

Chapter 3

Introduction to the Albigen System

Listen to the confusion of ignorance. For that which is wisdom belongs to the silent. Are you of the tumultuous masses that agonize for definition? Then of the human babble of voices, can you hear this voice? For this voice speaks words, and all words define nothing. In the abyss there is a path, that is invisible, that leads to the garden. Oh, what foolishness, to speak to the blind, and to those who hear words... (Rose, 1982, p. 89)

Everyone is looking for the truth. This is the common desire among all people. Based on each person's point of view, range of perspective, background of experience, clarity of vision, and depth of understanding he or she is right. No one is deliberately wrong. Within the particular paradigm individuals find themselves, people do the best they can to find a better existence and a better understanding of life. One's "moccasins" walk the only path one knows.

Everyone searches for a state of satisfaction and permanency, one's own way, whether the domain of endeavor be social, physical, or psychological. One may pursue knowledge, art, money, power, or love. One may worship nature, pleasure, humanity, "God," or oneself. Individuals adopt philosophies, lifestyles, strategies, and personalities in the attempt to deal with their lot in life, overcome obstacles, make sense out of confusion, and find something worthwhile for which to live.

Yet, this effort is seemingly too often in vain. Collisions occur with people on other paths. Despite the person's best intentions and mundane successes, the soul remains restless for some elusive resting place. This core dissatisfaction and unanswered yearning whether conscious or not is the other commonality among all people.

What is wrong? Some part of the formula seems to be missing. One aspect of this is our not realizing what the true desire motivating all our other desires really is. Another is our misidentification of ourselves and misunderstanding of our status here on Earth. The fundamental principles on which our existence is based are seldom questioned nor adequately defined.

What do we really know for sure? Honesty forces us to admit: not very much. Do we know the reasons behind life and death? Do we know the origin and destiny of the universe or ourselves? Do we know the nature of our relationship with the source of all things? Do we know the real cause of our suffering and the real nature of our contentment? Do we really know the self that is searching for wisdom or is victimized by delusion? Is anything really certain besides the grave?

Is reality only what humanity, individually or collectively, believes or wants it to be? Is there any way to find out what is truly real, apart from the assumptions and projections from within one's paradigm, born of conditioning, delusion, and make-believe? Is there a state of objective Validity and is it attainable?

Plato's parable of the Cave of Illusions and the sunlight of reality outside its door suggests there is, but that we cannot hope to find it so long as we remain hypnotized by and identified with the shadows on the wall inside our respective "caves", or the cave of humanity as a whole.

With self-honesty and reliable intuition as one's most valuable allies, one must find the way out of the cave, into the light. But how? Humanity's efforts to find its God and its soul have been perennially thwarted by the Tower of Babel syndrome that curses our search for Truth into further confusion and conflict (Rose, 1984). It has been difficult for seekers to work together harmoniously towards this common aim, or even to agree on how to best go about it.

Why should this be so difficult? This quest is indeed the highest of all human endeavors. And while it is the attempt to determine an individualized path into the unknown beyond, this process of inquiry can nonetheless adhere to some sensible, objective criteria. One common problem has been that many of the spiritually oriented teachings available tend to "beg the question" rather than ask it, and work to answer it (Rose, 1978, p. 167). Too often, we are presented with an attractive answer right from the start, asked to simply have faith that it is true, and assume that this faith state is equal to genuine *knowing* or *realizing*. This approach leads to a conflict of convictions and futility of results.

In this quest, what is required is not systems of belief nor buffers against discomfort, but a manner of searching that is honest and dependable; a way that is foolproof and self-correcting. We must find a path that we can trust to lead us out of our state of unknowing, despite our unknowing, and into relative truth. And from there to absolute Truth, if this is possible.

Christ's response to Pontius Pilate's question, "What is truth?" was silence (John, 18:38), yet the answer in this silence was not heard. Can we do any better?

What follows is the testimony of one man who has claimed to have found what all people ultimately seek, and the road map to it he has left behind.

Introducing The Teaching

"The aim of this work is to approach Reality" (Rose, 1978, p. 11).

The Religion Editor of a newspaper once interviewed Richard Rose and asked him to explain his system of spiritual work in 25 words or less. Rose replied, "Forget it. It would take 2500 words just to get you confused, and then even more to try to approach the explanation of that confusion" (Rose, 1985, p. 114).

Describing what is essentially an invisible, intangible path from the state of relative unknowing into the greater Unknown of Absolute Reality is nearly impossible. As he soberly testifies: "Enlightenment is a difficult subject to encompass justly; especially when you have witnessed not only the vanity of words, but the vanity of life" (Rose, 1978, p. 12).

Rose's teaching is an especially challenging one to convey due to the highly subjective and intuitive nature of the inner work he recommends. It is not so much a path of techniques and disciplines, as one of progressive selfconfrontation and direct insight. This difficulty is further complicated by his acknowledgement that no collection of concepts and directions can ever be adequate to the task of bringing one to the state beyond all concepts and directions. Still, he does have a system or a body of principles that is as systematic and consistent as anything can be in such individualistic, abstract matters. Through all this, the essence of his message is plain, as is the meaning in the traditional metaphor of Zen's "finger pointing at the moon."

The labyrinth through which Rose's map guides the seeker is treacherous and convoluted. However, he qualifies this by explaining: "Zen [his chosen style of teaching] is not complex. It is made complex by the many different types and levels of ignorance" (Rose, 1982, p. 184). His task has been to devise a system of spiritual search that is rigorous in its methodology, while not pretending to offer a simplistic formula that would obscure the individual's responsibility for finding one's own way out of one's personal maze of delusion. His teaching is the distillation of over a half century of research and experience, and so he has attempted to compensate for this innate arduousness of the path by building shortcuts and "tricks of the trade" (so to speak) into the system that he, as a veteran of inner work, has learned.

One reason for this difficulty in spiritual instruction for both teacher and student is expressed in Krishnamurti's famous dictum: "Truth is a pathless land" (Holroyd, 1980). Rose agrees with this assessment in his insistence that there can be no uniform, mechanistic, linear, predictable, and "objective" (in the sense of the process of search being external to the self who is searching) method possible for arriving at the condition of impersonal totality, or Reality; one that is thoroughly definable in advance, accounts for all variables, applies equally to each person, and is guaranteed to lead to a predesignated goal. He repeatedly admonishes those who look for techniques of incremental selfdevelopment to practice that "there are no buttons to push" to induce transcendence.

In fact, strictly speaking, Rose's form of Zen agrees with the paradox implicit in Advaita Vedanta that no collection of dualistic, ego mind generated efforts by a nonexistent "person" within a relative dimension can causally result in an Absolute realization. How can an illusory "self" do anything to find reality when it is itself the obstacle to its realization and any effort to end itself only strengthens its seeming selfhood? Capital "T" Truth is indeed "a pathless land".

Nonetheless, throughout the history of mystical or esoteric teachings, those who have attained GodConsciousness have been able to define common denominators, both of personal psychological functioning and impersonal laws of life, which do bind all seekers together and offer hope of a valid approach to Reality. Rose sums this up by stating:

There is a path to Truth. From ignorance to relative knowledge. From relative knowledge to an awareness of the limitation of such knowledge. And finally, we pass from that which we recognize as loosely associated intelligence to a reality of Being. (Rose, 1978, p. 194).

The path Rose describes is profoundly subjective and one of immanent discovery directly for oneself, of the Self, and cannot be merely an externalized formula to be conceptualized or created and applied to oneself, in the search for an answer apart from that self. As such, while many of the critical factors involved in the search for Truth can be gathered together into a mature, generalized system of inner work, Rose assures us: "Each man's Enlightenment is a different trip."

There is a reason for the necessary uniqueness of this personal search and the impossibility of an "assemblyline" method of promoting spirituality. Much of the inner work consists of first eliminating the obstacles to truthfulness in one's thinking, feeling, perceiving, and acting, rather than attempting to start out by presuming to authoritatively define God, based on belief or desire, and then imagining one's assumed position in relation to this divine figure. Without knowing who one is, without knowing who is searching or worshipping, such theology is empty of genuine meaning, as is similar conceptualization about the reality of the "soul", without proving it.

