

Chapter 17

Revelation

All the information presented up to this point about the recommended manner of search would be incomplete without some exposition on the moon towards which this finger points. Yet, unlike in a standard research paper, the results of the “experiment in philosophy” described herein cannot be presented as proven—with words and figures. As has been stated, Rose is offering the most thorough and direct road map he knew how to create, but it is up to each individual to seek according to its guidance and find for oneself whatever form of validation may await at the end of the road.

It has also been admitted that, as in most systems of psychology and/or esotericism, much of the teaching cannot help but be a reflection of the teacher: in this case, Rose’s own nature, his path, his Realization, and his way of conveying this “message in a bottle” to whomever may be interested in making the same trip. He adds this qualification: “I have only an account of a trip or adventure and of my conceptions of that trip. That which I really know, I have been unable to express with an ever-relative language” (personal correspondence, 1990). He does not apologize for this, but can only hope his comments will be taken into consideration by the seeker who is attempting to define a personal process of inquiry.

One of the central themes running throughout Rose’s teaching is that spirituality must be an experience of discovery, not creation from belief. He himself did not know what he would find at the end of his search—or if he would find anything at all. That what he found was not at all the humanized, glorious rapture of metaphysical and theological speculation provided extra validation that the answer that came upon him was objectively real, and not the prefabricated projection of desperate or romanticized desire. In fact, he states his not having known much about the occurrence of actual spiritual realization until after his own “experience” happened, when he read accounts of similar experiences in Bucke’s *Cosmic Consciousness*, and found that others throughout history had arrived at the same conclusion.

Thus, under the circumstances, in lieu of conventional proof of this map’s authenticity, this section will present some of Rose’s own testimony of his findings; the value of which as inferential validation is left to the individual’s judgment.

Before beginning, it is best to examine one significant, although rarely discussed, sequence of information that Rose discovered only as he went along. It concerns the very nature of spiritual realization itself.

In starting out on the path, seekers generally have an assumption about what "finding God" or "finding the Truth" will be like, even if the imagining is humbly not too specific. Terms are encountered in mystical literature such as: salvation, satori, samadhi, Cosmic Consciousness, nirvana, and Enlightenment. Frequently, they are casually assumed by student and scholar alike to be identical in meaning; the differences in terminology ascribed simply to cultural variations. For, after all, truth is truth, is it not?

On the contrary, although each category of experience exists in all religious traditions, however varying the contextual references to them may be, Rose states these terms are actually different levels of spiritual experience and are not to be used interchangeably. Truth is indeed truth, but what varies is the individual's capacity to appreciate or apprehend it. To explain this another way: Brahman (Reality) already, eternally *is* and is always completely realized outside of maya (the projected illusion). However, how much the Atman (or individual ray of awareness emanating from this source) finds of its root-beingness through or behind "our" minds — and the quality of perception and level of perspective on existence corresponding to this — is what varies, and the diligent self-inquiry required for its discovery is the work of ascending Jacob's Ladder.

From all this it can be seen that "liberation," as a goal, is a generic term. Its exact meaning and extent depends upon who one believes is being liberated and from what. Is one being liberated from physical and/or psychological suffering? From the attachment to earthly experiences? From death? From rebirth? From the belief in one's existence? The distinctions between these different conceptions of liberation can be illustrated by the varying forms taken by reported after-death experiences and, by some parallel, psychedelic drug experiences. Although there is invariably disassociation from the body — especially when the body is dead, the definition of the self going through the experience and the nature of the dimension witnessed will diverge according to one's level of spiritual maturity. Many who cross over will still be identified with a "spiritualized" or astral body operating in some relative, earthlike environment; some with a disembodied, yet distinct, human personality that encounters other individual beings; some with an impersonal, inquiring mind that engages in a process of evaluating ideas and their relationships; and some finally find themselves to be only a centerless observer — of perhaps nothing. Liberation will thus be related to how finite or diffused one takes oneself to be as a self, and the coarseness or subtleness of the dimension from which one wishes to be freed. One's contentment will be a function of these factors. There is no "one," in fact, to be liberated. Real liberation is from the mistaken conviction of orphaned personal existence within relativity.

So these six major designations refer to different levels of discovery along the path. The first four can be regarded as signposts that one is heading in the right direction, but none of them should be regarded by the naive seeker as the final answer; the top rung of the ladder. Rose asserts that only what is called Enlightenment or Absolute Realization is the maximum experience, beyond all duality of knower and known.

He has talked about the experience of salvation, common to all the religions of the world, and considered by the believers therein to be the goal of the spiritual life. Yet, Rose claims: "Finding the Truth is different from being saved." He elaborates, hinting at the greater answer that beckons:

Know thou of salvation? Of Saviours and Adversaries? From what art thou saved?
From death? Then know that all men die, even saviours. For it is only by dying that
one knows of life. For life has no value until it is lost. (Rose, 1975, p. 68).

While the exaltation and resultant moral conviction the person feels in this experience is certainly not being disparaged, he is saying that this is only one major step along the path and not its

intended culmination, being instead somewhat analogous to the graduation to the Emotional Level of Gurdjieff's Fourth Way teaching: to love and surrender to something more real than one's flimsy ego. Rather than finding the truth, being "saved" could be better understood to mean one's finding the path to the truth, leading out of one's current state of confusion or suffering, rather than remaining in full identification with it, unto death. "Salvation" could be compared to the joy and security Dorothy felt when encountering the Yellow Brick Road on her search for the Wizard of Oz. A sure way to the goal was found, but her journey was far from over. The equivalent for Fourth Way seekers would be the discovery of the self as the Process Observer, and thus being "saved" from continuing to identify with what dies, which is the body and much of the body-mind. Some religious people also conceive of salvation to mean the soul's being saved from oblivion or hell after death and instead reunited with God after a life of faith. Rose might say this is getting closer to the truth, but would add: do not just believe it, as such salvation is not automatic – act on that faith to prove it, otherwise it is not genuine faith.

