

## **The Threefold Path by Paul Constant**

~ Presented at the April TAT Gathering  
Claymont Society Mansion, WV  
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*Weekend Theme: Steps on the Path*

*In his teachings, Richard Rose laid out [The Threefold Path](#) to remind us that we cannot solely work on one level at a time. He offered tips and pointers toward three levels: the physical, mental, and essential. He also spoke about the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. In this presentation, as a former student of Rose, Paul expressed his personal discoveries through *The Threefold Path*. His intention was to inspire seekers to take their own steps toward an eternal spiral—from the mundane to the Absolute.*

### **Introduction**

As one of Richard Rose's students in the 1980's and 90's, I don't recall him ever delivering a presentation that centered solely on *The Threefold Path*. I recall him talking about many of the key points at various times, but I don't remember him pulling out his essay and reviewing the highlights. It just wasn't his style....

When I sat down to decide what I'd say today, I immediately recognized that Rose's *The Threefold Path* is packed with incredibly helpful advice. It became quite apparent that one hour of presentation time would only allow me to cover the highlights. It also dawned on me that it would be best to offer my own experiences so that it isn't so abstract and instead provides more practical advice for you.

### **Method**

Rose said: "The system advised is threefold, and the symbol of the pyramid is used to remind the student at all times that he cannot just work on one level at a time. The directive is threefold in that you are advised to BE or become the Truth [not learn it!], the Way, and the Life, which has practically the same meaning as the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The manner of following each of these three directives in turn involves work on three levels, the physical, the mental, and the essential."

### **Physical Steps**

- *Set the house in order.*

Rose talked a lot about making Truth your top priority in life. He also frequently talked about determination and applying your energy toward a specific direction. He did *not* mean that everything else in your life should be neglected. In fact, in the essay, he says that all of the steps must be done simultaneously. And so when he says "set the house in order,"

he illustrates with examples, such as economic security, our physical house, and our domestic scene. All of these examples should support our endeavors in the spiritual arena.

In my life, since my late teens, I've simply been devoted to the search for Truth—it has always been deeply captivating. This doesn't mean that I was pushing all my energy to the red line on the tachometer. It means that the search was where I poured much of my energy, yet I continued to give attention to my relationships, home, employment, and finances. The search for Truth was the center of gravity around which my life revolved.

- *Find someone who has been down the road. Travel in this regard if necessary, but never allow travel to become an escape in itself from your interior work.*

We can shave years off our search by finding someone who has been committed to Truth. However, with today's access to the internet, it's so easy to lose ourselves in YouTube videos, social media, and websites. We can find dozens of retreat offerings during any time of the year. And so we can easily find ourselves escaping from real interior work. By that, I mean looking within. I know that in my own life, I always struggled to turn my attention toward my inner world of thoughts and feelings, and later in life, toward perceptions, body sensations, and even love.

- *Find your fellow-seekers.*
- *Find a place to work together with teachers and fellow-seekers.*

These steps were super important for me. In my late teens, I read a lot of spiritual books, but it wasn't until I took the big step of engaging with Rose and the TAT Foundation did the real spiritual work begin. I know I'm expressing a biased opinion, but you'll have a tough time finding an organization similar to TAT where the teachers are friends, the seekers are sincere, and the price is reasonable.

Rose coined the term *Law of the Ladder*:

"We do not visualize a single man upon each rung, reaching down, pulling up the man below. We find that the ladder is 'A' shaped, pyramid in form, for one thing. There are less people on the higher rungs than on the lower rungs. We will be lucky if we can find one man who can help us, but we should be working with six or more on the rung below. We also find a new meaning for the brotherhood now. The man above may be pulling up the man below,—but they are pushing him a bit, at the same time."

The group or Sangha serves to sustain and remind all of us about the importance of Truth in our lives, thus keeping us on a spiritual path through inspiration, friendship, and nudging each other. In almost every presentation I give these days, I say that my friends were and still are my greatest teachers. A decade ago, when I had given up all hope of finding Truth, my longtime spiritual friends inspired me in a way that no one else could, and I credit them for helping me break through and dissolving into the Absolute and living authentically afterwards.

## Mental Steps

- *Implement regular, periodic, mental exercises with directed meditation.*

In my life, it was super important to carve time out of my day, perhaps an hour, to look inward or meditate. I made it a habit, and I was constantly experimenting and adapting my approach to introspection through the years. There are myriad approaches to meditation, and we all need to figure out what works best for us.

- *Or use Koan concentration.*

The dictionary definition of a Koan is “a nonsensical or paradoxical question to a student for which an answer is demanded, the stress of meditation on the question often being illuminating.” I haven’t been a practitioner of Koans, and so my experience is limited. I get the feeling, though, that Koans illustrate the limitations of the intellect and instead aim at an intelligence that transcends the mind. See the book *Profound Writings East & West* for Rose’s “Lecture of Questions.”