This process of undoing the myriad factors comprising and maintaining one's state of ignorance is highly individual. Rose explains: "The path is complex because each set of egos is rooted differently." Likewise, our reaction patterns to the seemingly unavoidable traumas of life are diverse. It is these egos of distortion and falsehood that prevent one from seeing the truth, and this tangled web in itself includes the difficulty of one's seeing the egorooted gestalts themselves and being able to free the real part of oneself from their seductive spell.

This is why it is so helpful to be able to work with a teacher who can see the intricacies of the student's mind with objective perception from outside the mind and point out the next step towards the state of valid being. With or without access to such a teacher, the student must work to refine that faculty for clear witnessing of oneself and reside in that more deeply. Gradually, this process of selfrefinement brings about the development of the higher Intuition, and it is this voice or sense of guidance that then becomes one's "inner guru."

To start out the description of this system, it should first be stressed that what Rose is referring to in this entire line of work is the *personal experience* of selfinquiry and resultant discovery, and not merely the vicarious satisfaction of the intellectual philosopher who attempts to build the ultimate conceptstructure toward heaven and then presumptuously places himself on the throne on top of it as a thought. This procedure can never be sufficient, for the brain will inevitably die, along with all the noble thoughts it hatched, including the belief that reality is definable in intellectual terms and that one is the thinker (which is itself later found to be no more than a thoughtcluster that believes in itself). The entire conceited, though possibly sincere, Tower of Babel collapses.

Likewise, Rose claims that one need not remain satisfied with the static worship of an unknown "God," with the assumption that the maintenance of this beliefstate will be sufficient to automatically carry one through to the end of the quest, or that this devotion alone is all the quest can ever be. Faith is a thought too, just as subject to decay as the rest of the vehicle of faith. Furthermore, devotion with a dishonest motive can be more an attitude of arrogant complacency than humble worship and submission to higher guidance. One must know oneself well enough to know the difference.

Rose insists 'The Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth' cannot be known until it is found (or rather, realized), so it cannot be comprehended or appreciated beforehand. Rose discourages excessive speculation about cosmology or the nature of Enlightenment, explaining: "(The Absolute) is not a problem to be solved or a philosophy to be proven. It is THE TRIP not the a priori road map" (personal communication, 1977).

Despite the determination with which he expresses his convictions, Rose does not claim to have the only valid teaching to guide one to the goal and acknowledges that people throughout the ages, from all cultures and religions, have arrived at the same answer through other means. He admits: "The Truth is not in (this system) alone. The Truth is found in the minds of men if they look deeply enough. It is inaccessible to those who are undetermined, only" (Rose, 1982, p. 134).

Rose explains that the diversity amongst even genuine spiritual teachings is due as much to the human personalities of the teachers through which the instruction is conveyed as to the requirements of the varying levels of capacity of their students. Yet, this individuality of style and process is only in the domain of the relative and casts no shadow on the objective reality into which one enters at the culmination of the search, which is said to be impersonal and universal. All fingers point to the same moon. For this reason, it is unwise to cling too tightly to particular paths, doctrines, and styles as being exclusively correct. Rose claims: "The only thing Enlightened people have in common is that which they have found" (Rose, 1984, p. 28). In assessing the style of this teaching, the student should remember that Rose is a human being too, however the One behind his mind is awake to itself.

What he offers is his own testimony of seeking and the experience of finding, to whomever would value them; this body of information being the substance of this study. He states his purpose in teaching this way:

What I'm saying is that I discovered, although I don't know how many can discover through the same procedure. But I feel compelled to pass on my discovery to somebody else. I can draw diagrams and make noises, but I think each man has to find things for himself. (Rose, lecture, 1979).

As to the teaching's reliability, all he can candidly admit is: "It worked for me, and in my lifetime" (Rose, 1978, p. 193). Although Rose stresses the need for awareness of the uncertainty qualifying all of one's efforts along the way and the necessary unpredictability of their results, he does not want to imply the extremist view, which can be a rationalization against action, that any spiritual awakening occurs purely by Grace and there is nothing anyone can do to bring it about. This attitude also includes those overly simplistic interpretations of Advaita Vedanta and/or Zen that stress non effort, claiming there is nothing to do, no "person" really there to do anything, and that any attempted effort along spiritual lines would be inherently selfdefeating, as any such exertion would only reinforce the conviction of individuality, willfulness, and desire that is the delusion that must be ended in the first place.

Rose would explain that these arguments for one's passively waiting for a miraculous revelation to occur by itself fail to recognize the reality of the paradox on our level of duality and are thus incomplete understandings of our status and obligations. Taking into account this other side of the paradox, tremendous effort is required before the state of true nonvolition can be attained.

He sums up much of the Albigen System in one succinct sentence, and in doing so describes the full course of this transformative experience in selfdefinition: "**You are what you dountil you realize that you do nothing; that you are an observer**" (Rose, 1982, p. 144). The theme is reiterated in another image: "Life is the only game in which the players are indistinguishable from the pieces on the board" (Brilliant, Potshots). Both lines are addressing the paradox that we must make lengthy efforts as seekers in order to arrive at the realization that one is not the actor after all, and there is no time, motion, or existence apart from the anterior Self. This is the discernment, the razor's edge. Rose has also answered this argument more humorously: "Enlightenment is an accident, but you canand mustwork to become accidentprone!" In other words, we can make a difference in having the impossible be less unlikely to occur.

As will be described in greater detail, much of the work involved in becoming thus "accidentprone" is that of eliminating all obstacles that would prevent realization from happening, and preparing oneself in capacity and maturity to 'receive' the Truth, should it be forthcoming. While one does not know at the start what will be found at the end of the "Yellow Brick Road," the path

begins right where one stands at the moment and the beginning steps are quite obvious, once the reality of one's predicament is recognized.

As the process of inquiry continues, the work towards selfdefinition develops a growing sense of purpose and justification of its own. Experiencing a movement towards greater sanity and relatively true selfhood becomes thus an additional source of motivation. And, finally, while one may have no guarantee of success at the outset, Rose plainly assesses our dilemma and eliminates all possible excuses for stagnant resignation by simply noting: "There is no reason for moving, and less reason for not moving."

At this point, the objective of all this effort and desire should be plainly stated:

The highest form of spiritual work is the realization of the essence of man. The final definition of man. And with this definition the definition of all things, and a realization of the Nature, Absolute, or God behind all things. (Rose, 1984, p. 27).

In other words, this entire pursuit gets down to the most basic desire to know. To know the truth about life, about death, about oneself, about "God", about the meaning of it all. It has been said that life is the only game in which the object of the game is to learn the rules (Brilliant, Potshots) and who is playing it. For Rose, the search had as its basis the uncompromising urgency for answering three essential questions: 1) Who am I (ultimately)?, 2) Where did I come from (before birth)?, and 3) Where am I going (after death)?

This is not a casual, inconsequential concern; an adolescent luxury that passes when maturity (and a fulltime job) sets in. Rose had had the conviction that life was not worth living if he did not know who was living and why. He complains: "It's a protest with me that people are acting without knowledge of the essence of being; acting without definition" (Rose, lecture, 1979). In other words: who is living our lives, and is it really "ours" if we do not know? Likewise, who is it who is faced with death? Can either life or death really have any significance to us if we do not know?

Rose is again pointing out that we have not properly defined who we are, fundamentally, but only assume our intrinsically established selfhood, while remaining transfixed by the tumultuous parade of life we helplessly witness and vainly call "ours." "**Experience is a worthless and transient existence, unless the experiencer is known,**" is his blunt, merciless verdict to all those unwitting actors who do not question the validity of their lives and identities, and an inviting challenge to those seekers who realize they must.

The message in this assessment is that, contrary to our natural programming to indulge in life, what is more important than enthusiastically identifying with "our" experience of life is *directly realize the nature of the experiencer*. Rose refers to this key issue of selfdefinition when he states: "Science tries to prolong life, but not to define it. Intuition tells us something is missing. We seem to know more and more about the show, but less about the Real Viewer" (Rose, 1985, p. 304). We must turn our attention around to look the other way, to see who is looking at, or through, us.

Rose becomes even passionate in addressing the central issue:

A mystic is a person who says, "Stop I don't care about the promotions, I don't care about making a million dollars; I want to know who's talking. I WANT TO KNOW WHO I AM! This, to me, is logical thinking...that a person wants to know who's pulling his strings. (Rose, lecture, 1986).