This is a simpler form of the previously described trap in esotericism – Advaita Vedanta especially – of accepting on principle, conceptually, that one's essence is rooted in Reality, or that one *is* this Reality now, then having this conviction quietly cross over the line into an assurance that mimics attainment, although without one's having "earned" it through direct experience. Whether one "believes in Jesus (God, the Guru, the Wizard, etc.," or "believes in the Self," one is positing an absolute value in imagination and resting in that simulation while one's point-of-reference of identity is still fixated within the ego-mind, instead of retroversing the projected ray passing through this finite self until realizing the object (so to speak) of that belief through unity with it.

One may feel justifiable security in the philosophical conviction that all experience is mental and takes place within a greater dimension of impersonal, spiritual awareness; that nameless reality which exists forever outside of time and beyond location, abiding wholly apart from the dream-spell of projected consciousness. However, experientially the critical shift in one's reference point must come about in which one is no longer strictly a finite mental being invested in relativity (and spiritual imaginings), but has attained the pointed **realization** of this awareness of the mind, as awareness inverts upon awareness, persistently, relentlessly...until the breakthrough. Then the mind is knowingly transcended, as knowingness finally comes to know itself.

Rose has described satori as the "eureka" experience. It is a term originally used in Zen, but the type of elation referred to can result from disciplines in any form of mental pursuit carried through to completion or exhaustion. It is specifically designated as a mental experience, as distinguished from a spiritual experience. It is the result of the mind's intensely working to solve a koan or perplexing issue of some sort, such as an unintelligible problem in algebra. At some point in the study, the mind reaches a climactic burst of holistic insight in which the issue is suddenly seen clearly for the mass gestalt that it is. The mind ascends to the apex of the triangle of the domain being investigated. There is an exhilaration of transcendence as one breaks free of the problem being considered. There can be a "philosophical satori" also in which the dedicated student of spirituality experiences a terminal explosion of comprehension and the true relation of factors in the cosmic paradigm being contemplated is understood. However, the realization is still on a mental level or within the mental sphere and does not experientially determine the identity or essence of the anterior Self in whose mind (which one identifies as oneself) is contained the insight. In a few quotes, Rose has possibly used the term satori inadvertently to mean Enlightenment. Still, there could be said to be a parallel in principle between the satori in the mind resulting in the discovery of the Process Observer, and the "satori" (as it were) outside the mind dimension of the realization of Essence.

Samadhi is a yogic term meaning a one-pointedness of mind in which the meditator becomes one with the object of meditation, whether it be a physical object, a symbol of devotion, a mental image, or an abstract principle. It is a temporary experience brought about through deliberate discipline in concentration and transmutation of energy. Psychic powers may develop concurrently. Although this kind of samadhi (as distinguished from two higher forms to be discussed shortly) is the result of years of intense inner work, it is usually not a spontaneous happening that claims one during the course of one's life of search for truth, as is the next category, but is specifically sought for, the faculty cultivated, and generally experienced in a formal meditation practice. While satori could be conceived of as the utmost state of "external" comprehension and samadhi the extreme end-point of inward contemplation, the two are related in that they involve a climax of mental tension (attention) resulting in a condition of unity and freedom from tension, or rather the holding of tension in suspension, as all movement in duality is transcended. Samadhi is an indication of mental mastery and can be the doorway to many possible discoveries of a paranormal nature. However, as is satori, it is still an individualized experience within the relative mind – possibly the mind's highest experience – and not the permanent residing in That in which the mind resides.

Cosmic Consciousness is usually considered the ultimate spiritual revelation in most metaphysical teachings. This is the experiencing of the universe as an undivided unity, of its being alive and conscious, of its being perfect and eternal, its every particle floating in a sea of Love. Celestial lights, colors, sounds, and overwhelming beauty are witnessed. It is an experience of mystical bliss and peace. One feels at home at last; secure in God's Grace. Yet, Rose asserts that even this – as glorious as it is – is still a relative experience, and not the final answer. There is still the duality of an experiencer and the experience, of a seeker and the God or Paradise that is found. The experience has a *content*, and its content is dualistically regarded as ultimately pleasurable and good. Yet, one mistakenly takes oneself to be this experience, and does not realize that this rapturous consciousness is occurring within a field of ever-present awareness as its backdrop, and that the Self actually is this awareness. This aware beingness is what contains all this duality, and it is One. The title of Merrell-Wolff's book, *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, points to it.

For years, I too had assumed that all these various terms for the goal-state of the spiritual quest encountered in esoteric texts were referring to the same thing. When I first heard Rose distinguish between them like this, and largely dismiss even Cosmic Consciousness as a very high level illusion (although the True illusion), I was amazed, and wondered about the ultimate vantage point which he would have had to attain in order to be able to make such a bold claim. In his teaching, he seemed to be eagerly trying to convey a very specific short-cut to Reality, and steering naive seekers away from any number of tempting traps and plateaus which may seduce the unwary, keeping them from reaching the final Realization.

I had asked him what the point would then be of attaining this state of ecstasy, perfection, etc., if even this too was maya. For the sake of pure theory I asked if it was possible to aim directly for Awakeness, apart from all projection. His reply gives a good sense of how a genuinely awake mind sees the world of manifestation, and in this makes the seeker more humble: "Cosmic Consciousness cannot be skipped. We can look upon our adolescence as unnecessary or empty, but it cannot be skipped either" (personal correspondence, 1978). We must first see and experience the truth about the world of appearance, in true consciousness, before being able to fully invert upon ourselves and discover the seer and source of the All. This is the macrocosmic parallel to his earlier explanation of why the work on oneself to become a truthful – if fictitious – human being is an essential phase of the larger search for the Self.

