

## Chapter 4

# Further Basic Principles

How is one to find a sure path to the Truth, given our generally ignorant state and the inner and outer obstacles to such work towards selfdiscovery? What must it involve? At times, the difficulty of the task seems overwhelming and one may feel inclined to abandon the quest, resigning oneself to one's fate. But the situation might not be that bad. As Rose explains: "Man is complex. The Truth is simple. The path to the Truth needs to be complex only in coping with complex interference by man's mind. As that interference is removed, the path becomes proportionately more simple" (Rose, unpublished group papers).

This work is the true psychology: the preparing of oneself for revelation. A big problem the seeker encounters in looking for reliable guidance from traditional, mainstream psychology in working through this inner maze is that the field has generally not taken the issue of sanity and ultimate selfdefinition seriously, nor does it have a dependable rolemodel for such a state to rely on as an authority.

I once asked a respected psychiatrist for his definition of sanity. He replied that the term was meaningless to him and his only job was to get people functional enough so they can be discharged from the hospital. In the realm of the already functional, psychotherapy still largely aims only at getting people to coexist harmoniously with others and to learn how to satisfy their own desires effectively. This is what Rose refers to as utilitarian psychology: a discipline for people who wish to remain wellbehaved potted plants, lawabiding statistics, and hungry consumers who can successfully earn "a nickel for Kroger's [market]."

The field of humanistic psychology developed partially in reaction to this lack of higher ideals in the existing paradigm of psychology, whether analytic, social, behavioral, or psychiatric. The source of the basic flaw in the development of these psychologies was finally recognized. Most theories of personality, pathology, and therapy were based on the numerous case histories of troubled clients with which clinicians worked over a period of years. These accumulated experiences, processed through the clinicians' own incomplete knowledge of themselves, resulted in the particular paradigm of the inner self that each devised.

The error in this method is that the exclusive study of sickness can result only in a sick psychology, as there is no reference point of sanity to which they can refer as an objective standard of measurement, and there may even be the tacit agreement that no such condition exists. This is much

like a physician studying only cancer and coronary patients in the effort to understand how the body works in its optimal state, instead of studying Olympic athletes or yoga masters.

The humanistic camp realized this error something that should have been obvious all along and went about looking for such a higher standard of superior functioning. This effort took the form of their studying an assortment of great artists, scientists, and social leaders as role models for defining the common qualities of healthy human nature.

This was a fine effort, reaching in the right direction, but did not go as far as it could have. The highfunctioning people that were studied were certainly closer to exemplifying the most noble human qualities than does the average person, but their standard still falls short of the ideal. If we want to know what sanity truly is, *we must examine someone who is absolutely sane.*

It is not necessary or even valid to study the bellshaped curve of personal diversity, and from that to derive a statistical average of what it means to be human. Studying people as they are does not reveal what they ought to be in their optimal state of awareness and spiritual maturity. It does no good to vote on this with statistics. An honest look at the world around us indicates the majority of people can be wrong. Even those at the upper end of this range may not know what really needs to be known and are still functioning within the paradigm of the normal, albeit extremely well. There is evidence that those rare individuals who are truly sane are beyond the boundaries of all our paradigms entirely.

As the references in Chapter 2 illustrated, there have been people throughout history who have claimed to have awakened from the normal state of consciousness, which they have unanimously regarded as sleeplike and false, and arrived at what they can only refer to as Reality, the Self, or God Consciousness. If we can be fortunate enough to encounter even one or two examples of such people who are fully sane (meaning: having a true mind, free of all egoic delusion and fragmentation, thereby existing in objective reality), then the mind of such a person would be a valid prototype of the mind in its pristine, natural state. The testimony of one such person is more meaningful than the statistics of a million crippled or foolish ones.

When personality and cultural factors are filtered out, the insights they provide into the workings of the mental dimension are found to be consistent with one another and as close to having the assurance of validity as one can get, short of direct realization for oneself. Any “transpersonal map” offered by such pioneers into spirit would be well worth taking seriously by any traveler of inner paths, however individualized its application would need to be.

The perspective on normal human consciousness from the vantage point of an awakened mind is humbling. During a discussion once on the different levels of awareness, I asked Rose what our minds look like from where he “is.” He replied forthrightly, yet without what would seem to be arrogance: “Like ants.” Another time, he was remarking mockingly on the pomposity and ridiculousness of most human ambition, considering our actual status of slavish subjugation to primal, biological programming. I asked him: “Do you consider people to basically be sophisticated animals?” With a straight face, Rose answered: “No they’re not that sophisticated.”

Yet, what could be regarded as offensive condescension could be reframed by the student into being a gentle slap across the face to rouse one out of a hypnotic stupor. One can join in Rose’s humorous japing by using such pointers to get wise to one’s victimized condition, rather than remaining helplessly identified with it, and thus seeing one’s predicament from a position of relative freedom.

Rose loves to subvert the common human tendency towards selfimportance, likewise implying that the error is in our attributing importance to a false notion of self and false understanding of

what life really is, thereby not taking seriously what really needs to be taken seriously. He chides: "The cosmos is laughing at you," creating an image of a chuckling Buddha watching a chicken proudly parading around with its head cut off. Coupled with his other statements along these lines, he seems to be telling us that life (as we know it) is a dismal joke, and death is the punch line. We must find the alternative before the curtain comes down.

He offers some guidance in a kinder way, while nonetheless knocking the starch out of the listener's vanity: "Don't take life seriously. It doesn't take you seriously." He is again exposing our groundless conviction of selfimportance and makebelieve meanings, and suggesting that rather than life on Earth being a playground for our enjoyment, we may be being used as bit players in a larger story by some agency that may not have our ultimate welfare as its priority. He is alerting the reader to pull back from the moviescreen of life with which one is usually wholly identified and take another look around. The true perspective may not be as flattering to us as we have assumed. To discover this true perception first requires removing the previously mentioned interference in one's mind that prevents one from seeing clearly what is, thereby allowing one to become more in unity with the truth.

However, for any Sage who has attained liberation to devise a legitimate system or teaching by which to help the student still stuck in Maya is no easy task. One can only dimly appreciate how difficult it must be for one who has awakened to Reality to return into an illusory world, to talk to people who are fictional, into ears that are hard of hearing, in words that are meaningless, about something that is incomprehensible, and to which no linear path can lead. One can only be grateful for whatever guidance is made available, as idiosyncratic as its presentation may be. He explains his hope in teaching:

I don't believe that anyone can give you any more than his own personal reactions and allow you to choose your own. But by talking, sometimes someone with similar questions and a desire for a certain [quality of] answer or completeness of philosophy may receive an intuition and you may have the same direction. (Rose, 1982, p. 143).

Rose is one who claims, "*I have been there and back*" (Rose, 1978, p. 224). His challenge as a teacher has been to provide a methodology of search that is as scientific as possible, while acknowledging that one is dealing with intangibles and that the seeker's path must always be an individualized process; one in which all the factors can never be known or controlled.