It was this intensity, this purity of desire and maturity of purpose that carried Rose through his arduous years of search, and that he has insisted is an indispensable attitude for the serious student of truth.

Yet, as noble as this quest seems and the questionable value of life unless it is known for certain, there is much internal resistance to making this crucial effort. Rose's assessment, as usual, is blunt:

People are able to continue living or tolerate life by putting serious thoughts as far back as possible. Something inside the individual does not wish to examine its potential for oblivion. The human mind does not want to see anything negative about itself. (Rose, 1978, p. 27).

Once the harsh reality of our status as ignorant beings killing time on Death Row is fully confronted in existential awareness, the imperative to do something anything to try to lessen that ignorance and move towards any possibility of greater knowing becomes undeniable, as would the futility and shame of doing anything else. In a burst of merciless insight, a student of Rose's, Larry F., once exclaimed, "Everything is procrastination!" (possibly even most misguided efforts on the "path").

By this he meant that the core of the work, or the "way", consists of the direct, naked confrontation of oneself in totality in the existential now, apart from all beliefs, imaginings, egoindulgences, and projections, including even timebound methods of incremental spiritual development, and focusing all of one's attention on the immediate issue of selfinquiry; the only question there is that really matters: "WHO AM I?" As this work is possibly the most difficult and critical undertaking in all of life, one that threatens to negate all that we know, have, and are, one encounters tremendous resistance to this inquiry on all levels of one's (false) being; hence the massive, chronic pattern of procrastination and piddling that we call "living."

As if being a silent, mocking reminder of this truth, Rose displays in the ashram a candle shaped like a gravestone, on the headstone of which is engraved: "Relaxit's later than you think."

This heroic search for the key to Heaven's Gate, for the final answer, has been a theme running throughout the history of mystical literature, however clothed in symbolism. Rose alludes to the answer to this mystery:

There is some key not yet found that might unlock the whole puzzle of creation...the visible creation, that is. ...the quest for the Philosopher's Stone, the universal catalyst. The alchemists were really looking for a key that would answer spiritual questions. ...the hunch or intuition that whispers convincingly that there is a universal constant, a key, which when found, will open up perspective in all directions and possibly answer all questions. (Rose, 1975, p. 3).

This, then, gets to the justification for the seeker's willingness to leave behind comfort, complacency, and convention (although, some do not have any choice, e.g. Colin Wilson's *Outsiders*), and the closest one can come to envisioning in advance the unknown goal. There is even a nostalgic poignancy in Rose's description of the goal of the path: "Our aim is to bring man to a condition where he will not need to question anymore" (Rose, 1978, p. 108). What this implies is that there may be a million legitimate philosophical/religious questions plaguing the seeker, yet they all have as their common denominator one's improper selfdefinition and thus vantage point on existence. This line of inquiry suggests it is best to put these secondary questions aside and work instead on answering the critical one; this resolving all the other ones as well.

Throughout his teachings, Rose counters the traditional notion that belief in God or a Savior alone is sufficient to bring one to the direct realization of that Godstate, or the more modern, "hippyZen" attitude that goingwiththeflow and beingherenow is all that is necessary to bring about this Grand Awakening. A belief in a God that is unknown or possibly nonexistent (the honest Truthseeker must acknowledge this in the beginning, until proven otherwise) that does not result in some meaningful action towards finding that God can accomplish little. Likewise, one cannot automatically assume that the perceived flow of mundane life inevitably goes towards one's spiritual objective, as the scheme of Nature may well have different requirements and purposes than does the domain of Spirit, or even that one can be anywhere, at anytime, without first clearly knowing WHO is being, where HERE is, and what NOW really means, outside of time.

This point was well brought out with a questioner at a lecture:

Rose: "I [have found that] the soul of man is God."

Q.: "Where did the soul of man come from?"

Rose: "Does it have to come from something? Or couldn't it just be? IT IS."

Q.: "If the soul of man can just be, why can't we just be?"

Rose: "Because we are not the soul of man. We are not the soul of man! We are the shadows in the cave of Plato." (Rose, 1985, p. 49).

Later, he added the disconcerting averment, "Reality IS, but it is elsewhere." (Rose, 1985, p. 261).

In other words, Rose sees what we consider to be life to be only a shadow of true being. Once, in response to my comments about the Albigensian doctrine, he replied: "I agree we are but figmentary characters in a nightmare, dancing to makebelieve" (personal communication, 1978).

The reader finds other statements in Rose's work that run counter to commonly assumed notions about spirituality and the attainment of its goal. These comments can trouble the seeker, but serve to test one's real objective as to whether one is looking for the bare truth of what is, at any price, or for some state that one wishes was the truth, because it is more attractive, desirable, or seemingly deserved. Likewise, if the seeker refuses to consider a recommended process of inquiry that involves struggle and insecurity, and eagerly opts instead for one that promises ease and selfflattery, one's real motives in the search are suspect. The harshness of some of Rose's assertions also evidences the sincerity of his intentions in teaching, as his willingness to present information that is not readily appealing to conventional human values indicates he is not trying to sell something, or himself, by distorting what he declares is the truth so that it fits into a pretty package.

One such understandably attractive assumption is that spiritual attainment will enable the individual to engage in life with more gusto and appreciation; the world being then experienced as one's playground. But Rose confronts the reader with a sober testimony from an unexpected perspective:

Some approach this attempt (at spiritual work) with a foolish reservation that they must hurry at it, and get Enlightenment so that they can go back to a "normal" life quickly and reenter the game of life. They never stop to think that when they reach Enlightenment, they will possibly have little or no interest in the game of life. (Rose, 1986, p. 2).

Later on, the point will be further explored that one's unquestioned notion of valid individuality, one's reference point of identity, and hence "one's" values and motives, may be found to not be

the same after such an experience. As Larry F. intuited: "You can't take you with you!" This recalls Balsekar's assertion that there is no such thing as an Enlightened person, as what that experience actually involves is the realization that no individual entity exists who "finds" God; there is only the Self, and the forgetting of the former duality.

Rose has a starker way of describing it, in this poetic excerpt:

I have looked on death and lived, but my life is as empty as death. I have been dumbstruck, and crawled from the sacred unknown, bearing the look of horror and regret, and pain; for I went in and another man came out. (Rose, 1982, p. 74).

Another student, Keith M., once intently studied Rose's manner of interaction during a group dialogue session and later, privately, confronted him with the insight: "You're an actor, aren't you?" Rose quietly admitted he was. In fact, he had to be, as there was no longer anything left of him but the actor. (We are no different, but do not realize it.) Elsewhere, he confesses: "The true teacher needs to invent a reason to live." This gradually becomes true for the student as well, as the insubstantiality of one's games and compensations becomes too obvious to deny any longer, and the quest itself becomes the only legitimate reason for continued movement.

Rose's testimony is sometimes surprising, and even painful, to hear, for those accustomed to spiritual teachings that cater to human desires and notions of justice. In response to a questioner at another lecture who inquired about what he expected to be Rose's heightened enjoyment and delight in daily, earthly life, once the state of Truth has been realized, he gravely replied: "The longer I live, the more I dislike this place" (Rose, lecture, 1980).

He taunts the reader with a vision of the human scene that is merciless in its rawness: "**The urge to live is as meaningless as the fear of death.** We do not really know the reasons for either life or death" (Rose, 1978, p. 198). This Zenlike perspective on existence also suggests that what really is important, in Rose's view, is to work to isolate the part of oneself that may survive death and "the vanity of life." He sees all else as being procrastination and indulgence in fantasy.

At another talk, an undoubtedly sincere person asked a long, involved question about what it is that needs to be done to "save the planet," "help humanity evolve," and generally promote the world's welfare, in relation to one's spiritual aspirations. He naturally wanted an equally serious, detailed answer. Ever the Zen master, Rose simply replied: "There is no world. There are no people," and moved on (Rose, lecture, 1979). The fellow remained stunned and speechless for the rest of the lecture. He was left to ponder the basis and value of his convictions about what the path involves, in light of this unexpected new assessment of his assumptions.

The uncompromising purity and singular intent of his message was conveyed in another dialogue. I had been wondering aloud about the religious principles concerning the "Fall of Man," i.e. what went wrong in the divine scheme of things, whose fault was it, the meaning of Original Sin, and such. I asked, "How did we get off the Yellow Brick Road?" Rose looked me square in the eyes as said: "There is no road. There's nobody here. Nobody's doing anything. You have to realize that. There's only a roomful of dummies sitting in the dark, asking each other: 'Are we dummies?'"