Mention was made in a previous section about Ramana Maharshi's metaphors for describing the difference between these two highest levels of spiritual realization. Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi (Cosmic Consciousness) was likened to a bucket that is lowered into a well on a rope to get some water, and which can be pulled back up again. The purified mind taps into another dimension for a temporary visit, but retains its separate identity. Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi (Enlightenment) was likened to a river blending into the sea and its water becoming one with it, never to come out again. The individual self is forever dissolved. One has become the ocean. Yet—borrowing from another traditional metaphor, that of the destiny of mankind being likened to rain which falls to the ground, eventually forming rivulets and streams, all inevitably converging into one mighty river that finally merges back into the sea—Rose attests that each drop paradoxically remains eternally aware of its “dropness,” even after having been reabsorbed into that whole, living, indivisible ocean.

Rose offers a further explanation—containing an astounding image—of this paradox regarding individuality as the essence of the seeker, after the (seemingly) valiant struggle, enters into the final Realization:

...It's like a drop of water in the ocean trying to break loose and vote. He might be there and he's conscious, but he is one — *the ocean is one big drop*. This is the paradox. When you get there, too, possibly, you might have more separateness than what you feel. You'll be separate. But you'll be one, because you're still observing. The drop of water is still observing the surrounding ocean. But its boundaries might not be the same (lecture, 1979).

Rose has defined two other critical distinctions between these forms of samadhi that need to be understood in assessing the nature of a spiritual experience. In the former (Kevala), the mind is alive, and is what has the experience. In the latter (Sahaja), the mind is dead, and Beingness remains to realize itself. In the former, the world is seen as being of Light. In the latter, the world is resolved back into the Self. As a perhaps indelicate analogy, if Cosmic Consciousness can be likened to an orgasm of the Self, Enlightenment is an out-of-body (out-of-universe) experience.

Based on some of Rose's comments, the Buddhist term, nirvana, seems to be similar in meaning to the “nothingness” aspect of Enlightenment (supported by Merrell-Wolff's stating that “the consciousness of the absence of objects is nirvana” [1973a, p. 104]), which is simultaneous with, or equivalent to “everythingness” (samsara). The entry into or appreciation of both at once is the total experience. This transitional appreciation is from that placeless pivoting point called no-mind.

The first four levels of experiences described are prior to Enlightenment; not beyond it. One reason why Rose points this out is because he feels it is important to prepare seekers for the fact that not all spiritual experiences are the same, nor are they all pleasant and blissful, even though some of them are. He wants to map out the way-stations on the final stretch of the path that are seldom accurately referenced, and in providing this greater perspective, allude to the “common ground” on which all relative experiences rest. Also, keeping in mind the Law of Progression and the reality of successive plateaus on the path, he does not want a seeker of greater capacity to stop short of the goal in the mistaken assumption that one has arrived at ultimate IS-NESS, while actually still being identified with some incomplete emotional or mental satisfaction that is *before one's vision*. If the seeker's real commitment is to finding the final Truth—and not a subordinate state of security, understanding, peace, or joy—and has sufficient self-honesty and intuition, one will always sense that there is more to discover, in total regression and expansion of self (or diminution, depending upon which side of the paradox one is seeing from), until one's very being has become one with Beingness, and there is no longer any division or differentiation of any kind.

In the following extended – and somewhat autobiographical – passage, Rose describes how the religious rapture of even the sincere seeker is still a condition of reaction bound within relative consciousness, and not equivalent to complete liberation. Such a “high” does not fundamentally change the one who is having the experience, as it remains a thing apart from the baseline state-of-being which one wishes to escape...although it would give a foretaste of a truer place. Recalling the aforementioned common ground of ultimate subjectivity as being the real goal of the spiritual quest (in the sense of the ultimate “I am,” although at the apex of non-duality this would be supreme objectivity just as well), he invokes the conclusive triangulation on Jacob’s Ladder in pointing to the necessary shift in attention that leads one out of the farthest reaches of duality:

The mystic is both blessed and pitied. The fact that the mystic must return from joy to suffering again indicates that he is lacking in a sound appreciation of his state of mind (and being) at both times or experiences. He does not have the final answer. If he has really found God, he should be happy forever...if finding God brings to people the feeling of divine acceptance.

The mystic *is* blessed, however. He should not be condemned even though – to all human standards – he is psychotic. He is a pioneer and a heroic casualty. He has dared to stand alone against nature. He has torn from his being the egotistical drives that beget children and enslave mates. He has struggled against the instincts of gregariousness and has ignored the customs and mores of his age. He has compounded his irritations, and so has stimulated his computer. He has gambled everything with the expectation of “nothing for certain,” but prefers gambling to the game of desire and reward. He has fasted, sublimated, and meditated to sharpen his intuition. He should be able, therefore, to sense the sensible when it is advanced to him.

Thus, if we can catch the mystic at the moment of his exaltation, he may be disillusioned enough to be thrown off his pleasant tangent – and he may be brought to the door of the Absolute (Rose, 1978, p. 222).

If one common theme can be found in all of his assessments of the different levels of spiritual experience, as well as the very structure of the entire path he has laid out, it is that the final answer lies in the direction of the ultimate, subjective source of awareness, and not out anywhere in the projection of the cosmos that is witnessed by this awareness. He is pointing to the state-of-being that is One, not two, and which contains all worlds and experiences. This understanding is best reflected in the last line of his poem, *The Mirror*: “I have had enough of this adventure into endless possibilities of myself...” (Rose, 1982, p. 95). This line conveys the image of a wise and weary old soul who remembers his Divinity after growing tired of playing the games of Lila, and is ready to re-enter death; ending the show.

