to the terminal phase of our own paths, and inadvertently disclosed the underlying nature of my chronic psychological condition. He offered a revealing glimpse of (or from) his subsequent position and the period of spiritual turmoil prior to its discovery, in this response: "Your sensing agony from The Three Books of the Absolute: Believe me...before I knew complete detachment from the world-plane, I too felt that agony, only more so...to the point of suicidal desires" (personal correspondence, 1978).

To be precise here, even at the risk of a seeming lack of compassion, this quality of despair is not to be confused with the experience of basic emotional anguish due to grief or loss, or any measure of earthly frustration and depravation, however deeply felt. It is of another level entirely and only earned once the earlier phases of meditation and self-confrontation have been largely worked through. It is important to make this discrimination, lest one regard very human mundane suffering as the special kind of suffering reserved for those who have answered to all lesser concerns yet find themselves still unanswered and apparently stranded in nowhere. In this misunderstanding, one may possibly not deal adequately with those personal issues that can and must be addressed and thus not reach that point of exhaustion where one's human drama no longer matters.

He has stated: “**You are on the verge of Enlightenment when you see yourself in your totality and futility.**” To see one’s entire life and selfhood in totality from all sides is a profound thing, and is the end result of the years of thorough self-study. To see oneself in futility is to be aware of the unknowing surrounding oneself, the groundlessness of one’s current existence as it is, and the seeming hopelessness of this finite person’s ability to ever be able to do enough to realize what may be on the other side of this unknowing.

In fact, Advaita Vedanta agrees it is necessary for one to see the futility of this entire process of using the mind and one’s will to get to “Enlightenment” – the impossible task: that the Absolute state-of-being can be achieved from any combination of relative efforts by a fictitious, mechanical ego-self, resulting in the becoming of what one already is – in order for the process to end. However, as repeatedly stressed throughout Rose’s teaching, the effort must be wholeheartedly made nonetheless, otherwise this transcendental perspective, born of exhaustion and collapse, cannot occur.

In fact, the function of this final despair in the quest is to show the ego-self it is not ultimately in charge and that the objective answer is beyond its jurisdiction. There must be a break of will, a giving up – and thereby an opening to a fundamental shift in reference point of identity.

Rose has little respect, and possibly only pity, for that vast majority of humanity who fully identify with the fantasy picture-show of life and never suspect it is all a pathetic farce. Many of his comments are intended to poke holes through this mental charade, to confront people with the reality of their condition. Psychoanalysis is no stranger to the principle of denial and repression as defense mechanisms for dealing with pain or horror. Rose, however (and Jim Burns more so), sees this as being not only a pathological pattern in extreme cases of trauma, but as the human condition itself. All we are, essentially, is a defense mechanism against the truth. Humanity forever lies to itself throughout all of life, while concocting rationalizations to buffer one against the harsh confrontation with ever-present death. Our very identity is the buffer. Yet, occasionally, despite one’s best efforts, reality breaks through. One’s massive facade of pretense breaks down.

Rose has remarked that depression, even to the point of suicidal despair, rather than being strictly a symptom of mental disorder, is the closest condition to a true assessment of life experience we generally get, despite whatever secondary egoistic distortions it might contain. (The ego-self who is despairing is itself, of course, the primary distortion, yet we have no choice but to acknowledge the experiential reference point of our existence as we currently find ourselves.) He has even stated: “The man who is about to commit suicide is just like the man who is on the verge of Enlightenment.” In both cases, one has come to the end of the line and given up one’s investment in the dream (including dreams of impending Godhood), seeing no alternative to self-negation, even though in physical suicide a tragic overgeneralization occurs in which the self is mistakenly equated with the body and body-mind. To lose the identification with this small “s” self and its conviction of no-conviction, and then to purely be, in the unknowing, is the real spiritual suicide.

An insight gained from maturing meditation is that it is best to view life from the vantage point of death. It keeps one honest. One sees truthfully. The mood of nostalgia touches on this. In critical deliberations, our personal issues – from value decisions to psychological trauma – are perceived more directly, without the distortive influence of ego, and the desires and fears branching from it. Yet, this “technique” is still a mental attitude. To see all of life in its essential form, actual death (of the mind – as we are only a mental experience) must take place. This cannot be simulated. Rose has stated it simply: “**To know death properly, the person must die**” (Rose, 1979c, p. 73).