It should be acknowledged here again that the paradox is intrinsic to the path every step of the way, including in the example of the previously mentioned scenario. For some people, efforts at social betterment, ecology, etc. (karma yoga) may well be a legitimate part of their spiritual path, either in manifesting their convictions of principle, eliminating egos of selfishness, or developing strength of character. But for others, it could be a tactic for avoiding facing their own inner work and an indulgence in conceit or presumptuousness. A blanket rule about this cannot be stated in advance and applied to everyone equally. This is one example of why Rose stresses the individuality of the

path and the necessity for defining the specific requirements of one's search based on knowledge of one's own nature.

Rose elaborated further on this important point and anticipated much of the "New Age" movement to come in its general exhortation that the purpose of the spiritual path is to "create your own reality," "be whoever you want to be," "put God to work for you," and promising that "you can have it all." Again, the conclusion he found undermines most of this philosophy:

The blueprint has been made, and all dies cast. The program for each robot is cast also. All that man can attain is a knowledge of his true nature, and some restricted ability to affect things which are not really realmeaning mental projections in which we believe. (Rose, 1979c, p. 38).

Rose counters the common assumption that the process towards spiritual attainment is synonymous with efforts at improving outer conditions, and alludes to the location of the real work of correction: "No true possessor of Cosmic Consciousness would change anything but his own erroneous view of things" (Rose, 1978, p. 212). In other words, the problem may not be so much in what we see, but what we see with, or through.

He adds another surprising twist to this theme; one that calls into question our notion that spiritual work involves remaking Earth into a Paradise according to our standards, and suggests there may be more to this story than we know:

Zen is an eastern system which takes into account that much (but not all) of the game is already fixed, and that it is a good idea to see things as they are rather than to try to change things which cannot be changed. (Rose, 1982, p. 145).

In the following quote, Rose is again dispelling the appealing, popular notion that Enlightenment involves the ultimate maximizing of the human ego's potential and thus one's enjoyment of the benefits from its conquest of the world. He offers here a valuable glimpse into the meaning of spiritual maturity, with a quality of nostalgia as if seen from the perspective of an ancient soul who has paid the ultimate price:

People try to gain power and prove wisdom by wielding power. Those who have really experienced the Absolute and viewed life from a Direct Appraisal of things lose all inclination to change any part of the theatrical mental reflections. An adult simply loses interest in the toys of childhood, and it matters not who has the marbles now. (Rose, 1978, p. 124).

This misunderstanding of the nature of Realization, and hence the inadequacy or even falseness of many of the means employed in the attempt to reach it, is best revealed in the following dialogue. An interviewer, who had only a simplistic understanding of what this search and its culmination involve, asked: "Mr. Rose, now that you are Enlightened, are you happy?" He replied: "I am free of happiness." Stunned for a moment by his casual dismissal, as if being an annoying distraction, of what is usually the highest aspiration in most people's lives, the interviewer regrouped her thoughts and reformulated the question: "Well then, would you say you have found perfect, eternal contentment?" Rose gently answered: "Yes...you could put it like that."

If he has found that traditional notions of happiness are somehow missing the point, then what is the real point? Rose here again zeros in on the crucial issue as being precise selfdefinition and the accurate apprehension of life that this involves: "You cannot be happy until you know what happiness really is. But more important: who is being happy or deluded."

This is the central issue; the foundation on which the whole teaching is based: selfdefinition. The ancient adage: "Know thyself". Ramana Maharshi's, "Who am I?" It is this essential theme **what exactly is the self and what is it not?** that runs throughout the entire process of search, in all its aspects.

Why must this be so? There are several reasons. The primary one Rose has given is simply that, whatever the Reality is that may be found, it must be the aware self that would be appreciating it. This is equivalent to Nisargadatta Maharaj's claim that the "I am" is prior even to all possible gods, which are contained in this ultimate Self.

Likewise, this is similar to the principle in Gestalt psychology that meaning is a function of being. In other words, whatever the truth may be, whether on a mundane or cosmic level, it is directly, inseparably related to and derived from the self that is experiencing this meaning or answer. This, in turn, ties in with the theme in Logotherapy of the pursuit of meaning and how the fulfillment of one's destiny first necessitates deep selfunderstanding in order for one to know what must be done.

The common message shared by these different teachings seems to be that whatever meaning or validity there is to existence is conferred by the consciousness of the observer. One discovers that in seeking after meaning, or "God," what one is really doing is holding up a mirror in front of oneself and describing one's own reflection.

It is partially for this reason that Rose rejects as being presumptuous the traditional theological approach to spirituality of one's attempting to right away define an unknown "God" and pretending to be thus "Godlike" in one's character or outlook on life. He bluntly states: "A theology that expects us to know the nature of God when we do not even know our own nature is manifestly absurd" (Rose, 1978, p. 125). He is indicating that this usual direction of search is clearly backwards. Before there can be any hope of attaining GodConsciousness, one must become conscious as a human being first. God is probably a lot bigger than we are. We would be better off starting with something closer to our own sizelike ourselves.

Likewise, Rose discourages the kind of meditation that intends to directly worship God, without first accurately knowing who is doing the worshipping and through what possible filters of projection. The work involved in the Albigen System thus designates it as a path of mindfulness, not a path of devotion. Although not intending to dissuade the homing instinct residing in the sincere religious impulse, nor the magical value of prayer in attuning oneself to transpersonal intuition, he declares: "You contemplate what's in front of you; not something way up above. You cannot contemplate God" (Rose, lecture, 1979).

This seems to directly contradict many devotional spiritual teachings that advocate meditating on God. This can be reconciled by understanding that Rose is speaking in literal terms of one's honestly admitting that one cannot contemplate something that is unknown. The humble devotee may well have a sense of guiding conscience, purpose, and holistic genuineness, all manifesting as the conviction of one's living in a state of grace. However, Godas ultimate realityis, at the outset, unknown to the seeker. If one did fully realize one's Godhood, there would be no reason to meditate; no longer any division between meditator and Deity. The introspective focus of the quest is thus not: "Does God exist?" or "Should we worship God?," but: "What is truth and how is it to be realized?"

To illustrate this, in answer to the courtroom question: "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?," the only honest response can be: "LookIf I knew the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I would BE God!"

A more precise understanding of such devotional meditation, and one that would be more in line with Rose's approach to the inner search, would be for seekers to instead contemplate their desire for truth, selfhood, contentment, innocence, Divine acceptance, etc. This would then not be the dualistic trap of projecting some idealized concept of belief outward from oneself and then worshipping this in the effort to reunite with it. Rather, it would be more meaningful to fully face oneself and look into the nature of that yearning for what one can only call "God." This form of meditation would serve to bring the person into greater selfawareness, unity with one's essential condition, and purify the quality of that longing coming from the center of one's unknown being. Also, recalling Jean Klein's teaching, this form of introspection would direct the attention back into the very root of the presumed selfhood that desires spiritual realization resulting in a startling surprise. Rose's understanding of true devotional prayer would be the surrender of one's egoself to the higher Intuition and *becoming* the truth of the path which it presents to us. Only by following this desire back to its source, deep inside oneself, can this duality between the seeker and the sought for God be reconciled.

Along similar lines, in response to one of my usual naive, intellectual questions about the nature of Realization and its cosmological significance, Rose replied: "Your aim can only be at finding your Self, your definition, your origin and destiny. You cannot aim at emptying out Nirvana until you know what Nirvana is". He is repeatedly cautioning against being too grandiose in one's imaginings, whether theological or metaphysical, and urging the seeker to devote full attention instead to first defining the self who is searching.

There is also another reason for this emphasis on selfknowledge, and it relates as well to any kind of investigation in any field. The scientist who is attempting to understand the nature of the physical universe, whether the focus of study is on the stars or atoms, has to first perfect the instruments and methods of observation before there can be hope of accurately determining the facts. A defective telescope or microscope, poor eyesight, or faulty preliminary assumptions will render the findings erroneous.

Another, more personal way of saying this and summing up the main theme of the teaching is that we do not see things as they are; we see things as we are. Therefore, only those who are real can know reality.