To give this entire report a feeling of authenticity, of fundamental validity, it is important to get as clear a sense as possible of the Realization Rose had experienced, upon which the teaching is based. An experience as profoundly personal (yet impersonal) as this could only be adequately communicated in his own words. While this report has not been intended to be an anthology of quotations, it is not only fitting but necessary to present, as the anchor of this teaching, a glimpse of the final answer which he found.

Following is an account of the spontaneous experience of Enlightenment which happened to Rose when he was 30 years of age (Rose, 1978, p. 171, 224-7; 1985, p. 84). I refer to it only with

trepidation, awe, and some embarrassment, in the face of what it means. Its actuality and magnitude are unimaginable. But, as the Albigen System developed out of his discovery and how he came to find it, some approximate insight into the Realization is necessary, however inadequate the words and concepts used to describe it must always be.

These are the moments that preceded the event, in his own words:

...I was living in a glass house. Now and then, emotion would settle on me like a stifling fog, and it would interrupt my meditations or studies. Irritation set in and the respites from it were brief periods of mystical peace or joy. I found yoga to be a wonderful sedative. I thought at the time that I was dialing heaven. Years went by, and with the years, my conceit began to shred away. ...I decided I had been kidding myself. My intense hunger for Truth was waning. I was not sure of anything except that which I could see in the mirror, and that image was not faring too well at the hands of time. ...I had reached a sort of culmination of physical desire and spiritual frustration. ...I was playing the drama of life with one face, and was looking eagerly to heaven with the other. ...Then came *the accident...* I came apart at the seams. Very quickly. It was almost as though a chemical catalyst had been dropped into my mind. ...I did not do anything rash. I had no reason to. I had no reason to do anything. While the ego is being melted, there is no joy. Sorrow permeated my whole being...sorrow for myself and for humanity. The distress became almost unbearable, and it came upon me from the field of my mind, not from emotion. Emotion may have triggered it. Or a brick in the pavement may have caused it... However, once the catalyst started the change of mind, absolutely nothing mattered. I had no attachments beyond myself...*once I became...more deeply.*

In my opinion, this last phrase is the most meaningful line in the entire teaching.

He goes on to explain what happened as the transformation continued:

I remember the early hours of anguish that preceded the great spiritual revelation... ...The experience described had all the symptoms of sorrow and despair, which changed as I progressed in the experience. The whole scene...was so dismal and so filled with despair that I wrestled with my sanity, or that which we call sanity... Only when my cherished sanity seemed to evaporate did I realize that this vision was only real as regards the perspective of the minds of men. In relation to the Absolute (which is real Reality), the whole thing was a mental tableau. It was a tableau of physical existence as opposed to ultimate Essence. The tableau is very much alive until we realize that it is mental. When we are about to step out of the mental into pure essence, we still have with us the memories of our evanescent intelligence [the Mountain Experience]... ...The initial attachment for myself became the prime source of my sorrow. I met myself face-to-face, and the division shocked me. Everything upon which I looked had a different meaning and aspect from previous comprehension, and was impossible to convey in language. Things in their essence are tangible only to mind-essence, and not tangible to the mind of everyday cognition. Somewhere in the being of man there is an eye that must open... I realized that I was both humanity and my individual self, and that I was everything. And in an instant, I realized that humanity didn't exist and that I didn't exist. But that I did exist in nothingness and everythingness, infinitely...

Rose represents the archetype of the warrior poet; the perfect blending of the Yin and Yang of human nature. He had written various pieces of mystical poetry prior to his experience, intuiting the direction to Truth, as well as subsequent to it, testifying to the reality he found. He has explained that he used an emotional medium, tapping into a mood of nostalgia, to describe something which ultimately was without emotion — that which gave way to the experience of Nothingness, and then Allness. He has said that towards the end of one's path, when there is no longer any willful methodology to practice or perhaps even any sense of direction left to take one further and no personal guru is available as a catalyst, something that can help push one over the edge of the finite at such a precarious moment is the reading of works of mystical inspiration, such as *The Three Books of the Absolute* (Rose, 1978, p. 229-236; 1988, p. 201-209).

What follows is a compilation of excerpts from various such writings, which collectively communicate a feeling, a conviction of another state-of-being, a view of existence from a vantage point not of this world. While no pile of words can ever replicate the realization of Essence, these words do convey a sense of what it means *to become...*

From *The Books of the Relative*:

Thou and the Lord are one. He who is alive when the remainder are dead [egos and relative values] — he is one with the Lord... I am the beginning and the end. I am the bowman, the arrow, and the victim. I am the Way. I am the Path. I am the Ladder. And the numbers are so written that they can only be seen from above, when the feet are upon them. For that which climbs is always upon a ladder. I speak and thou hearest Me not. I am the Truth. I am the Love. And as I promised, I and thou are one. So that truly thou must be honest to thyself, and love thyself for My sake... For we are one. Long have I been divided against myself, but now thou hast found me. Let there be no question or answer... I am the voice of silence. I am the joy and the sorrow. I am the beginning and the end. Be still and know that I am the discernment. (Rose, 1982, p. 84-86).