One of the most chilling moments for me in TAT group work occurred towards the end of a 30-day intensive. Several of us were informally discussing issues of meaning and direction, from our

inevitably human perspective. Rose then entered the room and quietly asked: *"How close is zero?"* and walked out. No one moved, spoke or possibly even breathed for several minutes after that; mentally frozen in place at this blunt confrontation with the ever-present void. We knew the sobering answer to his question; one that all avoid facing: *"It's right here, next to us, always."* We also knew the ominous implication contained in his entire teaching: the Truth is on the other side of zero.

These last statements must be carefully qualified. The final relinquishment is not synonymous with the urge for suicide. Rose is, of course, not intending his comments to be mistaken for the exhortation to kill oneself. Something must indeed die in order for the Truth to be found, but it is not the body, and even killing the body might not kill the conviction of the ego-as-self—as a psychic entity artificially isolated from the totality of what is, the "hungry ghost" whose desire for essence can never be satisfied, and who carries the illusory burden of self-responsibility—that is much of the real obstacle to Truth. Even the desire to die is still an ego maintained by the false self, not true giving up, and must be surrendered. What must be ultimately given up is not one's life but one's very claim to selfhood. When one finally no longer cares whether one lives or dies, but can only remain obsessed with the riddle: *"Whom does the Grail serve?"*—this, then, is the real, penultimate state. To stand aware and alone, still and silent, in unanswered desire. Prayer is the exercise of this yearning, until it consumes us. "God" is what is left over.

The next is an exceedingly subtle point to grasp. It is the intersecting point where the paths of Zen and Advaita merge. Rose states that even the final ego—the spiritual desire to find the Truth and reside in it forever—must be lost too for the answer to be found. Yet, it cannot be given up by the seeker in any way. Instead, as he has promised: *"It will be taken from you,"* (after it has done its job of getting one to the threshold). He explains further what brings this about during one's final moments:

You go through death with no conviction of survival. Because you have to be truthful with yourself. All the tales that are told could be dreamt up; they could be fiction. But when you die honestly, you die with absolute despair. And the absolute despair removes the last spiritual ego you've got left (lecture, 1986).

To qualify this last point, it could be surmised that this despair is that of the spiritual ego too, possibly its final remnant, and if the path of pure non-duality and becoming is selflessly followed out to the end, even this "despairer" would have been relinquished, or seen to be extraneous to (or by) the sole awareness of the sacred question that is all the seeker rightfully is by the end. For this "you" referred to in the above quote to die honestly, all convictions would have to be dropped; the state of no-conviction also. Simply stated, the degree of this despair at death largely depends upon how much of one's allegiance of identity has passed from the one who is dying...to what is being died into.

He adds to this another implication of this experience of personal negation as one's story ends:

You walk right up to the edge and you say: *"Hey, my head's coming apart."* And you get frightened. But that total lonesomeness takes you away from all of your contact with relativity. That lonesomeness is that your essence is separated for all time from (your loved ones and attachments to the world) (lecture, 1979).

The most cherished love object that one sees fade away into nothingness is oneself.

The philosophical attitude he has inculcated in the student, of uncompromising truthfulness with oneself above all else, must be maintained up to the very end. When entering death, one has little resource left with which to lie, regardless, as even the ego that would generate the cowardly motive for spiritual fabrication knows it is about to be snuffed. The wineskin is empty.

One cannot artificially induce this state of spiritual maturity. It has to be earned by fulfilling one's commitment. How can one know that this state of readiness is impending? It has been best defined this way: "The crucifixion of the self is accomplished when there is nothing left for which you wish to pray" (Goldsmith, 1956, p. 165).

Following is a series of statements Rose has made that concisely reviews the sequence of inner work he recommends, and to what this course of inquiry leads. He is essentially defining the core of Zen meditation in experience. As such, these comments, from their different angles, not only sum up much of the Albigen System, but more clearly indicate how this approach to validity differs from other teachings that primarily aim at creating an enjoyable state of consciousness within the mind dimension; one that is imagined to be the final answer. This is in contrast to bringing about the radical shift of vantage point to what is forever beyond all finite, objectified states.