It is for all these reasons that the emphasis in this category of seeking is not on religious devotion, philosophical speculation, or simulation of assumed spiritual symptoms, but on turning the attention back upon the undefined self from where the concerns originate. Rose explains: "We must find out who is searching. We must know the self. The small "s" self has to be discovered first before we can hope to find that lesser or greater Self which may lie beyond it" (Rose, 1979c, p. 74).

Rose reiterates this point continually from different angles, as will this report, because he feels it is so important and so often overlooked by overzealous seekers whom he considers to be either too immature or lazy to do the necessary work of preparation for discovery. His message is repeatedly that one cannot hope to attain capital "S" SelfRealization without first having thorough small "s" selfknowledge. One cannot "know God" without first knowing the self who would know God. One cannot transcend the mental dimension without first knowing one's own mind intimately. One reason why this effort is too often skipped or only lightly addressed is that of the common, false assumption of the automatic legitimacy of the self as the baseline of the search. Answering the question: "Who am I?" by confidently proclaiming: "I'm me," is not sufficient; however genuine one experiences this *meness* to be. Without first having a complete, precise definition of this "me," the pursuit of happiness, success, selfactualization, Cosmic Consciousness, "creating your own reality," etc. can have no valid foundation or reference point. Rose even suggests that to do anything, to strive

for any goal without such knowledge is meaningless: "Why build anthills before knowing what an ant is?" (Rose, 1979c, p. 39).

This, to Rose, is the direction of real philosophy and psychology, and is the end towards which he devised the mental system to be described. He explains:

The type of wisdom that is most important to have is definition. People presume that they are. This presumption isn't adequate. True psychology is knowing who you are; a permanent understanding of yourself. And when you have that, possibly there's a little dividend you might know what you're here for. (Rose, 1985, p. 220).

This indicates an entirely different understanding and expectation of the meaning of true psychology than its self-designated modern definition as a behavioral science. Rose has little respect for most of mainstream or what he calls "robot" or "hog pen" psychology, and feels the central issue of selfhood is either ignored or treated in a shallow or utilitarian fashion. He has noted that modern, materialistic psychology's attempts to define the self is like trying to determine the essence of the core of the Earth by studying soil samples or the effects of fertilizer upon the growth of grass, adding that even knowing this would tell us nothing about the origin and destiny of the planet.

Rose considers true psychology to be a sacred science and not only a tool to promote social compatibility or oil the mechanism of Nature. The purpose of mainstream psychology is to make people functional, so they can go back to paying taxes, reproducing, and indulging in illusions of success and happiness, in compensation for suffering and meaninglessness; not to ask themselves disturbing questions that have no immediate, reassuring answers. "Sanity" is an issue that is not brought up. Rather than Rose's being negative, as he sometimes appears, this compromise is real negativity. This is cynical.

He believes the real task of psychology must be more ambitious: "The perfect psychology will find the soul. The perfect psychology will take you to God" (Rose, 1985, p. 232). This is where personal and transpersonal psychologies overlap. Not only that, but Rose has found this to be the intersection point with true religion as well: "The desire to know God and the desire to know the Self are almost identical."

This, however, is not an easy nor obvious task. As he keeps reminding us, before finding the truth about existence, one must first know the true nature of the self that is searching for it and hopes to realize it. Yet, this self is then in turn being sought for by the self one finds oneself to be at that moment in the search, and that self is even less accurately defined, conscious, and reliable in its assessments. This becomes quite a dilemma, as Rose acknowledges: "The path to Truth begins with the self. We cannot properly isolate, identify, or analyze the self, because it is the subject about which we know the least" (Rose, 1982, p. 141).

Thus, the required process of inquiry is an inverted one. Rather than the search being conceived of as going outward from a solid, authentic, and reliable investigating self, which is the unquestioned baseline in most of both scientific and religious explorations, the inquiry goes in reverse, directly inward, to correctly and absolutely define the nature of our unknown source, from where all questions and all answers are found to emanate. What this search, then, becomes is one of continually refining the process of search itself, and in turn, refining the definition of the self that is doing the refining until finally culminating in the realization of unicity in Truth.

Despite the seeming reluctance of many people, even those who consider themselves to be spiritual seekers, to make this effort to know themselves, and the paucity of trustworthy guidance towards accomplishing this, Rose declares: "Every sentient being searches for his cause and his defi-

dition" (Rose, 1985, p. 6). Frankl regarded this primary urge in somewhat externalized terms as the desire for meaning in life. Rose would translate this into mystical terms as the desire to experience one's essence, which is the source and final appreciator of life.

Yet, there are some catches to this. Rose adds: "Each man hungers for the truth according to his understanding. However, man on all levels is lazy and is attracted to duality and emotion...and he procrastinates...fatally" (from lecture poster).

This discomfiting evaluation again points out the necessity for seekers to first work on perfecting themselves as a tool for seeking, before there can be any hope of finding objective reality. Rose describes our status at the beginning of the quest:

A common denominator in esoteric teachings is that man is fooling himself [or being fooled], and that he must first get a true perspective before he can proceed with any pretence about discovering the nature of God or the universe...or the true inner nature of man. (Rose, unpublished group papers).

This point cannot be overemphasized. It really is an obvious priority, yet one that is generally overlooked in most teachings that claim to aim directly for Godhood, total philosophical comprehension, or selfactualization. The factor that is too often overlooked is: **Who is it who wants the truth?** How would one be able to recognize and receive it without the perfected intuition and capacity to appreciate the truth? We get the image of an astronomer peering out through the telescope, looking for the Earth, without stopping to wonder on what the telescope's tripod rests. How can we actualize a self that is unknown, without running the risk of actualizing a self that may not be us?

Rose is thus painting a picture of the seeker's plight that radically diverges from the usual, unexamined, premise that the search proceeds from an automatically valid basis of selfhood. But without a solid foundation, the mightiest cathedral will still crumble. Because of this, he is describing a completely different manner and direction of seeking. He is "reframing" the entire nature of the philosophical quest. He explains this approach in a poetic passage: "I say that the Truth is in thee... (But) to know thyself, thou must first know that which thou art not, lest thou mistake thy alterego for the real" (Rose, 1982, p. 87).

He defines the seeker's real status in this particularly troubling image: "Is not a man a question asking questions, frustrated by the unanswered, laboring to answer himself...and creating a mountain of questions in the answer?" (Rose, 1978, p. 231). Recognizing this, and being able to go on, evinces a major point of maturity on the path.

This brings us to one of the fundamental principles on which this entire teaching is based: that the search must start from zero. Zero convictionstate. No assumptions, no beliefs, no projections, and no restrictions on the possible answers or the means to reaching them to be considered acceptable. One must start from a reference point of admitted ignorance, not because this is part of a mechanical formula to follow, but because this really is the truth of one's condition when strictly examined, and is something the honest seeker will acknowledge before being able to continue. How can one hope to find the truth while searching for it in an untruthful manner? That would be an inherent contradiction that would invalidate the search from the beginning. For, after all: what do we really know for sure? Honestly. At first, we seem to only be a body, with an awareness, a sense of self, and collection of experiences somehow associated with that body. We also realize that this body will definitely die, along with whatever convictions of meaning in life, philosophical understanding, loving bonds, personal worth, or religious faith we had assumed or created. That is then the end of us, as far as we know, unless we imagine there is some other form of continued existence for us

beyond the grave, or a deity of whom we are a part and to which we will automatically return after we expire. Yet, to complacently rely on these beliefs alone would be an enormous gamble and a possible bluff that death will inevitably call.

But how are we to know what is true? Everything written in all the esoteric books might be false. All spiritual experiences described by others may have been hallucinations. All concepts about life after death may be wishful thinking. All assumptions about the value of one's current life and identity may be pure fantasy. Rose sternly advises: "From the very beginning of our search for truth, we should realize our insignificance as regards our present, unproven state" (Rose, 1982, p. 144).

Rose is quite harsh in his evaluations of our condition: "In gloating over our [presumed] superiority over animals, *we neglect to see our own meaninglessness*" (Rose, 1978, p. 185). He taunts the reader with the unknowing pressing against us from both sides, like bookends: "Giving birth is the same as killing someone. In both cases, you're doing something you don't really understand." Along with exposing the ignorance that undermines our urge towards any kind of Godworship or selfworship, he seems to almost take delight in also negating any reflexive impulse one might have towards Natureworship as being a misguided, and perhaps lazy, gesture of surrender to a higher power: "We must not hurry to deify the planet. It too, is dying, waxing or waning" (Rose, 1978, p. 198). He adds:

It matters not if the earth has a spirit. It matters whether or not the human unit has an individual spirit, or whether or not the human can find for itself an extension of its being which is beyond the dominating power of Nature. (Rose, 1978, p. 224).

