

Chapter 6

Self Inquiry: Its Meaning and Direction

This study now needs to focus in more on how exactly to come to realize this final Self that is said to wait behind all projected states of mind. Rose aligns himself with the method of Zen in its recognition of the impossibility of stepping out of dualistic mentation in a straight line by any means. One cannot think, work, chant, grin, believe, ingratiate, copulate, or buy one's way into Enlightenment. The step from relative thought to DirectMind apprehension must pass through the realm of magic. This transformation in consciousness is quickened by a nonrational (as differentiated from rational, and not to be confused with irrational) mode of inquiry.

Zen uses a mental tool or procedure called a koan to prompt such a qualitative shift in understanding. It is traditionally a nonsense question posed to the student by the master; one that has no logical or even possible answer. Some standard ones have been: "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" and "Does a dog have a Buddha-nature?" (I had once asked one of Rose's heifers: "Does a cow have a Buddha-nature?" and it replied: "Mu". Even the cattle on his farm were into Zen. I was really impressed by that.) The student contemplates the question, wrestling with the futility of answering it on the level of rational mentation. By focusing intensely on the koan to the point of exhaustion or crisis, the mind of the student is forced to finally stop or blow up.

One's vantage point is thereby raised to a singular position of clarity transcending the apparent paradoxes posed by the absurd question, as the problem represented by the koan is only on the level of the finite, dualistic mind, and does not exist in reality. In this, the koan is a metaphor for the seeming problem of our very existence as individual, ignorant beings suffering in an alien world. Here there is a major paradigm shift to a different mode of knowing or seeing, with oneself as the pivoting point. The result is not so much a "correct" answer to the question, as one's attaining the quality or perspective of mind that comprehends the full range of all relative questions and answers, which was the real purpose of the exercise in the first place. This strategy of work recalls Ken Wilber's assertion that "trashing" the mind is not equivalent to transcending it, i.e. the dreamy devotee or go-with-the-flow hedonists who smugly disparage all mental inquiry and self-study.

However, Rose has amended this traditional approach and believes it is not necessary or even most expedient to contemplate these kinds of contrived nonsense questions in a formalized way to keep the mind focused on the problem, as is the practice in orthodox, oriental Zen schools. Rather, he points out that we already have many real, urgent questions constantly confronting us that must be

answered, some of which will be listed shortly. We do not need to make up any! The individual's very life, identity, and destiny, while remaining undefined, are koans. This is much the same point as Frankl's claim that it is not so much we who are asking questions of life, but that life is asking questions of us, and demanding the answers.

The fact is that as long as we do not know who we essentially are, the ultimate nature of the world we seem to be experiencing, the relevance of death to life, nor the final beneficiary or source of this mass experience, our very existence is a koan that negates any pretense of meaningfulness until it is answered.

Every serious human being has a personal koan. It may be the purpose of life, the apprehensiveness of death, the torment of unjust suffering, the desire for freedom or immortality, the question of selfdefinition, the existence of God, the meaning of happiness, or the nature of love. For some it may be the curiosity about the world and life aroused by the awareness of unexplained phenomena, metaphysical happenings, or a drug experience that showed a glimpse through the veil. Yet, all such koans are really aspects of the one question, seen from different, personal perspectives: WHAT IS REALITY?

Simply put: everything on the underside of the Cloud of Unknowing is the koan. As the individual is both the seeker of the answer as well as the source of the problem generating it, it is most accurate for one to state: "I am the koan." This is why Rose stresses the work on selfknowledge rather than on one's attempting to know God, for how can one hope to know the Creator of the universe without first knowing *who* is doing the knowing?

This intense focusing on a not readily answerable question, with possibly a nonfinite answer, is another reason why Rose does not teach a method of meditation that puts the individual into a state of peacefulness and ease. This may of course be a good preparatory state for clearer investigations and receptivity to intuitive input, but may also become a good excuse to search no further, as one may be seduced into assuming that tranquility is itself the goal, or may simply be feeling too cozy to be concerned about one's impending nonexistence any longer. Rose advocates instead the active attention to one's basic philosophical or life issues, this requiring great concentration and commitment.