He has explained what happens quite plainly: "If you think long enough, you'll stop thinking." The value of all the forms of inner work described throughout the teaching is thus two-fold. First, the attainment of thorough self-knowledge, mental clarity, transmutation of energy, etc. This is valuable both on the mundane level and as a pre-requisite for the breakthrough into Spirit. In this process of continually backing away from untruth, "...eventually it narrows down until there's no escape. You go through the funnel..." (Rose, lecture, 1986). Second, this determined meditation on the perennial koan, "What is Truth?" (John: 38), is what builds up the tremendous ball of energy that must precede the realization of the answer.

Rose has this vivid way of describing the mental dynamic that occurs as one's philosophical vector terminates in death:

If the last burst of energy is not wasted on thoughts of escape, the mechanism might, by shutting off the disturbing environment, and with the automatic decrease in sensory impulses, bring about at least one chance in its lifetime to coordinate all the circuits in the memory bank and come up with a startling discovery (Rose, 1978, p. 61).

The self is stripped naked and one's freed attention enables the now unobstructed intuition to fully attend to locating the answer.

Rose again refers to the need for the seeker to *become*, and not merely to learn concepts or identify with any contrived state. He explains how this must come about:

The problem is continually fed into the computer and has to be solved, and it can't be solved without a change of being. He can't change his being, though, but his being is changed for him by a triggering by a little procedure, which is a neutral state – the humble, egoless state of continued energy-application with a desire to know. (Rose, 1985, p. 251-2).

The state to which he is referring at the end is betweenness and is the proper attitude to maintain throughout the entire process of search. He defines this more precisely: "Satori, or the experience of dying while living, is the result of the ability to become, being applied to the direction of awareness at death" (Rose, 1981, p. 28).

As has been mentioned, a key ingredient in the happening that is betweenness is the tension between polarities in experience, until the koan is resolved through transcendence. This is much like a tube of toothpaste being squeezed from all sides until the content shoots out through the top, where an opening has been made (awareness). Rose describes the reality of this transformation, in very human terms:

What we have is the pursuit of truth, capital "T" Truth. Yet, we may be incapable of perceiving the Truth. So you have action opposed by conviction that you will be unsuccessful [or experiencing that you are not successful now!]. You live this. A person on the spiritual path lives this every moment every day of their life; they push, and push, and push...and then nothing logical, mental, or verbal can explain what happens—an explosion. Your being changes (Rose, 1985, p. 251).

This is one reason why the Truth cannot be appreciated or approximated before it is Realized, as is the case in so many teachings that function mostly on the emotional and/or intellectual levels. The one who starts out on the quest looking for the answer is not the One who one discovers oneself to be at its end—this Self being the answer. The one who starts out is not the one who "arrives."

Adding to this theme, Rose makes a couple of points about how the specific kind of inner work he teaches differs from some traditional methods of meditation—even a simplistic level of Zen—that he claims cannot reliably result in an ultimate realization of Validity, as the state-of-"no-mind" developed through such practices cannot help but still be a very subtle creation or conditioned sub-category of the human mind, and not the "letting go" or genuine ending of the ego-mind despite oneself, which is what such practices intend and which must occur before *that which is wholly Other* can become discovered. Furthermore, submitting to the work leading to this climactic shift in reference point is also what develops the "being" that would appreciate such nothingness, rather than one's remaining a mental self who becomes identified as a state within it:

In some schools of Zen, they devised a system of deliberately bombing the head. It was the exercise of attaining no-mind, which I don't approve of. I don't approve of trying to make your mind go blank. The understanding is that when you reach the point of no-mind, the All-Mind invades it, and you know everything. (This is accurate in principle) but you can't go about it just by simulating; taking a symptom. You have to do it [through the above described effort], and have faith in (the process) and in yourself, regardless of whether you go insane, drop dead, whatever. Persist. Keep that computer going. And what happens is the head explodes. Not the physical head, but the comprehensiveness (lecture, 1979).

Rose alludes to the real issue in this crucial distinction when referring to the Buddha's last step in meditation: to think of nothing:

You can't think of nothing. What happens is, after you bombard yourself with possibilities, you blow the head. And nothing is there. Your thinking becomes nothing. But you don't think of nothing. So this is the difference between what I call choosing the symptom—trying to imitate the symptom of no-mind—as opposed to just attacking the problem and attacking the problem, until the head just blows (lecture, 1979).