At its most base, such Natureworship may also be a sly bid for eliciting condonation for a propensity toward hedonism.

Rose pushes this line of thinking and our insecurity to the limit, and by doing so, like an archer increasing the bowstring's tension behind the arrow, pulls the starting point of the search back to zero. Challenging the very foundations of epistemology and solipsism, he makes the outrageous assertion: "There is nothing proven. We know nothing for sure *we don't even know that we exist*" (Rose, 1985, p. 82).

This is a frightening admission to contemplate. We have no proof that the human being is real, any more than a character in a dream with which we identify is real. For truthfully, how can one know the objective validity about **anything** without being in the state of absolute validity, from where all knowing derives? In discussing the difference between relative perspectives and Absolute Realization, and warning against any form of spiritual smugness or self satisfaction short of attainment of the goal, Rose insists: "You know nothing until you know everything" (Rose, lecture, 1979).

We do need to start realistically where we are and so have to tentatively begin with the experiential premise that we do seem to exist as distinct, individual entities who can choose to do something, otherwise another step would never be taken. But we must acknowledge that even this is still only a highly qualified status, a functional postulation, and the revelation at the conclusion of the search about our true nature may surprise "us". There are two main reasons for maintaining this attitude of rigorous doubt. The first is that, as the search in its purest form can only be for THE TRUTH OF WHAT IS, the primary criteria for finding it must simply that of being truthful in all ways. This is the central theme, in its various aspects, weaving throughout the entire process of inquiry.

Rose describes the proper mental attitude to be maintained throughout the search:

We cannot shut our mind to any phase of reality, and still have a capacity for truth in another field. For if we rationalize about one thing, then rationalization may well be a mental habit cooperating with our laziness or desirerethinking, and we are liable to rationalize about vital things. (Rose, 1984, p. 19).

In other words, we do not start out looking for what we expect or would like to find, nor strictly defining how we are willing to go about it, based on our desires, fears, and conditioning, and placing limitations on what we will accept as our methodology or findings. The investigation must start out from zero, from admitted unknowing, and proceed with an open, truthful mind towards greater knowing; or rather, as will be further explained becoming. This attitude is critical because for one to place any advance requirements on the goalstate from a point on the path that is innately inferior to the state of being that may be realized at the end of the path is to risk thwarting one's efforts to ever attain or "receive" it, and substituting instead some lesser, humanized condition for Reality. Rose suggests that this brand of spirituality is, in one sense, no different from the philosophy of atheistic materialism: "Man demands that God prove Himself in terms of our symbols and paradigms or be considered as nonexistent" (Rose, 1982, p. 137).

In fact, one cannot accurately estimate or even imagine what the final answer beyond all answers may be. It is best not to speculate about what can only be incomprehensible to the mundane mind nor to drag the infinite down to our level and pretend to define it in finite, relative terms. One may be in for a rude awakening. Rose provides a disquieting preview of the final discovery in this testimony: "You never know that which you are going to find. I did not want to find Nothingness. I always wanted to assert my individuality to the greatest degree of intensity" (Rose, 1982, p. 141).

The spiritual search could be likened to a qualitative analysis in a chemistry lab to determine the nature of an unknown substance. The researcher does not go into the testing procedure with the deliberate intention of finding gold or uranium because this is what he would like it to be. One simply works to find out what the substance is and accepts the results as they manifest. In other words: shoot first, and whatever you hit call that the target (Brilliant, Potshots).

This manner of searching requires tremendous vigilance and selfhonesty; especially so here, since the real object of study in spiritual work is oneself. *To lie to oneself is the greatest sin*, and is the great curse of duality. Yet, this task is made doubly difficult and precarious by the fact that one is initially forced to rely on tools of measurement and judgment that are imperfect, and become more or less accurate depending on the choices one makes at every step of the way.

To argue that the full truth can never really be known and that the endless paradoxes of the relative world allow for whatever interpretation of truth one wishes to embrace is a cowardly rationalization that would sabotage the search before it begins. This would be an unnecessary, fatal compromise with lesser motives and standards.

Rose here offers another description of the simple, yet critical, standard to maintain in this work towards selfdefinition and "becoming the truth":

Absolute Truth is not absolutely inaccessible to us and relative truth is definitely accessible. There is but one truth. We might ask here: "How shall we know the truth? What is reality?" We can only know the truth by teaching ourselves to face the truth in all things. If we encourage our computer to come up with erroneous answers, because they are more desirable, then we are developing a computer that we may never be able to trust. TRUTH IS THAT WHICH IS. (Rose, 1984, p. 1921).

As a pertinent example of this quality of mental honesty, one does not start out the spiritual search with the intention of finding “God,” because the term itself already presumes there is something to be found called God, and that one has a fairly good idea of what this Being or ultimate state is to begin with. The term has been so heavily used and misused over the centuries, with various anthropomorphic or politicized qualities projected onto it, that the term is nearly useless as an objective in a pure search. As Rose explains:

I don't use the word “God” because (in using the term) you give it such credence that the majority of people don't see any need to find God. This is the catch. I don't say there is no God; I just say, ‘How about proving your point?’ (Rose, lecture, 1986).

He considers the glib use of the word “God” to be a form of shameless namedropping, when people do not really know what they are talking about.

Rose prefers that one use the neutral term “Truth” or “the Absolute” to designate the unknown goal at the inquiry's conclusion, as this presupposes and demands nothing. It has no personal, cultural, or theological colorations. He describes it this way: “It may be said that the Absolute is a state or essence from which all untruths have been subtracted, leaving behind a region of pure fact; a state undefinable” (Rose, 1978, p. 206). While it is undefinable by a cognizer separate from it, as there can be nothing apart from the Absolute, nor can it be the object of contemplation by someone contained within it, mystics testify that it is realizable by one's coming into unity with it. Truth is thus a clean term, and has the advantage, as previously mentioned, of being its own criteria for discernment as one goes along in the investigation and is thereby constantly, intrinsically selfcorrecting in its workings and findings.

Although a seeming platitude, totality is likewise its own measure in that the Truth is all there is. This is a difficult principle for the relative mind to appreciate. When the tangled domain of duality has finally been transcended and the sole primordial Self realized, there is no longer any “other” to which it may be compared or by which it may be evaluated. Reality is itself the final yardstick. One can know the Truth has been found only by *becoming it*. As Rose explains: “We cannot conceive of a condition of absoluteness as being invalid because it is a condition of absolute validity. Absoluteness is final validity” (Rose, 1982, p. 133). Or, as the sign on President Truman's desk said: “The buck stops here.”

Along these lines, should one finally arrive at this realization of Truth, it could then be called God in retrospect if it is still important by that point to call it anything, and then only for the sake of communicating with those seekers who need to conceive of Reality in religious terms and cannot appreciate any answer that is nondimensional and nonindividualized. Rose does testify, however, to the possible dismay of those hoping for a loving, cosmic deity who will be eternally delighted by our human, corporeal self: “The Absolute is forever impersonal” (Rose, 1978, p. 171).

The second reason for this emphasis upon starting the search from zero and going on from there is not one of strategy or technique, but that of fastidious honesty with oneself. The simple truth is that we do not really know what the truth is. To merely accept spiritual doctrines on faith from supposed authorities, without also acting to somehow realize their truth for oneself, is to not be a seeker but to only remain as the identification with the belief in a conceptstructure. It is less important to seek after gurus and sages than to seek what they sought. To pretend our status is otherwise would be dishonest on a deep level and would belie one's lack of real commitment to spiritual work. Rose declares: “We find the common denominator of all seekers to be ignorance” (Rose, 1978, p. 91).