Too often, any form of introspection, whether psychological or spiritual, has been considered by materialistic scientists to be unreliable and unverifiable. However, by "scientific," Rose means several things: 1) there are certain consistent laws or common denominators in subjective work that can be described and utilized, 2) there are signposts or milestones of progress on the path that can be recognized, 3) reason, commonsense, and thoroughness in the investigation must always be employed and should corroborate, not contradict, one's intuitions, and 4) as one's status as a genuine observer is better established and one's perceptions are more clearly seen, one's inner visions can be more legitimately regarded as objective knowledge, of the most direct kind. This is scientific research.

However, Rose's system does differ from most such research, and most religious teachings, in one particular aspect. One of the standard requirements in scientific work is that one's findings be predictable and repeatable, otherwise they are deemed spurious. Rose turns this around with a surprising twist by claiming that one's findings in spiritual research are more likely to be genuine if they are NOT predictable and occur seemingly of their own accord.

There are several reasons for this. The primary one is that the aim of the search is *objective discovery*, not the creation of a desired goal. In the search for the Truth, by definition, one does not know what the ultimate, comprehensive “answer” may be when one starts out looking for it. To presume to know it in advance, even if basing the assumption on the testimony of those who have possibly found it, can still be only a feeble conceptualization at best, compared to the experience of Reality they have described. By having some definite objective in mind and then practicing disciplines in order to experience it, all the while fortified by strong desire and belief, one may well find exactly what one has been looking for. If one listens for an allegedly significant “cosmic” sound, looks for some form of celestial vision, wishes for a particular feeling of joy or distinctive mental state, these may indeed be experienced. The “God,” “Goddess,” or “Heaven” one seeks may well be found. However, one may never be able to know for certain if the experience is real, or is only the product of tremendous desire and projection. This may also prevent one from ever finding the real thing, which such imaginings can only simulate. Rose warns us:

That which occurs by accident is more reliable (for evidence value) than that which is born out of an intense desire of faith, because the human mind is the matrix from which many weird things are hatched by faith. We must be careful not to conjure up a preconceived idea of the Absolute. (Rose, 1978, p. 214).

Rose has referred to the occult doctrine that afterdeath states, whether of heavens or hells or something inbetween, are largely the result of one’s lifetime of indoctrination and conviction about the matter, even if subconsciously maintained, more than objectively real places or dimensions. Likewise, he believes that psychic phenomena, encounters with spirits, and such, are more likely to be genuine if they occur spontaneously and without eager expectation (which may also well negate the likelihood of their happening). Again, the emphasis is on preparing oneself to receive a realization of truth, rather than running the risk of creating some desired experience beforehand and then embracing it eagerly as the answer.

The search needs to be opened because what the process really entails is the gradual negation of oneself (as one currently finds oneself to be) and making “room” for the discovery to occur. The false egoself is the obstacle to the truth, not the one who will “acquire” it. To not fill in the vacuum of spiritual poverty by oneself, but to work and wait for it to be filled, is the real act of faith.

The other reason for Rose’s stress on unpredictability also somewhat counters the requirement in scientific research that the investigative procedures must be consistent and standardized. Rose rejects the notion that any such regulated, regimented approach to spirituality is possible, beyond the elementary stages of preparation and the implementation of certain universal Laws of Life (to be described). He does not consider any one mantra, breathing exercise, chant, posture, object of visualization, etc. to be a standardized tool that will bring about pre determined results to everyone in equal measure.

As his “Jacob’s Ladder” indicates, Rose is not suggesting that the mental dimension and what is found beyond it varies from person to person, but that the specific maze in each individual’s mind is unique to that person and is the course through which one must navigate in a unique way; one that cannot be fully planned out in advance. A general map can be provided, but the details must be filled in by the individual seeker, as one goes along.

What the Albigen System essentially is then is a blend of psychological, phenomenological, and philosophical refinement in tracing back one’s source of selfhood. It is naked inquiry into the question: “Who am I?” The path is its own reason and validation. Any other motive than the desire

for the truth will be exposed in time, and one will either fall away from the task or realize that this quest is the only thing worth doing. Rose explains the situation plainly:

The Albigen System does not pretend to offer any somatic advantages or improvement of physical faculties, nor does it pretend to be a spiritual placebo, nor to improve your business, nor to flatter your estimates, nor to lengthen your life, but it does hope to use some of that brief span of time to its best advantage in finding selfdefinition and essencerealization. (Rose, private group papers).

Once the individual has gotten to the point of recognizing oneself to be a seeker of truth in fact, having to be, how does one begin? What is the first step in this enormous task? This brings up one of the key principles in Rose's teaching, having implications beyond what is obvious. In response to an early query of mine, he stated:

Two things are necessary to begin: have hunger, and get dynamic or angry enough to start digging. Third: **commitment** a simple pledge to yourself and any god who might be tuned in. All books and philosophies beyond this are only words.

For Rose, commitment is a sacred term, containing a magic beyond its mundane meaning of one's promising to do something. It has the significance of a holy vow. It is the key that opens the doorway into a new dimension of life; a door that would not open without it.

Fitting with Rose's early, jocular nickname for the group Ignoramuses Anonymous, the vow is essentially: "I realize I am ignorant and lost (in terms of ultimate values). I admit my life and identity have no fundamental validity while I remain in the unknowing. I give up. I want the Truth and nothing else matters anymore. I dedicate the remainder of my life to doing everything I can to find what is real. I would appreciate any aid that may be available. I will see this thing through to the end, no matter what. I know there is literally nothing else to do that is of any value. Now what?" Whether the vow is overheard by some compassionate deity or by one's inner self, the result is the same: something magical begins. The beginning of a path that was previously invisible now becomes seen.

This notion of a commitment relates to another term Rose uses: the **vector**. This is originally a principle in physics, meaning a unit of force, of a certain magnitude, moving in a certain direction. Rose says that this is what the individual must become in his own life: a vector, towards some objective. He adds that this does not only apply to spirituality as a goal, but to anything. If the person wants the million dollars, the gold medal, the Nobel Prize, or anything else, one still has to become focused enough in intent and discipline to follow the course through.

Rose notes that most people do not bother to make of themselves a conscious vector in regards to anything. He sees the majority of people as generally just drifting through life, moved by a thousand forces of programming and influence they do not recognize or suspect, all the while pursuing the individual aims of any number of egos and appetites inside themselves that are oftentimes at conflict with each other and almost never questioned as to their source, meaning, or legitimacy. With one's energy and attention going in a number of mundane directions at once, if towards anything beyond survival maintenance, the net result for that life is seldom anything significant. Even if it is, the victory gained could not really be called one's own.

To become a vector means to know oneself well enough to know what one's real issue or drive is in life, and to have enough selfcontrol and determination to devote oneself to manifesting that with everything one has. This is a serious matter. It cannot be forced. It comes with maturity, although sometimes life itself forces such a sense of mission or duty upon us.