From *The Mirror*:

For God now breaks into many parts, observers watching observers, and observers of observers of observers, but which of these billions is really here now...which of these particles, among God's infinite number of particles, is watching God??? Is he alive to all who watch death and life, is he alive to God...who rejoices in seeing God particularized? Or is he alive who is not among the myriad observers, the myriad eyes that sleep or remain less asleep? Is he alive who hears through millions of ears, of greater or lesser dependability, or is he alive...that turns his back on madness, on rejoicing and despair, on pleasure and pain, on Gods and God-Particles, and who looks on nothingness with apathy and indifference, who laughs at the thunderings of Hell and the shrill insanity of Heaven, who feels with feelingness, as only God can feel... But who turns once more back to his fellow man saying I have become a mirror, look beyond my beauty, look beyond my ugliness, look beyond my wordlessness, my inarticulateness, my fractured mentality, for I have been back there freezing and exploding, burning and drowning — I have been the insanity of those observing, I have lost all my particles except that which is a mirror, which is nothing of me, but which gathers other particles which are inarticulate, And which identify with other infinite articulations of madness. I am that which gathers other particles, saying, let us be

mirrors. I am not a mirror of moaning and misery, I am not a mirror of praying and pleading, I am a mirror of the process called seeming, I mirror the seeming...watching the watching of seeming and dreaming. The puppets of the Absolute have broken their strings, have formed agreements to dream dreams, have agreed to pretend to create other puppets, and have agreed upon madness together, until madness has become to them as reality, while unconsciously they hunger for the comfort of the guiding hands of their puppeteer. I am a mirror that madness looks upon, and sees a hope surmounting foolishness, I am a mirror that reflects no madness and seeing nothing but a seeming of madness. I am a mirror that looks not to reflect love for I perceive no love but a seeming of love, and I see no justice, divine or human, but a seeming of justice. I am a mirror that was not made and remade to reflect only seeming...I am a mirror also of myself, watching myself, watching myself, watching myself ad infinitum. I am a mirror alive and aware, aware of being aware of being aware of being aware...ad infinitum...Untimed and unspecialized, dreamless forever, not dreaming of life or dreaming of death, not dreaming of Gods or demigods. I am a mirror with my back to humanity, vainly lighting a direction, for puppets to pick up threads and contact, strings to the Absolute. I am a mirror facing the Absolute, there is nothing to face, until we turn our backs upon the void...upon projections...upon particularization, upon seeming...until we realize we are not turning away from a void or from confusion or meaninglessness, until we realize that we do not realize...except that the Absolute has a mirror which it turns upon itself, saying I have had enough of my adventure, into endless possibilities of myself... (Rose, 1982, p. 92-95).

From *The Book of Omen*:

Man has sinned against Truth and has closed his eye to his lord, and by greedily trying to serve himself, serves no longer the Self. Woe, woe to the prophet. For the eye that sees the void swells into it, and the ear that hears a cosmos stilled by sacrilege is an ear tortured for all days, and the mind that grasps the collapse of all things is a mind made of nothing, sensing nothing. For space is upon us and all about us, and we are space and therefore nothing is upon us. Everywhere is nothing and we are nothing, and the memory of that which was screams at the void. But there is no echo... O Mind that peopled the spaces with thy thoughts, where are thy children? Gone is the question and the answer, gone is the hate and love, joy and sorrow. Gone is being and non-being, gone is the one and its many. All that remains is All. Woe to the probers of mind, to the dissectors of gods, to the analysts of gentle fable, for now all that remains is All (Rose, 1982, p. 81).

From *Yesterday I Went Insane*:

Yesterday I went insane, and dwelt, as Nothing dwells in space; Normal now, my views regain, but wonder, which – the truer place (Rose, 1982, p. 18).

From *Between*:

Between the art of love and hate, between the doubts between hope and despair, between the minutes we create, are seconds dead, and spaces vast and bare (Rose, 1982, p. 113).

From 1968:

Ah yes, I know that nothing is...that somewhere backstage a demon-god projects whiteness on a black screen that seems to live...and I complain, not that He has smiled upon the void, but that Maya bears life unto his smile, and that which *IS* will ever love that which seems (Rose, 1982, p. 78).

From *The Dawn Breaks*:

Nothing is happening. Nothing is done. The eye and urge are beauty and life, the owner is disenfranchised. The holder lets go of his grasp and everything becomes his domain. God is in his thought, and his thought lives only in his God. Nothing is judged. Nothing is known. Nothing is meaningful. Everything is perfect (Rose, 1982, p. 112).

From *Friendship*:

I passed through a deep crevice at twilight...before the backdrop of eternity...And I had a friend...Both of us had been to this same place, to the twilight in the narrow crevice, and because of this place, we are eternal (Rose, 1982, p. 110).

From *Transition*:

...And find at last that I am safe from beguiling light, and find voracious Truth deep in the infinity of Darkness and Eternity...deep in myself (Rose, 1982, p. 61).

From *The Three Books of the Absolute*:

Out of the valley of the river came a wanderer. Peace was in his eye and his soul was wrapped in Nirvana. Peace to the wanderer. O Eternal Essence, I was that Wanderer. I it was who left the gardens of tranquility that I might labor for Truth... My eyes are extinguished although I see the earth beneath me. And my ears are destroyed and my mouth speaks no words for my feet carry me through a realm that needs no language. And my mind is silent and humble in its dismay, and all within that House there is not one thought. And within that House is heard the painful tolling of a tiny silver bell, and within that dome is felt the surge of mighty roaring tides that will not be stopped. For the keeper of the House is gone, and all that remains testifies that he never was. Exploding thunder shakes its walls, and heaven and hell are within its region. For All is within that House, swelling it to burst its comprehension. All joy is here, and all of joy is pain, torturing the House that cannot contain it. All of joy is tears, and the world will not contain the reaving sorrow of this House. All this House is fire, straining to burst forth until these walls stand no longer. O lamentation of lamentations, has thy agony no tongue? O sorrower in the spaces of desolation, who shall hear thy anguish, and unless it be heard, how shall the pain be stopped? I, O Eternal Essence, beseech Thee—where within Thee have I dissolved myself? Where are prisoned those who follow love? Where have I left my I-ness, and now having left it, who is it that cries out to Thee? Where is the dirge of sorrow that is all that remains of me? Who feels this pain that burns and consumes, yet is felt not by I-who-am-no-more? Who is it that looks from the windows of my mansion like a strange prowler? Who is it that hears and hears not, that yearns for life and lives not, that seeks out death and dies not...? O Ever-Allness, what is Thy pleasure in my sorrow? Thou hast damned me to