What understanding about our status can we start with as an honest basis? We can ask ourselves: What are human beings for, on Earth? In other words, if life is for living, then what is living for? Courageous candor forces us to admit that our manifest purpose seems to be reproduction prior to death and our becoming fertilizer afterwards. All the rest may well be fantasy, vanity, and projection. Despite our desperately wanting to assume so, if there is some ultimate meaning to our experience of life, it is not known from our human, terrestrial vantage point. Nor do we know for Whose benefit this massexperience is seemingly occurring. Rose tells us:

Even discounting the force which we ordinarily call God, there is an order in the universe.... This natural plan must be known, and not only guessed at and it may go deeper than we think. It may go beyond the fertility of the soil. (Rose, 1979c, p. 46).

To confidently claim that the world exists for the purpose of our education, growth, and/or enjoyment is an embarrassingly egocentered presumption that still fails to conclusively determine who is living, experiencing, enjoying, etc., the larger purpose for all this struggle for evolution, or the nature of the ultimate Appreciator of our adventures. Likewise, Rose mocks any inclination of ours to feel pride in our roles as integral agents of Nature, on either end of the breeding process, as if we were deliberately participating in something important and masterfully expressing our creative power:

Man comes into the world amid the confusion of two individuals who thought they were combining two alternative principles, only to discover that they were merely creating limitless varieties of newly paralyzed and frustrated units which they called children (Rose, 1979c, p. 35).

Many passively accept the pictureshow of life and their experience within it as it happens to them, just trusting that a wise, compassionate God is running the show and all is as it should be, even though they do not know this God nor feel any compulsion to try to find out. Or, even if life seems absurd and unjust, and the existence of a divine overlord is doubted, many feel there is nothing they can do about the situation anyway and so must accept their lot in life as it is, without further questions or protests. Some even use their hardships and frustrations as proof that there could not possibly be a sensible deity in charge of things and so it would be futile to look for one. A few remaining people are unable to accept any of these philosophies and have no choice but to work to expand the boundaries of their unknowing or to break through them.

One form the attempt to answer this riddle takes is to immerse oneself in the thorough study of metaphysics and mysticism, and then, as a conclusion arrived at through logical synthesis and conceptual inference, to proudly announce: "I am God!" This, however, is a meaningless exercise in self-flattering bravado if "I," "am", and "God" all remain inadequately defined. Neither the feeble human ego nor frail mortal body can be seriously considered an absolute self to worship, the "God" that we assumed we must be is still an awesome mystery, not a known reality, and the "am" supposedly equating the two has no substance, source, or conscious validity.

To merely proclaim that we are undoubtedly cherished characters in a divine play for God's amusement (the doctrine of Lila) means nothing, if we do not know who we essentially are, what God is, nor the nature of our relationship to that God and His creation. Likewise, to remain content with the belief that God loves us, and so everything must be alright, can only be a comforting, lazy bluff, if we do not know the real nature of that love, but only project mere human desires and motives onto the Creator of the universe.

Rose casts a critical eye towards conventional religious notions of a kindly parental or conjugal deity figure: "We take too big a step when we conjure up a God that surmounts all time and space

and then pretend to know Him on a first-name basis" (Rose, 1978, p. 80). Perhaps God "loves" us the same way we love cattle: we can be milked and we are edible! It is certainly understandable for the human being to want to be loved and valued, but it is dishonest philosophy to project this desire up into the sky and assume that Reality is thus obligated to run the universe according to our wishes.

Rose's entire teaching is a dictum that says it is more important to work to transcend and comprehend the manifested universe including the "I" living within it and see it correctly from the vantage point of that which we call God, than to try to create a philosophy of life from incomplete knowledge from a relative viewpoint within duality, that can only be the product of mundane imagination; the source and mechanics of which we cannot even claim as our own. Without knowing the truth directly, Rose insists our existence is invalid, however much meaning we may create for ourselves, within the unknowing. Only when seen from outside it as a whole unit can the Cosmic Drama of Life be understood for what it really is. Most "New Age" metaphysical doctrines still tend to imagine spiritual attainment in human, personal, body-centered terms and are reluctant to contemplate the possible necessity for the complete death of the known self. Yet, with these above points, Rose is also alluding to the fact that the final realization of Truth is not merely a more subtle or exalted, yet still egomind-based experience within the relative world of Plato's Cave, but is an experience of actually *being out of one's mind*, which is the Cave of humanity. It is stepping into the Self; into something totally unimaginable.

Rose is also generally unenthusiastic about traditional religious paths consisting of faith alone in the benevolent mercy of an unknown God and the hope that one's prayers and rituals guarantee salvation. While he acknowledges there is some magic contained in genuine prayer, Rose feels emotional devotion is an incomplete formula and such followers are begging the question rather than asking it, and working to answer it. "Belief is no proof for belief" (Rose, 1978, p. 77), is his assessment of any circular argument that floats in ignorance, with no verifiable reference point in established fact. Again, the Albigen System is a path for seekers, not devotees.

One common example of how this legitimate desire to found one's life upon some bedrock of absolute truth can become trapped in rationalization is the fundamentalist's reliance on scripture. A believer says: "Such and such a principle is true." One asks: "How do you know?" The reply is: "Because it's in the Bible (Koran, Torah, Vedas, etc.)" "How do you know that what's written in this book is true?" "Because God wrote it." "How do you know God wrote it?" "Because it says so in the Bible (etc.)."

A similar process occurs when the reliance is on a specific Guru for one's conviction of certainty about some spiritual or life issue. "The Guru says so and the Guru is God, so it must be right" might be a trustworthy policy to work with if the seeker can be certain that the Guru in question is genuine. As it cannot be automatically assumed that everyone who claims to be God-Realized is truly so, and that even spiritual teachers who are legitimate often have differing teachings, the seeker is still the one who must finally decide which source or authority figure to trust the most.

An additional point is that even believing in a concept that is true (assuming there was some way to determine for certain that it was, such as having a document signed by Christ and notarized by God!) would still not be equivalent to one's being in that state of total realization where this would be known directly. It would always remain an article of faith, or secondhand knowledge. The only value of such belief would be if it prompts some action that might lead to experiential validation of the belief.

Thus, one can never successfully "pass the buck" of responsibility for one's path elsewhere, however strong the inclination may be to transfer authority to the object of the devotion, and however discreet or sincere the attempt may be. The reference point of judgment ultimately resides in the

seeker who is choosing to accept one doctrine or Guru as the truth over another, hence the need for one to become truthful inside. One must realize that the seeker is always prior to any considered teaching and one's reasons for being attracted to a particular teaching are finally inside one's own psyche, and not innately justified in the doctrine, guru, church, etc. itself. One must be able to objectively, critically assess why one is attracted to a particular path: whether it appeals to sensibility and intuition, or to any number of character defects or egogames. It is for these reasons too that Rose's emphasis is on knowing oneself, more than knowing about "God" or any body of teachings.

In this, Rose is countering one of the most fundamental principles in all the world religions: faith. (Actually, a sober, unsentimental look at the scene indicates that religion tends to provide more evidence for Satan than for God!) Most, if not all, exoteric religious teachings contain as the core of their message the fervent urging for people to believe in God. To disbelieve is generally considered anything from foolish to blasphemous. Yet, Rose wonders about the value to a sincere seeker of believing in something that is unknown, for then: in what exactly is one believing, other than a symbolic concept, and upon what reality is the object of this belief based? And, of course, the believing then all too often becomes a comfortable substitute for the effort of finding God for oneself.

He brings up a rude question regarding this matter of faith as a key factor in religion:

The exhortation to have faith to many seekers seems like the lament of a hopeless lover about to lose his mate. I wonder at the need to exhort men to have faith. Is the religion in question so lacking in appeal, intrinsic value, or in evident virtues, that one must be exhorted and reminded to believe, or that we must constantly remind ourselves that we must be in an accepting frame of mind? (Rose, 1978, p. 105).

Although there is undoubtedly a sincere spiritual desire motivating such belief in many people, Rose finds philosophical dishonesty in much of this attitude. There is an inherent contradiction in the notion of "believing in God." To believe in something means that one does not absolutely know the truth about the matter, and so the belief can only be the hope that what one wants to be is actually true. If, on the other hand, one does know or has experienced the goal of the spiritual quest, then the need for any belief would be made obsolete.

If the desire to "find God" is more precisely understood to be the desire to realize or comprehend the truth about existence, then the path towards this goal inviolably necessitates one's being truthful, and any such massive theological rationalization would be a lie to oneself about what is most important.