One student, sensing his only intermittent conviction about the Work and feeling some mild remorse about it, once asked Rose: "How can I desire the Truth more?" He answered: "You can't." One may desire to desire more, but it cannot be forced. A lesser part of oneself cannot commandeer the rest of the psychic organism and make it more serious than it is able to be. The outer personality cannot reach inside and manipulate one's core state in accordance with an egovalue. This impulse can only derive from the deepest part of oneself. If the part that desires is primarily only an ego, even if originally prompted by some dim intuition from the inner self, the interest will soon wane when newer, more appealing interests come to the fore, or the tentative commitment encounters adverse circumstances that intimidate further effort. This conviction has to come to maturity in its own time, which only then becomes the impetus driving one's spiritual vector and animating one's egomind actions.

In another instance, one of Rose's college-age daughters became curious about what it was her father was teaching his students, as she had little understanding of it at the time and he had never attempted to impose anything on her that was not solicited or welcomed. She read through The Albigen Papers. He casually asked her: "Well, what do you think?" She sat there for a long time, in silence, looking off into the distance somberly. She finally replied: "Dad I've got games to play." He discreetly walked away without another word. She was speaking on behalf of the young soul that admits to its compulsion to first pass through the Garden of Earthly Delights before putting away the toys of childhood and beginning to seek its source in earnest.

He has even lamented that his own longtime students are seldom serious enough about their commitment to the path or their utilization of him as a teacher. He once made the remark: "Nobody is knocking on my door, or if someone does, they run away to hide in the bushes when I open it." Yet, what seeker, on any path, can claim to have never turned away from the confrontation with blunt truth that he represents?

Keeping all this in perspective, Rose cautions about overambition as well; the fanciful, unrealistic notions about conquering the world and chasing every rainbow. He advises: "Don't get yourself confused with too many ideas, or too many drives; you can only make one major commitment in life" (Rose, 1982, p. 1467). This is reminiscent of Christ's allegory of the builder contemplating the construction of a house, meaning that one needs to seriously assess one's capacity and conviction before committing oneself to a major undertaking.

What ideally happens, whether one's vector is aimed at a spiritual or secular objective, is that gradually all the aspects of one's life merge together into one, harmonious effort in a given direction, much like numerous strands of fiber weaving together to form one, strong rope. One is no longer passively drifting or working at crosspurposes amidst one's diverse desires. Every value, every expenditure of energy revolves around that one, central vow. It may even be said that whatever a person loves the most is one's God, and is the God that will reward one for that devotion.

There is another major reason for Rose's repeated emphasis on one's making a commitment. (It should be noted that he does not mean a commitment to him or to any group or church. The commitment is to the quest itself, in the name of one's unknown essence.) He is convinced that the formal making of this vow initiates a process that is larger than the individual who is making it; something of a significance and scope the person cannot yet comprehend. He explains:

I believe that once the commitment is made to find your Truth at all costs, some interior or anterior self sets up protection. It may even set up the whole path. You can call it God or the Guardian Angel or a spiritual alliance, if you wish [the dotted line on the right side of Jacob's Ladder]. Something sets up protection. Now, I do not want you to

feel too secure, because uncertainty and despair are part of the formula, it seems, for finding the final door or breakthrough. The despair is necessary to pop the head, after the long ordeal of running between the raindrops. (Rose, 1979c, p. 69).

Rose suggests that one's life may be little more than a haphazard collection of experiences, over which one has little control, until such a commitment is made. At that point, however, if the commitment is sincere (and the capacity for wholehearted sincerity will vary depending on the unicity and ripeness of one's nature), from the truest part of one's character, something magical begins.

After launching one's "noisy vector" for Truth, a path that may not have even existed for that individual previously now becomes apparent, and the first step is revealed. As Rose states, the part of oneself that is real the only aspect that is real may well arrange the entire path that the finite egoself will need to tread to arrive into Awakening. The small "s" self would not know what to do or where to go if such guidance from behind the scenes was not provided.

The individual will find that events occur, fortuitous meetings with special people take place, inner resources become aroused that one may not have known one had possessed, and circumstances generally arrange themselves to lead one down the road towards further opportunity for learning and change. One becomes under the auspice of some unseen guiding power. One may even feel in a state of grace. This recalls Gurdjieff's notion of the accessibility of higher influences, in that "normal" people's lifepaths are determined largely by Nature, karma, and accident, whereas seekers and strivers inhabit a dimension of magic; one more "alive" and purposeful than that of those living in a world of sleep. Rose adds: "A true seeker is a very unique person. Outwardly he will not appear to be different from anyone else. His uniqueness comes from the particular game that he plays. He allows himself to become addicted..." (Rose, 1978, p. 207).

The rules of the game are different now; in fact, the person is now playing an entirely different game what DeRopp called "The Master Game." The person is living consciously for perhaps the very first time, in the search for what comprehends all consciousness. The person is no longer a statistic, a victim of life's sorrows and joys, but has become a warrior.

Rose's conviction about protection is a bit more imprecise, as seemingly negative or unjust occurrences will undoubtedly continue to happen, despite one's most noble efforts and virtuous lifestyle. Some events possibly attributable to karma may need to be played out. Certain hardships might be the natural adversity to any kind of ambitious endeavor that seems to be rudely built into life in this realm of duality. (However, the later section on "betweenness" describes a magical shortcut through this maze). He does believe that if the seeker is true to the commitment and does not "cheat" against oneself or break the rules, then no major, insurmountable form of opposition will rise up to counter or harm the individual. Something higher than our human selves will see to it that we escape the worst and see the quest through safely. Regardless, Rose's only comment about all this would be that we cannot, nor should not, presume to make any final judgment about our lives until the race is run and we can then see the entire story at once. From that transcendental vantage point we may find that events which seemed at the time to be negative or adverse to what we thought would be best turn out to have been just the right thing to occur in our story at that moment, to bring about some necessary result or opportunity. Rose has remarked having always felt he was born under a "lucky star" and that, in retrospect, he could see how some Intelligence beyond what he could imagine from his mundane perspective had masterminded his whole life, even setting up the events triggering his final Experience.

The implication here is that there is far more to the workings of the quest than individuals can know from where they stand on the road. He claims the myriad interdependent factors inside and

outside the seeker are so overwhelmingly complex that one could not hope to plot out one's course to the Truth from one's own store of understanding. Seemingly, once the commitment has been made, the path largely unfolds by itself, carrying us along with it if we are cooperative. We become aware of a larger destiny; one that may have plans of which we have now become a willing part.

There is an implication to this, which will be corroborated by one's experience. It is that beyond a certain point of commitment, one may not be allowed to quit the path and go off in a different direction. Once the promise has been made, there is an understanding that the commitment is a twoway agreement between oneself and Something Else. Once begun, one may be able to procrastinate, but never leave the path. Yet, Rose has qualified this with another consideration. He once submitted the ominous prophecy that, as the years go by, certain students in the school would "descend back into the illusion, while a few others will go on to become the spiritual giants of the future" (Rose, unpublished group papers). Every seeker recognizes the challenge and threat in this statement.