He does not believe that a condition of world peace for which most humanistic "New Agers" understandably long would really be conducive to this kind of productive introspection, but would tend to lull people into quiescence and passive acceptance of their ignorant, albeit comfortable, condition. In fact, he has said the absurdity and even horror of the world can be regarded as further goads to incline one towards spiritual search. He states: "The chaos is the koan" (Rose, lecture, 1981); presumably including the chaos inside each one of us as well.

There is a paradox in this stance too in that it is largely our violations against Nature that produce our hardships in life, individually and collectively, and our making the respectful efforts to get in tune with Nature's way would thus enable us to also draw closer to spiritual truth, if we were to regard the resultant peace as a doorway to more sensitive inner work, and not a resting place.

Rose has offered a powerful definition of the meaning of true prayer, which is analogous to Zen's maintenance of attention as being the truest state of mind while on the path. Prayer, in Rose's view, is not so much asking God for help or benefits, or even experiencing the desire for communion with one's God or higher Self. Real prayer is a constant state of being throughout one's entire life. Rose says prayer means: "**To always be one person, always asking one question.**" The koan serves the mind as does a magnifying glass to sunlight. One's identity as a vector is unified and one's aim is one pointed. This is the meaning of attention in Zen: to be "at tension." Prayer is this tension between the seeker and the God or answer that is sought, until the gap is reconciled through transcendence,

which is the answer. The Albigen System teaches one to focus on the endless koan of life until the mind explodes, and one knows awareness truly for the first time.

Rose explained his affinity with Zen by referring to Bodhidharma's four principles of Zen that distinguish its message and objective from shallower understandings of the religious life:

1. "Zen is a special transmission outside of scriptures." The essence of the Zen teaching is a personal experience of realization that is apart from conceptual learning, and can be directly transmitted from teacher to student.
2. "No dependence on words or letters." The goal of Zen as a living condition of being is not verifiable nor attainable by reliance on scripture.
3. "Direct pointing at the soul of man." Rose adds: "This goes beyond the mind; not direct pointing at the mind; it's the direct pointing at the soul of man."
4. "Seeing one's nature and the final attainment of the Self." The objective of the quest is to know once and for all who one essentially is, and to fully reside in that one true, anterior state of being which is the source of all selves, worlds, and gods. (Rose, lecture, 1981).

As reviewed in Chapter 2, Rose's system can be seen to relate to aspects from several diverse spiritual/psychological teachings: Zen, Advaita Vedanta, Gurdjieff's Fourth Way psychology, Vipassana Buddhist meditation, Kundalini, Karma, Jnana, and Raja yogas, phenomenological existential psychology, thaumaturgy, the Albigensian doctrine, and the Perennial Philosophy. The primary common denominator tying together all these teachings, as they relate to the Albigen System, is in the nature and direction of the search they advocate in their different ways.

The central issue is **selfinquiry**: "Who am I?". This contrasts with any number of religious and philosophical paths that consist of the attention going "outward", so to speak, from the inquiring self (petitioning a god, visualizing a chakra, constructing cosmologies, or manipulating physiology), rather than turning the attention inward to the source of the mind, or deliberately using external means (karma yoga or philosophical study, for example) to further selfknowledge and change of being.

Rose's intent in his teaching is to save the seeker valuable time and energy: "This (system) is directed to lives of less than a hundred years that hope for light within that span of time" (Rose, 1978, p. 78). Many paths may be valid in the long run, but the point he wishes the student to pick up in his message is often between the lines: "...the hint of a direct path to the summit..." The path becomes shorter when it is done right. Yet, even the shortest way is so very long.

To provide a clearer understanding of what Rose is offering, it would be helpful to point out some distinctions and similarities between his teaching and that of others.

In simple terms, the main contrast between Gurdjieff's teaching and Rose's is that Gurdjieff's emphasis in selfobservation was on looking at oneself experiencing, whereas Rose's is ultimately on looking into or for the experiencer. Also, the Fourth Way system aims at developing a permanent, dynamic "I" in the seeker, whereas Rose goes a step beyond this (although his principle of one's becoming a vector is similar to this philosophical "I") and points to the final realization that there is no distinct, individual self at the center of experience.