- *Use self-confrontation (self-analysis).*

In my estimation, it isn’t enough to just look inward. We need to challenge our beliefs, especially beliefs about our self and Realization. And one of the best ways to do it is self-inquiry. Quite simply, watching your mind. We need to gain clarity in our thinking and feeling mechanisms to see through the obstacles in ourselves.

Rose intended that these three mental steps would build our energy for Realization. With the energy salvaged, and through harmonizing the body and raising somatic energy to the head, we could better discern which spiritual systems have value and learn to act with sharp discernment. Rose’s system was one of tension. And so when the observation of reactions becomes intense enough, *the mind will stop*.

If you want to delve deeply into tension and energy, I recommend that you read Rose’s book *Energy Transmutation, Between-ness and Transmission*.

## Essential Steps

- *Reverse the vector.*

The dictionary definition of vector is “a quantity possessing both magnitude and direction.” In this case, it means a retreat from untruth, an erosion of our ignorance, a retreat from the errors of our beliefs—rather than postulating Truth in advance. Rose said: “You must become a vector *before you can become the Truth*.”

Rose used the term *Law of the Reversed Vector*:

“In spiritual matters, man must become identified as a vector, or force, if he wishes for results. If this vector is aimed in the wrong direction (relative world scene) his life is wasted. The Law states that you cannot approach the Truth. You must Become (a vector),

but you cannot learn the absolute Truth. We find that there is only one way, and that is to first build ourselves a very determined person—a vector. We must back into the Truth by backing away from untruth.”

- *Find the obstacles that you must learn in order to avoid them in the process of reversal.*

Our biggest obstacle to Realization is ourselves. And we must know our self well to get down to the roots of our obstacles. Our lifelong conditioning, moods, and states of mind all color our view of our self, others, and the world. The fifth chapter in *The Albigen Papers* delves deeply into obstacles.

Rose also encourages us to remove the urgency of habits. The word “habit” includes a wide range of distractions, which may not be negative except to our spiritual path. Habits are not sins but can they sap our energy, or they may lead to destructive addictions and even death. He cautioned about slavery to appetites or any habits.

- *Allow the ego to be eliminated, as it is the main obstacle.*

The word ego has so many definitions that many seekers are confused by the idea of eliminating the ego. Rose didn’t mean that we permanently wipe our slate clean. In fact, he said: “Our error lies in our haste to leap and embrace any teacher who promises to annihilate our ego. The ‘ego’ that he may annihilate may be the only awareness that we have.” I feel that Rose was pointing to the fact that self-improvement projects and attempts at ego-enhancements do not pave the way toward Realization. The process of watching the mind will naturally diminish the ego with time. The unhelpful qualities of the ego fall away.

- *Constantly implement the Laws that are listed in The Albigen Papers.*
- *Transmission.*

Rose strongly felt that a spiritual group should contain someone who is able to effect transmission. This is the final *realization of the Absolute*. Transmission is a mysterious process with no scientific validation. All I can say is that I’ve experienced limited aspects of it enough times to know it has merit. But we shouldn’t hold some belief that a teacher will take us on the full trip if we don’t at least meet him or her half way—we shouldn’t get lazy!

### **Chart of the Detailed Steps**

#### **The Way (Dharma)**

- *Set the house in order for tranquility and security.*
- *Conserve energy and find determination and desire for direction.*
- *Direct the energy profitably (examples: study and search).*

## **The Life (Sangha)**

- *Hold a high value for brotherhood and cooperation (spiritual, mental, and physical help, in that order).*
- *Use the Law of the Ladder.*
- *Become a vector.*

## **The Truth (Buddha)**

- *Tell the truth in all things relative (physical and vocal truth).*
- *Do not rationalize (mental truth).*

When we watch our mind, we can recognize how one part of us fools another part. We can see our rationalizations for not taking action and improper action. We can hear voices in us that want our attention, but these are often flawed and usually reveal themselves in the form of regret. The more clarity we develop, the less we'll rationalize and the more we'll be honest with our self.

- *Become the truth (Absolute truth).*

## **Commitment**

This 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 act in a sincere desire to help their fellows.

Before the helpless become (reach the Absolute), they have thus made a commitment that will 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 FOOLISH TO THEM WHEN THEY ENTER SATORI—AND SEE THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF ALL MUNDANE EFFORT.

[As the saying goes, God can't steer a parked car! Take action, or the repercussion may be that life will bounce you down a narrow channel that has been picked for you.]

AS IN ALL THINGS, THE COMMITMENT SHOULD BE THREEFOLD—BODY, MIND, ESSENCE.

YOU CANNOT COMMIT THE ESSENCE—IT IS ALREADY COMMITTED. We are ESSENTIALLY, as far as the Absolute is concerned. There is however a paradox here, which cannot be explained openly, as it will lead to confusion.