thoughtlessness, and yet I cannot leave off thinking, and still my thoughts are not words. Thou hast robbed me of my soul and mind, and my body laments for all ages, for my body dies not nor yet walks among men. Thou hast delivered me from my Ego, and what is there that remains? O Ever-Allness, forever insensate, pitiless to entreaty, speechless to my prayers – weep Thou with me, for I am of Thee...and all that remains of me is Thee. What is the magnitude of Thy nothingness! O what are the limits of Thy plenitude!...What is the thunder of Thy silence!...How quiet are thy cataclysms! Thus shall I sing the praises of myself. Peace to the wanderer!

...Who shall know of love and godliness, of peace and serenity, if knowledge is not?... Where, where is where...? Why, why is why? Where O wise among wise, is When...? In what drifting sandheaps are its footprints...? ...Who, who is who...? Can the sage, more the fool, say that which is being...and among beings, who are what? Is the spark an entity, or is it merely part of flame, and is flame only illusory heat...or does it live? Is not man a question asking questions, frustrated by the unanswered, laboring to answer himself...and creating a mountain of questions in the answer...yet who shall know? Who shall know the circle that has no radius, and who shall know the point that is a line of infinity...? Where is maya...? If all is maya, who, knowing, sees this illusion? Is not his knowing also maya...? In what pitiful hells are the wise...In what blackest abysses are the oblivious ignorant...? ...O wise and foolish, look about you in your joys. Where are the joys of yesterday...and being gone, did they ever live? Did you enjoy, or was it another's lips that drained thy cup?... Where are the years drowned in the ocean of the Unknowing? Think ye on the folly of light. Does it not perish when the eyes are closed? But the power over us by light is feared by man. He sleeps and dreams of darkness, and awakens, screaming into it... Relax ye and die and live the darkness, and enter the impassive pool of the Unknowing... What is time, O mind...? Is it the number of steps in a day, the number of thoughts in a step...? Then of the thoughts in a day, how many years of days would it take to know all that is known, and then how long – to know the magnitude of the Unknowing...? ...Mourn ye for the hour when the cloud of the Unknowing passes and the falseness of light dazzles the eye. For the light is a liar unto the Light, and the light is the darkness of the mind. Yet who shall know...? I is dead. Death is dead and life has no living...All that remains is All. I of the cloudier corpus is slain. It is slain that the "I" of the mind might live. "I" of the mind is slain, for the "I" of the spirit to live. "I" of the spirit is slain that the spirit may come into its glory. "I" of the spirit shrinks from the vanity of life. Space is upon it. Space towers above it, silently mocking its absence, and the spirit takes its leave like a thought...like the vapors and like the solitary sound that is heard not... Eternity wanders through infinity like a blind minnow in an empty ocean whose bounds are limitless...Yet who can see its boundlessness? Eternity probes itself like a blind idiot for it knows not its immensity, and it roars and rages in its madness because it cannot find its edges. Yet who can hear its roaring...? ...Eternity convulses in its pralaya, seeking for definition. Death agonizes silently for motion...And all that remains is All. O who shall hear of this anguish, for all that remains is All.

O Dream of Dreams, tell me, where is the dreamer? O Dreamer, speak unto me – in which of these dreams wilt thou be found? O dreamer, speak unto me, art thou the dreamer in the Dream, or the dreamer of the Dream? ...O Dreamer, answer me – how many people are dreaming thy dream? ...Reply unto me who walketh in wakefulness,

knowing not if wakefulness be but an illusion of wakefulness, or if sleep be the door of the Absolute...or if sleep be the dreamer awake... Speak unto me not in the ringing of my ears that know not if such stridency be the dawning of new perception—or the damnation of all that was real. O world, where are thou, that but a second past, clung to my feet? Where in space am I caught? O love, where are thy children—the friends of my youth? Who has frozen them in the eternal ice until they stand in transient memory, seeming as statues...? ...O never-never-forever...why art Thou? O tender I-ness forgive me... O lovable I-ness forgive me...for my hand has shattered the mirror, and I can see thee not. O hunger that begets creation, O wistful memory of myself, O transient I-ness, forgive me...for the probing finger has shattered the veil of illusion. I have shattered the chimera of all Knowing...and all that I know is naught. Time did I seize in the fingers of my mind, and that which seemed to move as a phantom did I hold in my fingers... The peoples of the earth did I see, all that had lived or will live, and their thoughts were upon their faces. Beneath my feet did I seize space... And in all this land there was not one sound, for my fingers held all time, and in time are the fields of motion. So that no atom stirred, nor did one audible wave afflict the ether. For the blood of the Serpent is coagulated, and in its mind all thoughts are one. And I saw the voices of men...and I saw the beautiful patterns of motion...but the world was as still as death...and the soft perfume of memory tinted the void with its essence... Plain was the picture for I had concentrated upon color and motion...and now they were no more. Strange was the land for I concentrated upon dimension until it waxed and waned... O friend of my childhood, O lovable I-ness, what have I done to my world? For I have turned my eye upon it and delivered it unto chaos! And now I look upon the looker...Twice I see myself, and then I see myself no more. I see myself as a suppressor of mountainous space and a conqueror of time. Mighty are my sinews, as I stand upon the mountain. Then I see myself as an infinitesimal man in the infinitude of humanity...caught in the congealed blood of life. I see this tiny man, happy, living, responding to illusions of color and motion and dimension, and happy in his response, knowing not the illusion of his indulgence in non-existent happiness. And looking upon the tiny man, I sees his joys leave him, for joy is a thing apart. And looking upon him I see his response leave him because motion is a thing apart. And seeing these things, my heart burns with love for existence. Yes, I on the mountain, conqueror of illusion, now weep for the beauty of illusion. And looking back into the panorama below, I, the mountained man—I the consciousness absolute, see that the tiny man now no longer liveth...for life is a thing apart. And since he no longer liveth, he cannot see me as I see him, nor can he see himself as I see him, nor can he ever know of his joys that are things apart...or know of his love which is now a thing apart. And knowing his love and his longing for the pattern, I on the mountain bewail and sorrow in his loss. Great is my anguish in his silence, great is my agony in his loss. And feeling my agony, I on the mountain, know that I am the tiny man in the endless cavalcade. And soon I see, looking ahead, that all my joys are not, that all my love is not, that all my being is not. And I see that all Knowing is not. And the eminent I-ness melts into the embraces of oblivion like a charmed lover, fighting the spell and languishing into it. And now I breathe Space and walk in Emptiness. My soul freezes in the void and my thoughts melt into an indestructible blackness. My consciousness struggles voiceless to articulate and it screams into the abysses of itself. Yet there is no echo. All that remains is All. My spark of life falls through the canyons of the universe, and my soul cannot weep for