The main similarity between his teaching and that of Advaita Vedanta is the recognition of duality and the need for transcending this to a vantage point of single vision. Rose's ways of stepping outside of duality have been touched upon previously:

1. The inquiry consists of neither belief nor nonbelief.

2. Relating to the principle that every form of egogenerated effort begets a counterforce to thwart that effort, the mode of inquiry is neither to struggle in the work nor not struggle in the work, but to see directly *what is* the truth is the guru.
3. The teaching states that the conclusion of the search does not consist of the seeker “finding God,” but rather the realization that neither the seeker nor god (as the divine carrot on the stick) exist — there is only the Self.
4. As will be explained further shortly, the central principle in the Albigen System that reconciles all dualities on the path is that of “becoming the truth.”

There is one main although subtle difference between Rose’s teaching and that of Advaita, and is why he strongly advocates the Zen approach to the inquiry. It is agreed upon in both teachings that the individual ego mind is the obstacle that must be overcome in order for the Self to be realized. The difficulty that both acknowledge is that it is difficult to “kill oneself,” as “oneself” does not want to die. Yet, both teachings agree that the path is essentially one of progressive suicide of this false self.

It may be argued that the following is a simplistic understanding, but Rose’s form of Zen believes in using the mind to overcome the mind, using paradox to escape paradox, while fully recognizing the treacherousness of the mind and its inability to do anything to completely transcend itself, as Advaita warns. As Rose sees it (this relating to Zen’s use of the mind to work on one’s koan, which results in the stopping of the mind), the mind is a knot that can partially untangle itself; a clear and still quality of mind allowing one to come closer to the truth.

This can be reconciled with Advaita’s teaching that “there is nothing to do” if one is identified, not with the Zen mind that is actively engaged in the dualistic inquiry, but with the undifferentiated awareness in which this inquiry is seen to occur. Thus, there is nothing for “one” to do, if one is detached enough from this wholistic process of unraveling to allow it to occur by itself, as it were, knowing that the seer of this so-called person is really Oneseif.

In this way, the ego self can be understood to be able to honestly work to end itself during its return to truthfulness, while something more real watches it and will remain. Bringing in Gurdjieff’s principle of the philosophic “I,” if one is identifying with the truth, rather than with the ego self that forever clings to its life, one may become a “kamikaze” seeker, so to speak, attacking untruth, and dying into it. The ego can be regarded as a boat to cross a river, a ladder to climb up, or a rocket booster to carry a capsule into orbit. It is a vehicle that will be discarded or jettisoned after it has done its job. The seeker has to have some mature appreciation that personal salvation of the individual may be impossible. However, one can live in service of the quest itself and be willing to accept the eventuality that this seeking self must die, so that the true Self can be realized to ever live. Without the strong commitment in the beginning, one may not make it this far against the resistance to self-negation. This is the Fourth Way philosopher’s form of devotion.

One significant advantage I have found in Rose’s system, compared to some sources in Advaita and Zen, is that he does not leave as much room open for misinterpretation of his teachings, and consequential “cheating,” by students who are either immature or dishonest. It is possible to study very serious teachings that may well be literally true in every word, but yet not know how to translate its meaning into personal terms; into one’s life of search. Every genuine spiritual doctrine can and has been perverted by those of lower motives or capacities, often because the original teacher spoke directly from the Source on a level too high for the listeners to really hear and appreciate, yet assuming they would pick up the meaning fully as intended.

Rose tends to spell things out more in detail; the ramifications, applications, and implications of his ideas, in plain, human terms. He does not let the student fall into the common trap of assuming

one is duly following the path and is on a higher level of spiritual maturity than one really is, while still indulging in all sorts of personal vices or foolishness that are not recognized for what they are. He starts his teaching down in the gutterpsychologically if not literally (although sometimes both!) where we generally live, not in the "Kingdom of Heaven" that we know nothing about. Rose knows all the traps and rationalizations to which one can fall victim, and his often blunt, confrontational approach to teaching is meant to compensate for these weaknesses in the unwitting student, even whose best can never be enough to the real task.

In working through the inner maze, whichever way one turns, Rose is standing there at every corner with a twinkle in his eyes, staring intently at the seeker, and gruffly demanding: "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

All the many examples and explanations presented so far about strategies and traps on the path have been meant to draw strict attention to one of the central principles in the Albigen System: **backing away from untruth**. The reason why this same point has been made so frequently, from so many different angles, is not due to a love of redundancy alone. Rose feels that a hazardously false approach to seeking has been promoted by so many diverse doctrines that all the many ways in which this error manifests must be clearly recognized and the message unequivocally driven home that honesty with oneself requires one inevitable manner of search.