In regards to spirituality, there are generally two categories of people: those who believe in "God" and those who disbelieve. (Those who do not care either way are irrelevant here.) In a sense, they are similar in that both are believing in a concept that has been created by or given to them at the start, but which they have not proven. The former lazily believe in a God they do not know, and the latter contemptuously believe in the non existence of this same unknown God. Neither knows what is true for sure. Their Godconcepts, whether pro or con, remain untested postulations; mostly projections of personal inadequacy.

Both are really worshipping the same thing: their beliefstate, and never bother to peer outside the closed paradigm this creates, nor suspect there is anything possible beyond it. If they are lucky or if their fate is merciful, something may break down this wall created and maintained by the ego mind and force them to acknowledge a new perspective on things.

The agnostic mind may be even more pathetic in that it is afraid to even have a conviction about the matter one way or the other nor any hope of ever finding out the truth. Such people would

certainly not risk making any effort that might threaten the comfort of familiarity and futility, possibly resulting in some jarring transformation. The agnostic pretends diplomatic openmindedness, when it is mostly needlessly languishing into oblivion.

There is a third, smaller category, however; one that is neither belief nor its opposite: disbelieve. This is the path of **directly seeking for the truth of what is** from a starting point of neutrality within the unknowing. (The perennial philosophy hints the path may also end here, in a higher sense...) This is where exoteric religion becomes esoteric. This path does not accept some principle of spiritual verity on faith, nor does it arrogantly state knowing as a fact that it is false. Either would still be an assumption, not a realization. This third path starts out honestly from a beginning of conscious ignorance, and inquires with an open mind in all possible ways, with the aim of finding out for oneself what the true nature of things is, especially about oneself.

Rose offers another description of the proper attitude in beginning the search:

There is only one time to start and this is now. The manner of searching is to use the tools at hand until better methods are discovered. Of course, in order to begin a work we must have an objective. And the objective need not be immediately negated by declaring that we do not know that which we expect to find, when we announce our objective to be the truth. Such a stated objective actually means that we aim to come to a point of noignorance and being. Our objective is to find our definition, whatever the finding entails. (Rose, 1978, p. 179).

He adds: "You must be prepared to find that which isnot that which you wish to findeven if it is oblivion" (Rose, 1982, p. 141).

Rose noted that Christ gave out, what seemed to be, two divergent categories of teachings in the Gospels. On one hand, He advocated that people should believe in Him as the Son of God and the Savior. On the other, He proclaimed: "Seek and you shall find". Rose considers believing to be different from seeking, and suggests the former was meant as an exoteric teaching for the masses, to make them feel secure and behave morally, and the latter was an esoteric teaching for those who were capable of appreciating the higher road He revealed, and traveling it.

Rose here notes an even further challenging distinction: "Christ had at least 70 disciples. There were only 12 apostles. The percentages of people who have ears still aren't the percentages of people who have the ability to act" (Rose, 1985, p. 242). He is constantly reminding us of the need to take action on our convictions, so that they will become real; or rather, so that we will become real.

This apparent dichotomy in Christ's message may be reconciled if one takes "believing in God" or "believing in Christ" to mean believing that: 1) fundamentally, Reality or Being IS whatever it is, and is the source, context, and final standard for all things, 2) a path to realizing it does exist and one is capable of walking it, and 3) possibly some aid from an unknown agency is provided to the sincere. In this sense, "believing in Christ" (or the Guru, etc.) would symbolize one's following the road to the Kingdom that He described; the bearing of one's cross along the way. This would then also mean: "seeking". The distinction between the two forms of belief can be described as this: one form of belief prevents one from moving, as the belief justifies one's staying comfortably stationary, while the other form of belief motivates one to seek, as the belief is in the promise of finding.

This, now, brings up another one of the basic principles in Rose's teaching: doubt. He insists: "The sacred science is doubt, not belief," and: "To know is to know that which is. To believe is to weave" (Rose, 1975, p. 68). The seeker must take care not to create, project, fantasize, visualize, rationalize, or hypnotize, but work to "*become*," in ways to be explained in the rest of this study. One

must not underestimate the ability and inclination of the human mind to deceive itself or be unwittingly deceived, especially when it is motivated by desperation, lethargy, conceit, or immaturity. Rose stresses that a healthy doubt is a primary tool of discrimination in this investigation into the unknown. But what does it mean to correctly doubt?

Doubt, in Rose's usage, does not refer to its conventional, erroneous meaning, which is actually the "disbelief" attitude described previously. Doubt does not mean to claim that something is known to be false and is thus rejected. "I doubt it" actually means to acknowledge not knowing the truth about something at that point in the inquiry, and that one will look into the matter further to determine what is finally true. One may later find that the issue being considered was indeed true all along, but then this would actually be known personally, and not merely assumed. Doubt may be regarded as the chisel the philosophical sculptor uses to carve out the naked truth from one's amorphous slab of raw experiencedata.

Rose claims that this is what Christ was referring to when He stated that His aim was not to bring peace, but rather a sword. Rose's interpretation is that this was referring to, what in Zen is called, the Sword of Prajna, or discrimination between the real and the unreal. Rose teaches that this attitude is not merely a technique to be employed or a bit of dogma to be mechanically enacted, but is an essential aspect of this process towards personal realization. He has a less poetic way of stating this than did Christ: "There is garbage and there is stuff that smells worse than garbage. Discrimination is knowing the difference" (Rose, 1982, p. 144). He elaborates: "When you get into subjective matters, you get down to a point that the only thing you have to go by is how well your intuition is perfected, and how slowly you jump to believe something that sounds good" (Rose, 1982, p. 147). This principle is best stated in a highly significant saying by Zen master Po Shan, in regards the "doubt sensation": "**The greater the doubt, the greater the awakening; the lesser the doubt, the lesser the awakening; no doubt, no awakening**" (Chang, 1959, p. 95). As will be explained later, this gap between doubt and realization also directly relates to the Zen principle of tension in preparing one for the final breakthrough. All this is also somewhat analogous to Christ's parables about the futility of pouring new wine into old skins, and the necessity for dying, so that one may find Life.

This attitude of naked inquiry, of starting with no presumptions about oneself, the path to be followed, nor what one insists on finding, is deemed a prerequisite for arriving at a genuine answer; one not contaminated by human imaginings and ego. The only qualification Rose adds is: "Doubt everything, except your ability to doubt" (Rose, 1985, p. 82). In other words, one must believe that one has some measure of ability to search in a meaningful way, and that one step will lead to another, otherwise one would never do anything and be paralyzed into limbo.

The maintenance of this doubt sensation also prevents one from ever falling back into the complacency of the familiar and settling for a false sense of security within the unknowing, thereby precluding the continued search for truth. However, beyond a certain point of commitment or obsession, this is no longer possible anyway; much like the thousand pound weight that one cannot put down. Once the Question has been asked, existence is recognized to be hauntingly empty until it is answered. Once on the path, the door to higher awareness opens only in one direction, and then closes behind us. One can procrastinate, but never go back.

Rose strips away all buffers and poetic garnish, and describes the human condition uncompromisingly, as one who sees our sad world from a place beyond life's hypnotic spell:

We live in a cloud of illusions and rarely realize that we are spinning this web of fiction for all the hours and days of our lives, unless we are fortunate or unfortunate enough to die slowly. Perhaps slow death may be the only moments of reality for the total life

of many earthlings. Because the dying person is forced to face the fact that he is about to become zero. Nothingness has more meaning to him now. This dying man knows too late the value of the doubt, and the foolishness of faith, unless that faith be in his own power to solve the problem. (Rose, 1984, p. 20).

This recalls the bumper sticker that says: "Hell is seeing the truth too late."

This insistence upon determined action, based on a wholehearted conviction about the urgency for such action, is stated quite emphatically by Rose: "Christ said 'Seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you'. When He said 'knock', He meant put your head against the door and rap with your head; not just with your knuckles!" (Rose, 1985, p. 116).

To sum up much of the material up to this point: Rose's basic message in introducing this work is that the real quest does not consist of our trying to "find" God, like some longlost relative. God is not lost. Rather, we need to find ourselves the one who is looking. We are lost. God (meaning: Reality) is already here, for there is nowhere else to be but HERE. But we do not know where "here" is nor "*who*" is here.

Nothing is wrong. Ignorance is the only problem. **We are the ignorance.** We do not need to wait for the Messiah to arrive to save us. The perennial philosophy is that the Messiah has always been here, waiting for us to wake up.