In other words: the self who would think of nothing itself becomes nothing. Thought ends as the thinker ends.

Following is another description of the course the Psychology of the Observer meditation will take. The frustration referred to is the recognition that nothing can be known for sure on the level of the mind, but yet all one can work with is the mind (in some form). This conflict, worked through to its climax, is what raises the vantage point of the viewer up to the apex of the top triangle:

Watching the mind intently with the mind produces a tremendous frustration. You become more and more despairing, until you feel this is hopeless. But you must keep on working, until the explosion. **Then awareness is not in FRONT of the mind anymore** (Rose, group discussion).

This last sentence is of profound significance. It indicates the nature of the shift that must take place. We exist entirely within the mind. All our spiritual efforts – whether devotional, philosophical, phenomenological, or whatever – are within the mind. All our imaginings about what we would like Truth or God to be is also in the mind, as is any answer found that is still some form of relative consciousness. Right now, awareness seems to us to be an extension or faculty of the mind; the mind being experienced as its source and container, instead of its object. This form of awareness manifests as the observer. We never suspect there is an awareness anterior to the mind in which the mundane self and all its heavens and hells exist, and that the real Self is the source of this awareness. The seeker's task is to retroverse this ray of awareness back through the mind, until one's point-of-reference breaks through this Cosmic Egg and arrives at naked Reality, which is forever One and Awake.

We use the mind to escape the mind. This is the way of Zen. Without the certain commitment at the beginning of the quest and the determined vector maintained throughout its course, the *being* that would survive the death of the mind would not be sufficiently "prepared" for its realization, or one would stop short of the breakthrough. Rose explains this in an interesting way, dispelling some naive assumptions about spirituality:

All people are automatically immortal, but we do not all go to the same place (after death). Awareness doesn't terminate, but you can't expect to advance into a dimension that you haven't mentally "vaccinated" yourself to beforehand. The mind with certain convictions and limitations, if it lands in a certain place, would consider it either oblivion or hell (lecture, 1986)

Why must this be so? He has explained that if one was to die today, and the only reality one knows is the body, on this planet, in this solar system, then when all this fades away – one's body is gone and the brain is gone with the body – what is going to be left to appreciate the next dimension? Where has one's point-of-reference gone? If it is still the human body, with all its egotistical obsessions about what it believes it needs or what "heaven" should be, then if one was to land in another dimension with no compass, vision, or grounding, one would be hopelessly lost. Without the prior establishment of inverted awareness, one would not even know oneself.

He has said: "The only thing that prepares you for death is conviction." By conviction, he does not mean belief in some postulated, happy outcome, as in his warning above, but rather the certain faith in one's essential self as being one with Reality, even though not knowing what the actuality of this means. If the commitment and surrender have been 100%, this quality of aware selfhood is itself a kind of knowledge.

In response to a mature questioner at a lecture who indicated a knowing rapport with his message, Rose infers one of the reasons why he places such an emphasis upon sexual restraint, especially during the critical, culminating phase of the path. Here he also reveals how he too had experienced life prior to the Realization; hinting at the hypersensitivity to the reality of the moment, the feeling of restless gravity, the growing intensity of purpose that has nowhere to go, and the need to somehow remain firm in one's conviction and vigilance while the appearance of the world and even the substance of one's psychological self become increasingly shaky and shabby all around this aware presence of concern:

Q: "When you reach the point where the physical world and time become unreal in a way; when practical life loses its value and doesn't matter – it can become pretty difficult." Rose: "I know. I know that. The only thing I can say is to try to keep yourself chemically balanced, that's all. You can handle it, if you don't become unbalanced chemically." (1985, p. 97).

He is implying that the process of internal preparation operates largely according to a schedule and by an intelligence over which the seeker has no control or even understanding, that the ordeal – however frustrating and bewildering it becomes – is endurable, and that healthy body chemistry is one of the keys to a clear state-of-mind and to insuring one's safe arrival.