There is a further aspect to this principle. It relates to the Law of the Ladder, which will be described in a later section [see also "Definition of Terms" section]. One becomes part of a larger process that involves many other people, energies, and Laws of Life, and the maintenance of one's commitment is crucial to keeping this sacred process in operation. As Rose explains:

(Commitment) makes an eternal spiral...from the mundane to the Absolute. By his commitment, the teacher reaches down to help the helpless. The helpless, before receiving help, should make the commitment that when they succeed in any degree, they will help in sincere desire to help their fellows. Before the helpless become (reach the Absolute), they have thus made a commitment that will have set in motion at least their minds and physical bodies in the direction of teaching and helping others and even setting an example. All of which may seem to be foolish to them when they enter satori, and see the insignificance of all mundane effort. (Rose, unpublished group papers).

As anyone who has ever vowed to break a bad habit or embark upon some new discipline knows, the lower, unruly parts of oneself can work to thwart the more ambitious part that makes the commitment. It is difficult for a fragmented, mechanical, heavily conditioned, semiconscious "person" to make a major life commitment, and fully follow through with it, without inner resistance. Yet, this determination is what is essential, especially in this most important of all ambitions.

There is a critical reason for doing this. As Rose warns the prospective seeker: "(Regarding commitment): If it's a spiritual thing don't do it halfway, because you're only going to get halfway. And halfway to eternity is nowhere. That's still ignorance, because **you know nothing until you know everything**" (Rose, lecture, 1979). He is obviously referring to a special kind of conviction that is in a category by itself. Its real significance is more than the making of a promise. It means giving oneself up to the higher reality one hopes to realize.

Rose defines the essence of the matter in this key dictum: "**You will become the percent you commit.**" This is again similar to Christ's sayings about one's needing to die in order to find Life, as well as Po Shan's statement about the "doubt sensation." The more one gives of oneself to the process of inquiry and transformation, the more one will find of reality.

This gives a different connotation to the principle of prayer than its usual meaning of one's asking God for help or healing, in exchange for greater faithfulness. In line with Rose's insistence that one must become a unified vector towards the truth, it is seen that the true prayer is not any one

gesture or sentiment of a spiritual desire, however sincere, that stands isolated apart from the rest of one's life. According to Rose, the sum and extent of one's entire life is one's prayer for the answer. It can be regarded that all of one's life is weighed as a whole unit upon some cosmic scale every deed, every thought, every desire, every struggle, every act of courage, all the wins and losses and this then becomes one's total statement of commitment about that lifetime.

Although Rose depicts "Enlightenment" as finally being an all or nothing affair, in another sense, no effort is ever wasted, even if the results do not manifest as an absolute answer in that lifetime. Rose states that from a perspective outside of the relative stream of life, all of one's work and dedication to an ideal is seen as becoming an eternal fact that cannot be erased. The moment of death becomes then the signature on one's self-portrait painted stroke by stroke every day, by every act of one's life, and this story of struggle and achievement remains forever.

To provide any final solace, however, there is still then the obvious question of who it is ultimately who appreciates this eternal fact. One of Rose's students, Eric H., supplied the equally obvious answer: "Why the E.F.A., of course the Eternal Fact Appreciator!" More seriously, though, Rose adds: "Be content that your life was not an act of foolishness...and know that this brotherhood fact (of action) is more real than the transient world of illusion, in that some of its members have transcended illusion. (Rose, 1975, p. 58).

It is not to be implied that once the commitment is nobly made, the rest of the road is always to be smooth and joyous, with limitless celestial aid speeding one's journey along. While functioning in the dimension where polarity is the law, and possibly laboring against forces that do not wish us to escape our bondage to this place, one must expect to encounter resistance. Rose alerts the seeker with this warning and promise: "People who make a commitment and are aware of that commitment, will continually find opposition to test the commitment, and with each test comes a redoubling of direction and intensity" (Rose, 1982, p. 144).

Regardless of one's domain of chosen endeavor in life, we are not only tested, but defined by resistance. While one may lament the hardships, sacrifices, and setbacks in one's process of search, the opposition to our efforts that we encounter helps us in a sense by fortifying and determining our character in the arena of daily life.

At a meeting years ago in which several of Rose's students were discussing values and priorities, one fellow, Phil F., spontaneously blurted out a line that has haunted me ever since: "Every mystic has his price." This is an intimidating and humbling accusation; yet even more so, a challenge to the seeker to prove oneself an exception to, what statistically seems to be, an insidious rule on the path.

What he was saying was that at a critical point in one's life, one may choose to identify oneself with the ego that makes the commitment to work for the truth. Then, as life goes on, one is continually bombarded with temptations and distractions from without, and weaknesses and rationalizations from within. The desire to find reality, God, or ultimate selfhood has to be one's unequivocal priority, otherwise, sooner or later, one may find oneself "bought off" by some lower level trinket or gratification, short of the goal; and there shamefully to remain.

This warning is the underside of the First Commandment: "Thou shall have no other Gods before me." Truly, one must be willing to give all to the quest, in order to get All in return. Phil's warning remains to test the integrity of one's commitment, and the thoroughness of one's self-knowledge in rooting out those imps of lower desire that would thwart the grand ambition.

Rose is a man of action. He does not offer a merely intellectual philosophy or emotional panacea. He is not even interested in having people share his beliefs about the nature of things and

the principles of the path. He insists one's philosophy has to be one's life, for the seed to come to fruition. Once the seeker understands what this path involves, one's character must become infused with the determination to fully manifest the teaching one now professes to believe, and not only admire it from a distance or worship it as an idol.

Making this shift from thinker to actor requires selfknowledge. As Rose defines it: "Determination is the awareness of conviction." It is this commitment that is repeatedly tested by adversity and what finally determines one's destiny.

It is not easy to isolate this quality of character and to live from this alone. Facing the truth about oneself without blinking or furtively justifying one's distortions requires tremendous integrity. One questioner at a lecture admitted feeling resistant to committing himself to the work of transformation; his having some intuition about what cost this would involve. In response, Rose confronted him by saying: "You don't have courage. You don't want to accept the reality of yourself."

The principle of selfsacrifice relates to courage in that one must have the faith or conviction that the part of oneself that is regarded as "me," or the paradigm of lifeexperience that one regards as "reality," can be jettisoned in return for the greater reality or selfhood waiting beyond the boundary of one's current understanding. This important theme of the self's division into conflicting selves, and the truer self being hoodwinked by lesser selves will be later explored in greater detail.

Another fellow at the lecture was also apprehensive about diving into this business of personal sacrifice and change. Rose's perspective on human nature and psychological work was artfully revealed in his response:

You know what you are afraid of. You think you are afraid of losing some part of yourself, but you are really afraid of losing a coward. Let him die. He is not worth the attention. There may be something magical found in the losing of that coward. (Rose, 1979c, p. 69).