its loss...for lamentation and sorrow are things apart. All that remains is All. The universes pass like a fitful vision. The darkness and the void are part of the Unknowing... Death shall exist forever... Silence is forgotten... All that remains is all. (Rose, 1978, p. 229-236).

These poetic impressions describe “Rose’s” experience of entering into Enlightenment, as he watched himself die. The essence of the Realization itself, however, can never be spoken or communicated. At most, like the Buddha’s silently holding out the flower before his disciples, the naked reality of it can only be conveyed through direct transmission to a student who is ready.

As can be deduced from the glimpse these lines provide of what it means to be Awake, of the Reality outside the cave of shadows, the significance of life on Earth has an entirely different meaning when seen from outside of it, from the other side of zero. Rose has made the following revealing statement about what the prospect of finding the real Self might actually involve:

My comprehension of the mind of the final observer is such that it presumes the observer to have need of neither mundane perception or memory to BE. It has a different perspective when the body is negated or removed, in that it no longer particularizes, for one thing. The memories and personality that we identified as being us in the body-coat have ultimately about the same dearness and wistfulness as the characters from a story projected upon a screen for our edification. It might be like coming out of such a dark theater – out of comfort and illusion; this business of finding our real selves. For a short while, the chilly shock of the out-of-doors reality is there. (Rose, 1975, p. 60)

He has suggested that after this awakening into Reality, the only purpose in returning into this world of appearance would be to bear witness and to point a finger at the moon.

To this end, for the benefit of the seeker, he has also summed up the core meaning of this experience in more accessible terms. He again refers to this key “rite of passage” of one’s consciously entering death (in somewhat humorous terms here) in order to emphasize a critical point:

You think, “Oh boy – there went me into nothing.” You’ll think you are going to die forever. It’s good to think that because it kills the ego. When the person feels he is starting to die, he will drop all of his egos immediately. (Rose, 1985, p. 182, 184).

As traumatic as this transition is, he goes on to add the crucial message of the entire teaching: “But the amazing thing is that after you die, you find yourself still observing the mess, and that OBSERVING IS THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY” (lecture, 1986). This is the conviction he wants to impress upon the student who is contemplating the inevitable appointment with death: “The only thing I think is valuable to know is that when you go, the observer still lives” (lecture, 1986).

This also relates to the obvious question of validation: how does one know that a “spiritual” or after-death experience is valid and not some hallucination or creation of belief, as repeatedly warned against throughout this teaching? Rose answers this by referring to one’s ability to become aware that, whatever dimension one may be experiencing – one is *witnessing a vision*. When the knower behind consciousness knows itself directly, all such splitting up of reference points of selfhood as subject and object and the consequential potential for distortion within any form of manifest experience with which one may be identified is transcended. This state of ultimate subjectivity is itself the validation. As such, “I am that I am” is also ultimate objectivity. Everything from Cosmic Consciousness to a bad night in Pittsburgh is found to be a relative mental experience and not real, or not as real as the One who watches it and in Whom it exists. Rose says: “You view the scene. And this is the only

proof; the only point-of-reference that you have: your observing self" (lecture, 1986). This final Beingness is Christ's: "I am the Truth."

Rose inverts this very question of validity. The usual scientific method of validating psychological knowledge is for one to pose as a theoretically neutral, outside observer who is witnessing an experiencer and an experience, and then somehow judging the authenticity of their relationship. Rose says that Realization cannot be validated from some vantage point below it or ascertained by the manipulation of any number of concepts subordinate to it. One's *becoming* the Truth is the state of absolute validity.

Rose has made a couple of other curious remarks relating to the question of validity. From the viewpoint of human experience, which is all we have to go by on this side of the Unknowing, the Buddhist terms we encounter, such as "nothingness," "void," and "emptiness," imply non-existence or limbo; some unconscious netherworld. This is because we can only conceive of our mundane, body-ego-centered existence as being the ground of reality, and its negation can only be regarded as oblivion; hence our deeply ingrained fear of death. This is also the motive behind the myriad religious fantasies we concoct to assuage our existential dread at entering this mysterious realm; a forbidding place, where our selves and evanescent world, though undefined, are threatened to be undone.