Rose assures the seeker that this period of trauma is the necessary doorway to the discovery of Essence:

The observance of the mind with the mind, and with what might seem to be infinite variables for factors and explanations, leads to a resounding disaster for the mind. It is necessary to note here that the disaster which the mind encounters is the threshold of man's final form of existence – his final illumination, from which he looks back and correctly defines all that he previously experienced (Rose, 1979c, p. 57-8).

This testimony also indicates that we cannot have a clear, comprehensive perspective on our own experience of life while still within that life. It is only from having stepped outside that stream of experience that its real nature and meaning can be recognized by the final Observer.

The next three quotes provide some of Rose's most precise descriptions of the workings of the Psychology of the Observer in actual experience. Some redundancy is allowed here because so little lucid information is available in esoteric writings about the precise nature of the inquiry on this highest level of meditation, and this insight is most critical. Although his testimony is autobiographical, he feels that every seeker who goes through this process of work will find the same rungs of Jacob's Ladder being climbed that he did, and the same final point of Realization attained.

This first statement shows the realism of the path he describes: the actual experience of doubt, of abandoning oneself to the effort of self-definition, and of the unpredictable final triangulation:

(You feel) you don't have any answer – nobody knows who they are, and maybe at that point never expects to find out who they are – but by the persistent sticking of that problem into the computer, on that binary system: "What is the relation between pure awareness, which I may be – I seem to be aware – and the pointed observer/awareness?" – you continue to analyze all of this. And all at once, the thing pops. Now, this is the path to Sahaja Samadhi. There's no rhyme or reason to it. But at a given time, this awareness pops and you are one with Oneness. And that's the end of the trip (lecture, 1979).

He next describes more specifically the experience of self-observation taken to its extreme, as one's point-of-reference in awareness struggles with the impossible task of realizing itself:

The person who has reached the Process Observer becomes a very real creature. This is where a man is no longer living [solely] a somatic life. He is watching his own mind. He has risen to the point where he is concerned not so much with the body as he is with consciousness and the workings of the mind. He becomes obsessed with this – this is the center from which he works. But he again discovers that there is another relative

line. He is watching the mind, but he is also aware of awareness. He is aware that there is something behind the mind – something that is seemingly almost indestructible. So he doesn't look with intuition anymore; *he looks simply with direct-mind at awareness itself*. Now, from this contemplation, the dashing back and forth across this upper line (E - F), man arrives at an Absolute realization of himself. He arrives at a point in which his head is on dead-center. There's no place left for it to go. And then, of course, if the experience doesn't kill you, you might be able to do something on a mundane level (Rose, 1985, p. 219)

Lastly, he describes how this process of meditation, of seeing inverting upon seeing, *ad infinitum*, culminates in the cataclysmic disintegration of the mind, and the spiritual nakedness discovered when it dies:

We become aware of the mind as being external to our awareness. "We" are now observing all from a point of undifferentiated awareness. The mind still does not stand still but continues its labor of sorting and studying the processes of the mind. It simultaneously becomes aware of its own potential for awareness. The final throes of the mind are like the intense but hopeless motions of a beheaded chicken, *struggling to be eternally aware of the awareness that it witnesses*. It is for this reason that those who go through the experience of transcending the mind, recognize in it and describe it as being the experience of death. The mind does not die easily, and when the personality is gone, we find that we are still aware. Not only are we aware, but we are infinitely more aware than ever before (Rose, 1979c, p. 33-34).

These statements also provides what little description is possible of the nature of the mental dynamic on the top line (E - F) on Jacob's Ladder. The seeker has become the observer of everything by this point, but is also aware that even this observer is being watched. The question finally becomes: "What watches the watcher – and *who am I???*" Once the twin poles of Observation and Awareness are experienced directly as actualities, not concepts, no specific procedures to follow can be formulated that will causally result in the ascension to what ultimately encompasses both (Point G). One watches and waits in open, maximum tension.

As the esoteric warrior contemplates this voluntary entry in self-destruction, Rose offers this solace...to be recognized and appreciated by the only part of oneself that would remain:

Achieving a union with Essence is the equivalent of losing the mind. Such discoverers (of essence) may return to the world with seeming incoherence. However, be assured of one comfort should such befall you: all who have attained...who have lost their minds, or who are about to lose their minds will recognize you (Rose, 1979c, p. 92)

Repeatedly throughout this teaching, the implication is made that the goal of the spiritual quest is not only not something that is learned or acquired, but not exactly even something "experienced," in the usual dualistic sense of the word in which a person experiences some desirable, conditional state that exists apart from the experiencer who seeks it. Rose insists that one can only BE-COME the final answer. Much has been said about the work involved in this becoming – but what is the reality of Being, or Essence? And what does it mean to die?