He has also made comments in passing that liken the seeker of eternity to a valiant warrior: "Life isn't worth living if you're afraid of dying," or even a kamikaze pilot: "If you intend to die, you can do anything." Rose would also undoubtedly agree with the intent of the old samurai saying: "When faced with a choice between life and death, always choose death." What can die can only be the false.

Rose's comments are not to be confused with suicidal morbidity. Rather, he is intending to inspire the seeker on to a greater sense of urgency and boldness, and to leave the familiar props of psychological comfort behind. Despite his repeated warnings for one to not underestimate the subversive influence of the forces of adversity, he also wishes to encourage the seeker to become fully immersed in the work of, what he calls, the "grand obsession," trusting that life itself respects a commitment well made. While not meaning to promote the childish image of an anthropomorphic, parental deity, Rose does affirm: "Fortune is an ally to the brave."

One's motive for the commitment is not entirely that of noble courage. It is also the mature recognition of the insubstantiality of life as we know it now and the hunger to find what is true on the other side of the veil, while there is still time to hunt for it. Recalling the metaphor of Plato's Cave and the entire philosophy of the Albigensians, Rose's presence constantly confronts the seeker with the admission that, contrary to our apparent experience, we are not real nor in reality now yet there is promise of a road out of the cave. It is the sole part of oneself that is *real* that is able to recognize this Voice of intuition and is moved to act on its prompting. Beyond a certain point, the quest itself becomes the only value that is meaningful, and one smiles knowingly at the memory of the graffiti

from the hippydrug era: "Reality is a crutch"; "reality" referring to the illusion that is now all we know and are.

As will be explained in a later section, Rose acknowledges there being significant differences between the male and female natures that require somewhat different approaches or attitudes to seeking. His stress on doubt, determination, assertiveness, etc. is more geared to the masculine nature, whereas devotion, receptivity, and surrender are more fitting to the feminine nature. Finally, of course, some measure of both must be blended together in each individual's nature, as it is the call of the same higher Intuition to which one is committed or devoted. According to Rose, the common denominator in both cases is: "You have to love the truth" this is the heart of the formula.

Despite the seriousness with which Rose urges the search be regarded, he does not mean to intimidate the seeker into feeling overwhelmed by the complexity and arduousness of the task described. In fact, the hope of success he offers is of the most positive kind: that it is almost entirely dependent upon one's worthiness of hope, according to one's conviction and resultant efforts. Rose's very presence offers the additional encouragement that spiritual realization is not only for mythical, superhuman, godlike avatars who had a blessed destiny from birth, but is attainable by an ordinary although admittedly highly extraordinary human being. Rose claims: "Anybody can do this with just plain determination and common sense, who is willing to face himself and examine his condition and convictions" (Rose, 1985, p. 5).

Rose's understanding of what the search involves, as well as his very style of teaching, preclude any "guarantees" of predictable, measurable consequences, as he rejects any simplistic, mechanistic notions of spiritual work. He does not want to encourage belief in the attractive prospect that, for example: "x" number of breathing exercises, plus one hour daily of chanting the Lord's name ("How do you know what the Lord's name is?," Rose queries the enthusiastic devotee), plus 10% of one's income in the basket, times 20 years = Enlightenment.

However, he does make a bold claim that could be confidently regarded to be as close to a guarantee of success as a mature seeker could want. In fact, this formula can be recognized to run throughout his entire teaching: "The rate of realization is directly proportional to the amount of and quality of energy and attention applied to the quest." Its more concise form "**Results are directly proportional to energy applied**" is like a holy commandment in Rose's group and, coupled with the earlier stated dictum: "You will become the percent you commit," sums up much of the system in this regard.

Their meaning is that, while the consequences of one's actions cannot be assumed to be linear, i.e. "A leads to B leads to C," there is an overall formula that states the process of selftransformation resulting in realization is directly dependent upon the amount of effort one puts into the inquiry. The rhymes and reasons of the myriad inner and outer details of the transformation are beyond the individual's capacity of understanding and are in the hands of some higher agency, but Rose wishes to assure the seeker that the more one labors for the Truth, the more of it one will come to realize. The more one learns to see the whole of one's life process from outside it, the more it is seen that a knowing Hand is turning the combination lock of our minds to free us.

Rose mixes chastisement with hope in pointing out how our misdirected efforts towards ordinary, mundane gratification could be more wisely aimed: "If we applied the same amount of energy that is wasted in any of the material pursuits, we would see spiritual results" (Rose, 1978, p. 195). He is saying that although spiritual work is in a category by itself, much of the impetus and discipline involved in making for success is much the same as in one's working to satisfy any ephemeral, earthly desire. He is asking us to dig deeply into ourselves and reexamine the nature of our desires to define the real desire underneath them all, and work to answer it directly, with the same energy.

An even finer quality of discrimination is necessary beyond this preliminary distinction between terrestrial and spiritual aims. One must be prudent in choosing between possible esoteric paths, as one's decision can bear grave consequences. Rose confronts the seeker thusly:

The questions that you must ask yourself naturally begin with a question as to whether you actually want to approach reality. Another question to ask yourself deals with the amount of time you can or are willing to spend in search of that Reality. Can you afford to waste twenty years of your life, probing and believing a system, only to find that it is incomplete, spurious or of an anodyne nature? That you lose your money in the process is not near as important as the time that is lost, because the older you get the more intractable and calcified the mental abilities become. (Rose, unpublished group papers).

Rose's advice regarding this issue again goes back to his repeated emphasis on needing to develop a reliable intuition as the tool of discernment. When one's judgment is guided by intuition, the seeker must then act to manifest the living commitment to it. As one acts to confirm one's conviction, more and finer intuition will grow from that action for the next step. Although the original motivation to do something may first only exist as an inspired concept or vague inkling, before the full emotional commitment is felt that would bring it to life, Rose assures us that the "feeling" of certainty will follow desire, if the desire is followed by appropriate action.

Rose wants to make a clear distinction between the path of intellectual, scholarly analysis of philosophy, and the dynamic path of holistic work on oneself. He states that while still on the path: "You are what you do, not what you know."

Progress on the path is not always obvious, at least to the individual in question. As periods of hardship may prove to be the most productive in the long run, the subtle inner mechanisms of the psyche may have a hidden schedule for their own unfolding, and changes can sometimes be more apparent to others who see us over time than we notice in ourselves in the slight increments of daily experience. However, Rose urges seekers to constantly monitor themselves and be wary of stagnation. He asserts: "If you aren't moving [progressing], it's because you aren't doing anything."

This brings up one of the most serious, weighty questions he periodically poses to his students (one with an often embarrassing answer): "WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" By this, he is obviously not asking one to list one's daily activities or even larger projects or commitments, such as family or career. He is asking: "What are you doing with your life? What is the meaning of all the things you are doing? What egos, fears, and appetites are you serving? What are you doing to further your ultimate spiritual objective?" These are profound questions, requiring tremendous self understanding and honesty to answer them, and then the courage to act in response to the possibly humiliating answers.