In fact, his recommendation about how to search for the truth is the exact opposite from most spiritual teachings that offer an image of a God to worship from the start, with the assumption encouraged that the sincere worship of this image will unfailingly result in one's eventual merging with this God. Possibly this is so. However, he claims this is an unreliable method, too prone to ego contaminated error, is presumptuous and that there is a shortcut.

Rose considers the manner of Zen to be philosophically more scrupulous, and even foolproof, if fastidiously applied throughout the inquiry. He has defined wisdom as a corrosion of ignorance. He refers to Zen as being "the negation of negativity" (Rose, 1978, p. 176). This means recognizing what is false or incomplete and rejecting it in thought and deed. Gradually, what remains is that which is relatively more true or sensible. The false is negative to the true, and negating it reveals the truth it hides. This is not a contrived methodology, but rather the realistic procedure called for by our status as ignorant beings in a relative world. As Rose explains: "We know not where Truth resides. There can be no paths to Truth, only paths away from untruth. There is nothing proven for us in advance. We must experience for ourselves" (Rose, 1982, p. 147).

There is a catch in this. We must be cautious in our experiencing of supposedly higher states of consciousness and take care not to experience something we have projected. Rose elaborates: "We can only find Truth by retreating from untruth, not by postulating a Truth that we achieve by visualization rather than realization" and then advancing on that postulation. The traditional metaphor of truth being like a mountain that one must climb up is misleading because it can carry the implication that one already knows exactly what the nature of that mountain is, including what is at its summit, and that one can assertively march right up to it along wellmarked paths.

In this business of "finding oneself," there is the danger of deciding for oneself who one wants to be, based upon possibly inadequate knowledge of who one really is or should be. The spiritual equivalent to this is one's claiming to have an immortal soul simply because this conviction makes one feel secure, and then simply living as if this was taken for granted, but without actually proving it ("...the soul is like a car that is the most recent style. Everybody just has to have one," Rose chides). He is advocating that one resist this temptation to create a selfdefinition in advance as a concept of belief, whether personal or cosmic, and pretending to "be" that. Rather, he recommends one back

into the asyetunknown truth, and find out what it is. So this becomes a more functional definition of “worshipping God.” A more accurate way to describe the honest procedure toward SelfRealization is the old joke about how to make a sculpture of a horse. The answer is to take the slab of stone and chip away everything that does not look like a horse! [Note: See book cover of *The Albigen Papers*.]

This, then, is a form of process of elimination well in agreement with Advaita Vedanta’s assertion that one cannot know who one is, but can know who one is not. By backing away from everything that is not “me” until there is nothing left to negate the “I” of Truth is finally what’s left. This has an exact parallel in the Hindu definition of Brahman as being only: “Not this, not that.” Nothing else can be said about the Self, or from it, that is positive. As it is itself the ultimate ground and source of all things, nothing lesser derived from it can define it. It can never be “known” by a knower subordinate to it. It can only be realized by one’s coming into unity with it.

The principle sounds easy enough, but how does one begin to practice this? How does one discern in regards to values, subjective states, possible directions, etc. while admitting to not knowing what the truth actually is? Rose frequently refers in agreement to the Catholic maxim: “The finite mind can never perceive the infinite,” but does not accept its implication that one can therefore never find the Truth, or God. Rose adds that one can take a shrewd step: one “can start by *perceiving the finite mind*. You can see what is obviously false, and is not you (the viewer).” Here he is also indicating that the truth is not an externalized philosophical principle to claim as one’s prize, but the experience of ultimate Selfhood. One is what is sought. Nonfinite, aware **beingness** is the final answer.

How does one start to back away from untruth? If one starts from a basis of acknowledged unknowing, has the desire to find Reality (using selfinquiry as the pointer to it) and proceeds with an open mind, one has made a worthy beginning. Rose says that while it is true we do not know what absolute Truth is at the start, we can begin to discern between what is more or less reasonable, more or less complete, more or less *truthful* in any given issue, and go with what is more so, until something better or more valid is found. We start with what is most obviously absurd or harmful, and reject that. In this way, nothing unknown is ever postulated, and each step towards selfdefinition, whether regarding inner or outer factors, is based on a realistic assessment of what can be known at that moment, from that vantage point. This is using Zen’s sword of discrimination. He does add the warning that we must take care not to reject something simply because it does not include something that we want to do.