To get beyond the dichotomized, polarized mind, one must go with intuition and betweenness into the inner mind, and then behind it. Both Jim Burns and Alan K. testify (see Chapter 18) that the realization of Truth occurs when the question – the polarity of asking and answering – dissolves

due to the absence of the pressure that generates the question, and thus the questioner/answerer. (This state is not to be mistaken for one's ignoring the question in the first place, yet remaining an oblivious, invalid "self," as is much more commonly the case.) **Truth is an experience of totality.**

Rose here attempts to clarify the nature of this final experience and its implications about self-definition, validity, and the meaning of non-relativity:

To me the term Enlightenment refers to the Absolute or total realization you can come to. I don't use the word "soul" to mean something of a gossamer quality that floats around like a ghost, but I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the inner person or capital "S" Self is more real (than our human selves). The universe we enter at death with that Self is far more real than this (world). What we have right now is a big long line of thinking – bouncing around on this thing of relativity, whereas in a direct-mind experience of the Absolute, you only experience oneness; not multiplicity, not shades-of (Rose, 1985, p. 232)

The immanent realization of a non-relative state-of-being cannot be spelled out in detail, no more than one can explain exactly the meaning of the answer to a koan. Still, Rose does provide some insights into the nature of the transition from seeking to finding that one will experience – and the grave price it demands.

He has made the statement: "At a certain point in the process of self-analysis, the head stops and a phenomena occurs: the knowledge of nothing" (Rose, lecture, 1979). The reality of this is admittedly something impossible to understand, or even to conceptualize, as it is a happening outside of the mind. It must be "experienced." This statement also points in the direction that better explains a distinction brought up several times in this paper: how the Albigen System of meditation (as well as Advaita and Zen) differs from most other forms of meditation. Simply put, most forms of meditation are the immersing of oneself in a state of one kind or another; something that is regarded as being "spiritual." This is not without value. However, what Rose and his kind recommend is the backing away from all states – into an as-yet-unknown "non-state" of open, unlimited, contentless awareness.

There can obviously be no quantifiable method or technique within consciousness to bring about the final Revelation from this point (although massive efforts within consciousness are necessary for one to ever get to this point), as this non-state is not something created or cultivated, nor the accumulated result of something else. He refutes the teaching of any "button to push" that pretends to manipulate the mechanism of Grace and make the heavens open up according to our will, saying: "There is no method to a lightning bolt" (or earthquake!).

Rose's affinity with Zen is evidenced in his comments about what triggers this shift out of the relative, into what seems to be the void: "You reach an Absolute realization by looking between thoughts" (Rose, 1985, p. 251). He clarifies this by adding: "You take the mind in thought, and then take the mind in no-thought, then you have an Absolute realization. It is when the mind goes blank through tension" (Rose, 1985, p. 213).

He continues with this theme in addressing the special instance of transmission, which is this tension-energy deliberately directed at the highest possible goal. Yet he again reminds us that the simplicity of this principle should not mislead us into believing Realization can be effected in any mechanical way:

The whole formula is not written, nor is it writable, because each case demands a slightly different formula. There is a personal variable and a propitious, unpredictable moment

needed...and a teacher comes in handy; especially a teacher who is able to create a state of tension, and who is able to see the student's critical moment when Enlightenment is at hand (Rose, 1975, p. 64).

To those fortunate enough to be his immediate students, he is referring to himself.

We keep coming to this word: tension. To have an Absolute realization requires absolute tension, and this preparatory state is achieved by fattening up one's head to the maximum (The Buddha's second step) and then watching it from the vantage point of nothingness (the third). This tension is felt as one is stretched between the poles of life and death, being and non-being, and desire/faith and despair. The rest of the formula also includes the need for detachment from this seeking self; the ability to laugh at one's predicament in the midst of the struggle being a good form of this.