Rose does add some solace to this grave image. He has remarked about his students: "Everyone IS moving (paradoxically), due to his commitment but slowly." He is implying that the path to which one commits oneself and the fate that defines one's course through life has a momentum of its own that will carry the seeker along, even if one goes only halfconsciously and grudgingly. But Rose also points out: "You shouldn't settle for going 2 m.p.h. when you can go 1000 m.p.h." especially (recalling his gravestone candle) if there is no guarantee that one has that much extra time to spare.

To draw some parallels here for the sake of historical context, one can see similarities between the principle, "You are what you do" and the path of karma yoga, in which one's physically acting out the life of search and service is the main "way" of seeking. Likewise, the path of bhakti yoga, which is the attitude and lifestyle of devotion to God as the Beloved as reflected in all of one's interactions with people and the earth, can be regarded as a form of Rose's simple advocacy that one must "love the truth."

He also makes a surprising remark about the results of one's introspection. Most of the Albigen System does consist of the inner work towards self knowledge. However, Rose does not want to imply and seemingly condone the seeker's possible tendencies towards laziness and delighting in one's mental gymnastics that the whole path consists solely of sitting in a lotus position and serenely "looking for God."

Rose declares: "Wisdom comes during work, not meditation." In other words, he found in his own life that, while he was putting in tremendous effort over a period of many years in studying himself from every possible angle, it was during the actual experience of living, in dealing with people, being confronted by adverse situations, and following out his commitment in daily affairs that insights into his nature and the realities of life would come to him, seemingly when he was not specifically thinking about them. This is also a major principle in Gurdjieff's Fourth Way, that all of life is the path. Spirituality is not to be compartmentalized separate from the holistic flow of experience. Furthermore, there is a connection between the happening of such direct mind glimpses and Rose's comments about genuine realization needing to be an unpredictable surprise that hits the individual from out of the unknown.

There is some magical principle of life involved in this; one that applies in any domain of effort. When Rose says: "You confirm a conviction by action," his meaning points at this formula. As his emphasis is on direct realization rather than secondhand knowing or dualistic worship, this requires some such magic to bridge the gap, and it is this: **Action is the catalyst that transforms insight into being**. It is the actual experience of putting one's life on the line that demonstrates the sincerity of one's convictions and is the real prayer that works the miracle of alchemical transmutation from somewhere deep inside.

There is also another, more subtle, significance to this principle. One reason why it is so difficult to concoct a systematic spiritual teaching is that the student is still stuck in a world of polarity and paradox, and is incapable of viewing things directly, with a whole mind. No straightline effort on the mundane plane can result in the seeker's ascending to an objective vantage point of comprehension of that same relative domain. It is the wholehearted giving up of oneself to a process that is larger than the individual, involving the complex interrelationships of factors that one cannot imagine, that brings about by its very self-sacrificing nature, the catalytic means for transforming duality to unicity, as one ceases being strictly an individual entity and becomes part of a bigger pattern.

In a sense, Rose is exhorting the seeker to become a Renaissance man in working towards self-knowledge and self-mastery. Similar to Gurdjieff's principle of "harmonious development of centers", one is urged to develop all of one's faculties to the fullest, in service of the quest. One needs to have a keen intellect, a sensitive emotional nature, a vital body, competence in work, and maturity in relating to the others in one's life. It is not any one aspect of oneself that is important; it is all important. One must learn to keep on top of the numerous details and responsibilities of life if there is to be any hope of being able to successfully work for something beyond ordinary life. As Rose says: "Our success in big things depends on how many little things we can manage simultaneously" (Rose, 1982, p. 144).

He adds a qualifying note of caution. He does stress the need for being dynamic, mastering oneself, overcoming the adversities of worldly life, resolutely challenging absurdity wherever it is found, etc., as versus the "dharma bum" / hippy role of the 1960's in which disillusioned youth drifted carelessly into oblivion out of the mistaken notion that any form of will, ego, or accomplishment was "unspiritual" and one should passively "go with the flow." Likewise, Rose does not encourage the stereotypical image of the reclusive mystic as a pale, weak, morose, and forlorn individual who pleads

for solace and forgiveness from a stern, elusive God, after abandoning the world in disappointment or failure.

Patterned after Rose's own character, the Albigen System advocates a rigorously individualistic stance. The honest seeker is not designated a sinner begging for mercy for some antediluvian crime one cannot remember against a God one does not know, but more a disgusted, selfrighteous, proud victim of ridiculousness who demands the right to be returned to the correct perspective on things. In a moment of Joblike blasphemy, one may feel the urge to cry out: "God has sinned against me!" He has addressed this sentiment in a poetic excerpt: "I'll forever question why a man is made indebted to a cause he cannot see, and paid in pain for being blind. Where does justice lie that gives a man the urge to see, but gives no eye?" (Rose, 1982, p. 58). He poses a further question: "There is another disturbing note that is echoed by scholar and clod alike: why do the gods remain hidden?" (Rose, 1978, p. 75).

Despite his discouragement of the strictly monastic lifestyle, he does not for a moment want anyone to mistake his message for one that defines spirituality in physical or social terms, or that the objective is to remake the world into a Garden of Eden, or that any amount of external, relative effort can be traded in for an absolute result. He is always keenly aware of the distinction between the path of mundane life, even when lived for the highest purpose, and the actual inner or esoteric path of selfinversion that aims at shattering the spell of maya and awakening one to transcendental reality. He states: "You must keep your feet on the two paths at once, while keeping the two paths separate at the same time" (Rose, 1982, p. 141). In this, he is recalling Christ's instruction that one must live in the world but not be of the world, as well as Gurdjieff's description of the Fourth Way traveler as a "sly man."

Contrary to the current hopes of many that universal Christ Consciousness will burst forth upon the world scene one day soon if we only think positively enough, he would claim this is only more desperate makebelieve and grandiose projection. There is no "New Age." There is no "Old Age." There is only madness and the awakening from madness.

All of this brings up another key principle in the teaching; a classic Roseism upon which much of the Albigen System is based: "**You have to fatten up your head before you can chop it off!**" (Rose, 1985, p. 186). In this, Rose is referring to his finding, based on his own process of search and discovery, that before the final revelation can occur in which one's identification with a nonexistent personal "self" is permanently extinguished, revealing the greater Self behind it, one must first go through a prolonged period of disciplined effort toward selfknowledge and development of "being."

His aphorism, though deliberately worded in a humorous, grotesque manner, has several serious implications:

1) Relating to the concept of the vector, one needs to gather oneself together into a ball of energy that is strong enough to withstand the onslaught of hypnotic projections by life that serve to maintain one's position in the mundane status quo. One must struggle relentlessly to counter the negative forces acting from within and without to keep one thus trapped in ignorance. Rousing oneself from sleep requires consistent vigilance and determination.