There is much obvious material for the seeker to examine as a start. Is one’s body or lifestyle unhealthy (e.g. diet, substance abuse, sexual excess, etc.)? One can readily determine what is wrong and take steps to correct it. Are one’s priorities and values foolish or wasteful (in terms of time, energy, and attention), in relation to the requirements of the quest? One gradually learns to discern what is detrimental or tangential, and veer towards what is more conducive to discovery. Is one attempting to satisfy one’s core desire through dishonest or derivative means? One must sincerely confront oneself and identify what the heart truly longs for and faithfully ask it how it may be answered. Are one’s thoughts, emotions, and relationships pathological and distorted? This is harder to deal with, but some serious introspection and sensitive partnering from coworkers can help one to see the errors in one’s psychology and to make adjustments towards what is more genuine. Is one’s moral and ethical conduct corrupted by cynicism or selfishness? The hard decisions we make here largely define our character and destiny. Does one maintain philosophical or theological assumptions that with some honest examination could be seen to be rationalizations meant to buffer one from discomfort and the recognition of necessary effort towards personal change?

As one begins by rejecting the grosser forms of erroneous values or delusory paradigms in one’s life, one slowly becomes more truthful in one’s mind, body, relationships, perceptions, and

convictions. The process continues into increasingly subtler and finer discernments as one matures in the work. This is where personal psychology blends into transpersonal psychology. The inquiring mind is always the pivoting point around which all evaluations and evolution occur. It is the chisel the philosophersculptor uses to discriminate the false from the less false.

There is a common trap in this procedure also, indulged in by those of dishonest inclinations. Some will argue that there is no such thing as right and wrong, that all values are relative and conditional, that all values are only human creations or arbitrary beliefsystems, and that it is best not to judge anything anyway, especially oneself. This attitude is usually less a measure of compassionate wisdom born of transcendental vision than it is an indication one either really does not know the relatively right from wrong and does not want to be confronted about the matter, or privately does suspect one is in violation of truth in regards to some personal issue and is not about to admit it.

Rose has a more authoritative way of responding to this objection that God does not judge and everything should be regarded as valid in its own way, the sun shines equally on us all, etc. He states: "Let us not rationalize here...that there is no right or left in the Absolute. ...Absolute values cannot be understood or applied until the Absolute state has been reached. It is only sophistry to try to apply them before" (Rose, 1981, p. 18). In other words, there may be no such thing as red or green in the Absolute, but one had better know the difference when coming to the traffic light at the intersection and respond accordingly, otherwise one's bluff of transcendence may demand too high a price in this harsh land of relativity.

We can see that each step on the path follows the one preceding it and care must be taken not to allow false premises to remain unchallenged, thereby sabotaging one's finer efforts that are extensions of them. This is much like a rocket that is being shot to the moon needing to be rigorously accurate in its trajectory, as a fraction of a degree of error will result in its missing the target by thousands of miles. One's unexamined and unabandoned inner lies bring the same result in the search for Truth.

This strict adherence to honesty with oneself applies to every aspect of one's life. Rose states this point emphatically:

We are either right or wrong, in regards to relative truthseeking. In the Absolute state, things may well be neither right nor wrong, or both. And while we aspire to an Absolute state, and to Absolute Truth, it remains doubtful if we will ever attain this if we compromise relative truth, or shut our eyes to reality. (Rose, 1984, p. 1920)

This latter point refers to the common "occupational hazard" in spiritual thinking to project, what Rose calls, a "Pollyannic" coloration onto life and to deny the actual realities of things. For example, we hear the noises that birds make and are seduced by our reflex toward humanistic nostalgia into interpreting it as "singing"; presumably romantic love songs to each other or simply as expressions of joy in living to brighten our days. All this, because we wish to believe in a Walt Disney cartoon world. We want to deny the savagery and mercilessness to the individual inherent in the interdependent carnage of Nature, and superimpose our own puerile fairy tale-land onto it. Rose delights in undermining this projection, however, asking: "How do you know the birds are singing? They might be cursing or screaming in agony!" He wonders how we can ever expect to see the final Truth of existence if we make a habit of lying to ourselves about all the smaller truths of daily life. (Of course, the perception of life as a horror show would be a human projection too. We do not really know what life is to the One whose Life this is.)