But, as in discussing any principle in this teaching, there is a paradox involved; the complement of which must also be recognized in order for complete comprehension to be possible. The "nothing" is not the final answer, as nihilistic Existentialism or a shallow understanding of Zen would conclude. Rose here refers to what the total experience – the summit of Jacob's Ladder – entails:

There is a certain thing that reacts, or results from the contemplation of thought and no-thought at once; of "holding them in your head." The gut realization comes from contemplating truth and nothingness, like the Zen koan, until your head stops – and then everything becomes apparent to you. Everything and nothing are on both sides of the line. If you know everything and nothing, you become in union with the Absolute (Rose, 1985, p. 250).

Rose has said all this even more concisely, and in doing so, has summed up the entire Psychology of the Observer system of meditation in one sentence: "**When the Observer becomes aware of the small "s" self, within awareness, and realizes it is not this self, something else becomes aware of both**" (lecture, 1979). What finally comprehends even the awareness of consciousness is the Absolute.

This aforementioned state of "nothing" or "no-thought" is not exactly what he means by the mind's stopping (the "no-mind" of Zen, which is the intersecting point with the Unmanifested Mind), although the two are directly related. The state of no-thought is still an extreme state-of-mind and being considered or witnessed by the observing self, which, strictly speaking, is a part of that same mind. No-mind means the non-existence of any finite self, including even this highest point-of-view within relativity (the Process Observer), which is still that of a mental self.

There is a necessary sequence to making this discovery, however. Rose had once remarked: "The intuition of the child is like the surrender of the aged," in relation to the preliminary quality of mind required to apprehend the Truth. He explained, "It's the awareness of one's nothingness – which then leads to everythingness." It is again this theme of one's needing to be able to see life directly without the contaminating influence of ego. He made it a point to emphasize that although these two sides of duality are equal in their actuality (so to speak) and their simultaneous appreciation is necessary in order for one to arrive at the ultimate non-dualistic state-of-being, "You must first experience nothingness, and then everythingness." An ever-familiar theme in mystical literature, he found that one must first enter the death of the self, before the all of the Self can be found.

Rose has made a curious comment in describing what can happen when this occurs: "When you lose your logical mind...if you make the right turn – you find Nirvana." He is indicating that losing the mind – "Nirvana" loosely translates as "extinguish," as of a candle flame (meaning: ego-

self) — is not the only factor in this transformation. What might this “right turn” be? The wrong turns that lead to insanity or more ethereal levels of mental delusion are obvious and documented well enough. The right turn can only be an about-face: the observer turning around to stare with direct-mind into the ultimate source of one’s own I-ness. This is the ray of awareness that leads back into the Self.

This alludes to another qualification for this experience; one that has been touched upon in earlier sections. It is this principle of the vector, the commitment, of fattening up one’s head. Rose has referred to “The Mountain Experience” as being the witnessing of the outer world as a projected illusion and oneself as that witness. This is near the top of the Ladder, but is still an incomplete experience. What is lacking is that one does not yet realize oneself to be the totality, but is still identified as an individual center of awareness tied to a lamenting human mind. The death of all that was known is experienced, but one’s spiritual being has not been “readied” enough to enable one to appreciate the final realization of the Self, which contains both “maya” and the seeing of this maya. One is stuck in a tragic Twilight Zone dimension: dead to all meaning in a world that no longer exists, yet not having found Life. One’s remaining days are haunted, until the final key for release can be found.

All this can come about because some death experience may have been precipitated prematurely or by accident without there having been a sufficient vector built up in the search, resulting in the seeker’s not having enough “being” developed to carry one through to the final experience. This is what can happen should the ego-self be dissolved by drugs, some unwise meditation or kundalini-raising practice, or an unexpected trauma for which the seeker has not been prepared by years of deliberate work on the self.

It is the steadfast observation of the thinking and mental processes that dissolves the egos therein by exposing them; the spiritual desire ego being the last one to end. Only then can one have isolated that sole particle of “I am-ness” that can survive the death of the mind. The guidance of The Tibetan Book Of The Dead was provided likewise for this purpose of readying those about to make the final journey, so they would not become trapped in any other unreal mental realms, but return all the way home.