2) As the path is very much a form of "suicide" of the egoself which one currently experiences oneself to be, it is necessary to develop the "being" or "soulpresence" behind this acting self. This is so that, should the experience of transcendence occur in which one finds oneself having no body, no personal mind, no perceptions, and no world to rely upon as reference points for identity, there will be a truer self left over to which the shift in identity can be made by default. Without such an awake inner being sufficiently readied, one could easily become lost in any number of illusory bardos after

death (re: the "Tibetan Book of the Dead"), or disappear entirely like a puff of vapor, as Gurdjieff warned would happen to those whose "souls" remained latent. It is a dangerous gamble to complacently assume one's soul is automatically waiting to welcome one on the other side, after the hypnosis of life has ended.

3) Directly related to number two: as the fictional self, that is now all we know, does not want to die, it is necessary for one's philosophical vector to generate enough momentum to carry one through the actual death experience that Rose claims is the doorway to Reality. Without adequately building up this "head of steam", one may not be able to break through the barrier of egodeath, or the individual self's inherent resistance to being ended may keep one restrained within some variant category of the paradigm of relative life.

4) As an extension of number three, one of the many paradoxes of this path is that before being able to transcend individual selfhood and realize the transpersonal state of Oneness, it is necessary to first become fully individual, whole, and true within oneself. Rose has said: "The person who becomes Enlightened has to first become the sanest person on Earth." Attaining this status requires tremendous diligence and work. One cannot "give oneself up to eternity," so to speak, without first going through the labor of achieving mature comprehension of oneself and the realities of life. To "chop one's head off" prematurely through some contrived technique of egodissolution would be an act of bad faith and might result in an incomplete realization or lesser amazement, if not landing one in a state of insanity or oblivion altogether.

This last reason requires some clarification. It is important to start on the path right where one is standing and not in the imagining of where one would like to be. Before getting to the transpersonal phase of meditation, the personal phase of selfunderstanding must be worked through. His previous quote about "sanity" is not an absolute principle in a literal sense. He has also said, in assessing the authenticity of a teaching from any Enlightened person who remains encumbered with a human psyche, that a crippled chicken can still lay a healthy egg. What is crucial is that one know one's mind and nature thoroughly, including all the influences that made one as one is, even if certain preset factors cannot be changed. The point is that one must know the truth about oneself in totality from a point of mental clarity, and thereby come to know of the knower who is free of the person.

5) The most subtle reason is difficult to convey. It relates to Rose's references to Zen as a manner of seeking that aims to shock the individual out of the state of duality through "banging one's head against the wall" of paradox, until one breaks through. (The wall and one's head may be found to be the same thing!) In a sense, as Advaita Vedanta teaches, it is impossible for a relative, finite, mechanical creature to do anything that will result in Absolute Realization, or Infinity. Yet, it is this impossibility that Zen attempts to "outwit" by bringing one to the extreme of conscious, complete, focused selfhood (small "s") and then negating that in death. One divided by zero. All that remains then is the awareness of both existence and nonexistence: the Self.

There is an additional point that may be worth mentioning here. As Rose freely acknowledges, there are many paths to the truth. He does not claim to have a monopoly on the territory. He is only describing the shortest route of which he knows; one that worked for him. It seems there is a common denominator to all valid paths (which is not to imply that every possible path leads to realization or is equally efficient in getting one there). This commonality seems to revolve around Rose's consistent emphasis upon commitment, determination, and honest desire for the Truth.

One can compare the divergent doctrines, techniques, practices, etc. in all the world's religions, and then relate them to the final goalstate; the experience of which is unanimously agreed upon by all mystics who have finished their respective paths. The apparent conclusion we may draw

is that no matter what form of effort is made on one's path whether it is primarily psychological, philosophical, devotional, physical, metaphysical, social, or any combination of others, the objective reality may well be that the disciplines themselves are largely inconsequential gestures by a fictitious entity within an illusory dimension.

However they may be corresponding to something that is real on the other side of the unknowing, and it is this wholehearted desire, intention, attention, and surrender motivating all of one's efforts that is real. This is what works the magic behind the scenes to develop the anterior "being," masterminds the process of shifting the reference point of essential identity, and brings about the awakening to the real Self. The work to "fatten up one's head", however it is done, is one's form of prayer for the answer. Having it "chopped off" is the unexpected doorway to that answer.

As described in Chapter 2, warnings have been scattered throughout the numerous historical, esoteric teachings that the seeker must be aware of adverse influences on the path. All is not bliss and easy progress. According to the Albigen System, the nature of this opposition is generally understood to be of two kinds.

The first refers, again, to the pervasive reality of the paradox that one confronts at every step of the way. Every understanding has an opposite side that may be just as true or false. One never has the complete picture on anything, while still seeing from a relative vantage point. This becomes most problematic in the pursuit of spiritual knowledge, as it is of a more abstract domain than is the strictly mundane. This is what makes it especially difficult for seekers to agree on common principles of the search and work together harmoniously. As Rose describes our plight: "The Tower of Babel (syndrome) casts its shadow on all levels. We are dissembled and mute" (Rose, 1984, p. 27).

This is less a deliberate effort at opposition by some malevolent influence than it is the impersonal result of our unfortunate handicap in trying to solve an infinite problem with a finite, and fallible, mind. As everything in the world of polarity is in balance, every attempt at some movement or change encounters resistance from its opposite, with which it is irrevocably tied. Effort engenders countereffort. As all factors in the relative world are interdependent, as are objects hanging in a mobile, no one factor can be readily moved by itself, as every other factor to which it is related exerts some force upon it to maintain the overall status quo. Furthermore, any effort, however nobly intended, generated from out of an ego state, which is by definition an artificial contraction separated from the holistic flow of life, will, due to its inherently fixated, reactive nature, be to some extent countermanded by the psychic reverberations bouncing off the solidified parameters of that ego's paradigm. In other words: our outgoing energy inverts to thwart us, (e.g. the lesson contained in the Chinese fingertrap toy). We must learn to operate out of wholeness, out of emptiness. Rose's advice on how to bypass these forms of resistance, or pass through them, will be explained in the sections on "betweenness" and "directmind". The second reason is more specific and disturbing. I once asked Rose, after a particularly invigorating and insightful lecture, how seekers can feel so enthusiastically committed to the spiritual path during such moods, but then gradually fall away from the obsession in daily life, as one forgets, compromises, and rationalizes these concerns into the background. He replied: "It's the programming of Nature. You aren't supposed to think about these things."

He teaches that built into the world is opposition from various forces of Nature, as well as specific forces within nature, that wish to obstruct the seeker from escaping this world and attaining the dimension of spirit. He refers to this collective influence as "the Forces of Adversity."