Yet, he claims this transition actually involves realizing that what is entered at death (if the death is total) is MORE real than what is left behind (including the various possible after-death bardos where one may linger unknowingly, if one is not entirely dead as a mental conviction of finite selfhood). In this sense, the Self can be likened to the "black hole" phenomena in astronomy. This is an object or source of energy of such unimaginable magnitude that it absorbs everything within its reach. Not even light can escape it. It can only be defined in negative terms as being "black," or an area in the cosmos where nothing else seems to be, as no positive quality can be ascribed to it. Yet, it is not a vacuum or an absence of something real. It is in fact much more real and intense than perhaps anything else in the universe. Black holes are suspected to be the birthplace of galaxies. The only way astronomers can describe it is the same as how Hindu sages describe Brahman: "Not this, not that."

Rose testifies that the Observer-Self is forever awake and untouched by all possible objectified states of consciousness passing before its vision. In recalling his experience, Rose has said: "I was aware of oblivion. It wasn't real." This statement has another significance, in addition to its reassurance that there is something eternally real beyond the dark, seeming oblivion of death. It is that the state of Realization *is always*; not only when "one" (so to speak) is on the other side. There is nothing that is not contained in ever-living awareness, including dreamless sleep. Even "oblivion" would be only a human conception or imagined sub-category of unconscious unconsciousness within the mind and could not really exist as a final state, as this too would be surrounded by the ultimate Beingness, which is that of maximum, aware IS-ness. Another implication is that this Self which has been rediscovered is anterior to both the "void" and the manifested universe which is projected onto it. Rose came to this conclusion after his experience: "When I came back, I was also aware of nothingness...then I knew I was immortal" (lecture, 1985).

The living presence of Rose's teaching was revealed to me once during a group discussion he was leading. He was talking about the different levels of spiritual experience (as discussed earlier), and how the occurrence of each higher level of realization is rarer than the ones below it, as the pyramid of humanity narrows to its peak. He referred to the frequently described accounts in the metaphysical literature of rapture, lights, and glory, and how what had happened to him reduced all that to a wonderful, though trivial, distraction. I picked up no trace of ego or vanity, as one would expect, in his stating he had encountered or heard of only a few people throughout his life who had

also experienced that final Awakening. I knew his having any form of pride in his spiritual status would be not so much foolish, as utterly meaningless.

At that point, I asked him – what I later realized to be – yet another naive, though honest question. It was a question asked from a strictly human perspective: “Do you ever get lonely, considering how few people have ever had the same experience you did; that so few people can ever really know ‘where’ you are and what you’re talking about?” He replied to this instantly, without thinking about it first or trying to deliberately come up with some impressive sounding, “cosmic” remark, as guru’s are supposed to do. This lack of a gap between question and answer indicated to me that he was responding genuinely from his essential condition, and not processing some strategic angle through his “Zen teacher” mind.

Rose said: “Lonely? I can’t be lonely. **There’s nobody here but me.**” He looked around at the group of us on the lawn, as he sat on a large, flat rock, reminiscent of the scene of the Sermon on the Mount. We stared at him in awkward silence as he added: “I’ve been sitting here all these years just talking to myself!” At that moment, seeing the twinkle in his eyes as he looked at me, and then his bursting into laughter – the great Buddha’s laugh – *I knew who he was*. His final revelation: “There’s nobody here but me,” has echoed through my mind like a haunting mantra ever since.

This has been a long journey; this discourse on the Albigen System. The full significance of Jacob’s Ladder as a living experience is difficult to grasp at once, yet it must be maturely appreciated. In line with Rose’s doctrine of backing away from untruth rather than attempting to define Reality directly, he has generally avoided making flat statements about the nature of the Realization he experienced at the end of his philosophical search. This is for fear that immature seekers would only turn any such definition-in-advance into just one more idol to passively worship, and hence an obstacle to discovery.

Following, however, is the most direct admission he has ever uttered on the subject; one that sums up his entire teaching:

The tiny man and the observer are one, and the final observer is the Absolute. There is nothing but me – this is the final answer (lecture, 1979).

This, finally, is the explanation, in 25 words or less, of the essence of Rose’s Psychology of the Observer. Tying this in with Jacob’s Ladder, the tiny man is the bottom triangle, the observer oversees the middle triangle, and the Absolute is at the top of the uppermost triangle.

“*There is nothing but me*”: the meaning of the words, when fully confronted, is like one’s being crucified with a stake right between the eyes. All is contained in that declaration. The challenge it commands, for the rest of one’s days, is to search for the exact definition of that “me.”

This teaching has been Richard Rose’s gift to us; his legacy. He has never claimed to be a savior for anyone, or an Avatar for the human race. His function has been to serve as a guide pointing the way back to our Source. In doing so, he has fulfilled his commitment to make available what he has found. It is up to each individual to make that same commitment to Truth, and follow it out to the end.

To the age-old question: “Does God exist?”, Rose’s testimony firmly replies: “Yes. You don’t.” He once playfully chided us by saying: “After I die, I’m leaving this place permanently. You guys aren’t going to get any more help from me! Don’t pray to me for any advice, like I’ll still be floating around, watching you.” Rose was not trying to be cruel. What he was getting at is that he is not the one who is watching us and drawing us home, always. He is urging us to find out for ourselves, Who is.

He bids us farewell with these words:

*I will take leave of you
Not by distinct farewell
But vaguely
As one entering vagueness
For words, symbols of confusion
Would only increase confusion
But silence, seeming to be vagueness,
Shall be my cadence,
Which someday
You will understand (Rose, 1982, p. 71).*