Occasional reference has been made to a “doorway” between the relative, material world and the non-finite, non-localized world of Spirit. The discussion on meditation explored the need to perceive all dimensions of mind from beyond them...until seeing a break in the fabric of thought. The mind is then STOPPED and does not perceive or project. Rose teaches that Enlightenment is found at this gap between thought and no-thought, and that some propitious shock will propel one through this gap, when it is time.

He has gone so far as to provide a most intriguing answer to the age-old question of where this gap specifically is: “Man lives in the space between the synapses. The synapses are the contact points between mind and body” (Rose, 1982, p. 138). By “man,” he means the real or inner self; the eternal “I AM.” By “mind,” he is referring to this aware Spirit, not the somatic mind. The gap of the synapses over which our vital energy passes in its processing of consciousness is where the two realms touch, and where Mind watches mind. It is a model of the ultimate polarity in the cosmic koan between being and non-being; the tension of which keeps the whole universe in place. It could even be regarded as the “eye of the needle,” the “straight and narrow way” to which Christ referred, requiring the utmost in betweenness and intuition to navigate through it.

Rose explains the essential issue this way:

The task of the seeker of eternity is to die while living; to know of death so that the seeker will know of all the secrets of life. To effect this enormous task, the seeker must produce an enormous amount of energy. And to create that energy, the polar mechanism must have a large gap...a gap as large as death itself (Rose, 1975, p. 65).

Something should also be mentioned about the dotted line (F - B) on the right side of Jacob's Ladder, which Rose calls the Invisible Current (Rose, 1979, p. 42). In simplistic, theological terms (which he might not endorse!): As we look for God, we would have no hope for attaining the top of the Ladder where He resides, unless "God" was looking for us too. This is similar, perhaps, to the theme in Michelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel, in which Man is reaching out to God, and God is reaching right back.

Rose suggests this Invisible Current is the silent, still voice of the true Self, alerting the actor in the dream to the quest that must be made to find oneself. In fact, its increasingly recurrent refrain of "Why?" has been the primary koan intended to raise one's point-of-reference from the stage play of life to the comprehending awareness of life. The very question is the memory from that ultimate reconciliatory point, wafting into the mind of the finite man. This anterior Self may well also set up the entire path the tiny person has to tread, once the firm commitment has been made. Seekers might not be able to find their way through the maze of the unknown without this guidance. He has also said this about the occurrence of the final experience: "If it's supposed to happen to you—it will happen at a safe time...it is arranged for you..." (lecture, 1986).

He refers to the happening of his own experience and his conviction about how the anonymous master forces on the other side of the veil engineered his awakening:

I did not create my experience. As I've said, all spiritual experiences are different because there are certain mechanical things necessary (to enable it to happen). The experience itself may be a projection; a tremendous, vast mental projection. But it gets the message across to you, that beyond a shadow of a doubt, THIS IS WHAT REALITY IS. And without that help, I don't think we could do it. Now — where do we go further? How do you identify that? I don't intend to identify it. But I believe this: that there are levels of intelligence that help other levels of intelligence. (lecture, 1986).

Rose elaborates further upon this influence of Grace:

By himself, man can do nothing. Unless. Unless man can, through some faculty for feeling, pick up a downward emanation from man's real Self, or from God, or the Absolute (F - B), he would not be inspired to resist the massive onslaught of negativity and hopelessness which he experiences on the plane of life (A - B). (Rose, 1979c, p. 42).

"The Voice" that Rose was describing in his autobiographical poem of the same name was a reference to this Invisible Current. In this he reveals the sense of destiny he feels had led him throughout his life of search: "There is something calling me. I have heard its changeless voice often in my life... And now if I hear it again, I shall follow it with all my soul...For that voice is greater than me." (Rose, 1982, p. 75)

In this sense, what in a religious context might be called "loving God" or "being in the presence of God," can thus be understood to mean one's being in touch with the Invisible Current or being one with it, on each step up the ladder; the ego-self being in tune with the deeper Self, and loving its manifestation as the path or the work.

Rose's repeated comments about intuition being the result of refined emotional thinking have more meaning now, and here blend with what could be regarded as a more mature form of devotional mysticism. With a poetic touch that taps into the nostalgic mood, which he considers the homing instinct of the soul, he states: "*The yearning brings you.*" Recognizing the call of that dotted line, and following it, is one's prayer for the answer.