This includes two primary aspects: a) The general intent of the organic realm to keep all lifeforms subject to natural law within the closed system of life which it administers, which acts like a kind of "gravity" to keep the aspiring seeker on the earthly plane; b) More insidious are specific intelligences

residing in the psychic realm that are parasitical to humans and wish to consume human energy for their own purposes, thereby crippling the seeker's efforts at spiritual work. The workings of these influences and how one may overcome them will be further described in the section on sexuality and energy transmutation.

Rose's depiction of humanity's plight and the individual's difficulty in fighting through the maze to freedom is dire:

Man as a race and individual is unable to continue to fruition the search for Truth. Religions reach a peak and then die. Man as an individual possesses certain years of his life in which he may dynamically pursue wisdom or religion. But then he is overcome by lethargy, circumstances, or despair long before his natural death. Those of us who wish to stop and think about ultimate directions are jostled by the herd and repeatedly goaded by the exigencies of living. I wonder if it is even possible for other than a few to pause in this herd stampede and meditate [recalling the Gurdjieffian/Kerrick principle that only a few are allowed on the Ark ?]. Something inside the individual does not wish to examine its potential for oblivion. (Rose, 1982, p. 145).

Rose explains that seekers find themselves in a doublesided quandary. On one hand, it is important for one to be aware of the fact that there is opposition to spiritual endeavor. One must have the discernment to recognize lies from truth and the courage to act on the distinction. One must be aware of the myriad forms of conditioning acting on the psyche and have the intuition to sort out what is a genuine thought or emotion coming from "within" (so to speak but more on this later) and what is a deceptive, subversive, or parasitical influence impinging on one from without. One must be shrewd and wary. The humbling acknowledgement of the reality of hypnosis will make one more circumspect in taking the authenticity of one's experience for granted.

On the other hand, Rose warns that it is a mistake to focus the attention on the source of the adversity itself, with the intention of defeating it before being able to go on and doing what one knows needs to be done. Whether the adversity is in the form of disadvantageous social conditions or psychic attacks by unnamed intelligences, what is important is for one to doubt one's own experience, perceptions, states of mind, emotional reactions, etc. enough to have the time and mental "space" to judge what is valid and what is not. To confidently assume that every urge or conviction is justified simply because one is aware of experiencing it is to leave oneself open to costly mistakes. Again, the serious study of hypnosis reveals some important clues about the potential for error in mental functioning and even how we may fool ourselves in pursuing our spiritual aims. The mature seeker need feel no insecurity in such self-doubt: the doubter is more real than the person's experiences being examined.

The focus in the search needs to be on one's own psychological condition and correcting the errors in its functioning and processing of information. To angrily dwell on overcoming the Forces of Adversity head on is a trap set by those very Forces to sidetrack the seeker into a needless and futile tangent. Yet, to ignore the possibility of delusion in one's subjective experience due to external agencies of adversity, with the assumption that one's judgment, values, moods, etc. are always flawless or divinely ordained, would be likewise foolish.

What Rose advises is for one to study how the delusive influences from whatever source, in whatever form, and of whatever intent affect *one's own quality of mind and resultant actions, and then determine objectively what is true*. Subsequently, one must act on this intuitive reading. This resultant action may then lead to a vantage point outside of the previous delusion state, enabling one to see the

truth of one's condition. The subtle strategy involved in this adroit maneuver will also be elaborated upon in the section on betweenness.

This relationship between all forms of opposition and the need for selfknowledge in overcoming it is best defined in a brilliant, yet ominous assessment by Keith M., one of Rose's students: "**The Forces of Adversity will block a man on whatever level his being is on.**" There is much material in this statement on which the individual may reflect.

What is this warning implying? Contrary to our conventional, cherished notions of democracy, everybody is not equal to everybody else, excepting if one wishes to speculate about some common domain of essence where we are all united at one root in Reality. On the human level, however, people have different natures, different strengths and weaknesses, different programming, different issues, different capacities for dealing with them, different modes of experiencing life, and different levels of maturity or wisdom. One's "being" can be said to be wherever one most identifies or has ascended to on the ladder of spiritual evolution.

What this stern dictum is saying is that on whatever step of this ladder the individual is functioning, this is where the opposition will set in to challenge the seeker about going beyond it. It is not a matter of one's being thwarted by one's inability to contend with some issue or task way above one's capacity. This may not be necessary to keep one stuck.

The especially diabolical nature of this adversity is that it does not only take the form of attacking us at our weaknesses. This mode of approach is obvious enough and predictable. One can be vigilant against this and learn to compensate for it. The person who has a tendency towards drug or alcohol abuse, for example, will find the temptation of intoxication to be the arena where one's character fights to determine one's fate. The individual with a weakness for debauchery has a similar, massive battle to contend with. Those who are hungry for gold do likewise. The Seven Deadly Sins of traditional religious teaching describe some of the main categories here.

Rose alerts us that even these obvious "sins" can be rationalized away as being legitimate convictions. Lust can become: "love or 'my need'"; laziness: "wise relinquishment of the ego of being a doer"; pride: "discernment that I am meant for better work"; weakness: "strength, flexibility, wit, or manifest equanimity"; and procrastination: "logic, gradualism, 'one thing at a time', or waiting for God's will or a sign from heaven" (Rose, unpublished group papers).

That one's weaknesses should be used against oneself is to be expected. However, the adversity seems to know our psychological natures so well as to be able to insidiously use our strengths against us also. The scholarly philosophertypes who take pride in their reasoning ability may find that this tool of intellectualism is being used to seduce them off the path towards selfdefinition and down any number of sideroads that, while fascinating and challenging, only serve to fatten the intellectual ego, rather than to further insight into oneself. The person of an emotional, devotional nature may be tricked into having this potentially admirable propensity be instead directed towards an object of worship that does not lead to ultimate spiritual benefit, whether this is in the form of an unworthy guru or the exclusive demands of mate and family. The dynamic person of action may likewise be tricked into charging any number of taunting windmills, building temples reaching to heaven, or enthusiastically promoting ideals of social change, only to realize too late that one's energy may have been better spent on more selfish taskssuch as the work towards finding one's identity. Even the religiouslyminded may have the humble desire to serve their God twisted around to where, for lack of discernment, their piety is seduced into being subservient to a corrupt teacher or organization in the name of God; this dedication leading them not to heaven, but possibly to doom (e.g., Jonestown).

We have to get wise to ourselves, rather than merely identify with ourselves. This is where Gurdjieff's principle of "chief feature" is relevant: that we each have one major attitude or stance towards life that defines our character and represents our primary obstacle to seeing clearly. One must know one's nature thoroughly: the virtues and the handicaps, one's conditioned tendencies, and the filters that distort one's perception of inner and outer conditions. By knowing one's basic psychological nature, a person may also well find evidence there of the Force of Adversity that is manifesting some issue or exploiting some weakness to prevent one from rising above that level of being. The seeker has to be a master psychologist with himself in order to not be one's own biggest handicap on the path. This discernment also requires knowing when one is being forced to overcome adversity and when it is possible to go around it. Employing "betweenness" will enable one to go *through* it.