Rose often refers to the allegory of Plato's Cave in our need to become free of our identification with shadows and find the sunlight outside in the real world. Yet, he says we cannot simply turn around and walk right out. In a poetic passage, he describes the recommended method of approach:

Turn thy back to the light lest it blind thee, but advance toward it in this manner. Always thy face shall be toward the darkness of ignorance, for thou need not be wary of the Light. Make one step in seeking and make another. And these things shall be made known to thee, and with each step it will be easier to follow the next. (Rose, 1982, p. 88).

The point in Rose's repeated critiques of traditional religious paths can be summed up succinctly: there is a difference between knowing, loving, or seeing God and realizing or becoming God. He makes a crucial distinction between dualistic human experience and pure spiritual experience. He claims that all states of religious exaltation as well as all forms of psychic phenomena are still mental experiences, occurring in the consciousness of the finite human being, or the larger, shared consciousness of humanity, and are not truly transpersonal experiences of the spiritual dimension. These may be legitimate transpersonal experiences in relation to the individual egomind, but they are still within relative consciousness.

He says that all disciplines, study, meditational practices, physical work, prayer, etc. have lasting spiritual value to the seeker only to the extent they result in this *becoming* towards what is real; one's essence coming to discover itself. The brain rots as does the rest of the body at death, and all relative knowledge, memory, and human experience die along with it, however inspired certain states of consciousness may have been. At best, they may propel one into another illusory dimension of one's choosing at death. To be fair, the one conditional value of such "higher" states of consciousness is that one is freed from the confines of the grosser levels of maya and place one in a more strategically advantageous position to apprehend the objective Reality that is wholly apart from consciousness.

All this ties in with the earlier mentioned principle in Gurdjieff's teaching that, contrary to most religious doctrines, we do not automatically possess a divine "soul" that merely waits to be acknowledged, but rather the seeker must develop the capacity for this soul from its latent seed state, or develop the awareness of it from it. His entire elaborate system of Fourth Way Work was devised for this purpose. This too is the preparation for death, so that when the somatic mind dies, along with whatever gods or heavens it had long imagined, some essential "being" remains afterwards to taste immortality.

Rose has much more to say about how this development is to be accomplished. He starts by citing a highly important statement in Christian scripture; the full significance of which has been historically underappreciated: "I am the Truth, the Way, and the Life." **This was the great revelation of the Bible: that Christ became the Truth** (Rose, lecture, 1986). He goes on to add that Christ did not say he "knew" the Truth or "found" it or was somehow in relation to it he became the Truth. Rose is implying that Christ was not merely boasting that he had some unique stature or favor with God that nobody else could have, but that he was laying out a comprehensive formula or path that one could follow to attain the same realization.

Rose has also laid out as complete a path as possible to this goal. However, each person's psychology and personal requirements are different, and every detail cannot be spelled out in advance for everyone. Much of his stress is upon the individual's learning to implement "ways and means" of personal effort to bring about this becoming according to one's particular circumstances. While some of his previous comments may sound like he is disparaging mental effort, he is not. He is only describing its proper role in the larger work of transformation and transcendence.

Rose puts it like this: "Becomers look for ways to find the truth by processes which involve a change of state of mind, and this in turn leads to a change of being" (Rose, 1984, p. 28). This recalls the old proverb: "Watch your thoughts, for they become your actions. Watch your actions, for they become your habits. Watch your habits, for they become your character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny." Rose would certainly concur.

This is also another way of explaining his emphasis upon the need for commitment to the quest and one's becoming a dynamic vector towards the truth. A common principle in metaphysical teachings is that the mind becomes that upon which it constantly dwells. Chants, prayers, and mantras are a symbolic way of worshipping this goal, and undoubtedly work slowly to bring one more in tune with the object of reverence. Rose wishes to define a more precise and conscious methodology that uses the mind to its best advantage in the work of subjective refinement while simultaneously backing away from it, rather than attempting to distrustfully override it with devotional practices alone.

A very important point was clarified in the following dialogue. I once asked Rose: "If the human mind, personality, identity, etc. are finally realized to be unreal and not 'us', then why should we have to go through this extreme effort to know ourselves, correct our psychological defects, adjust our philosophies, and so on; why not simply meditate on nothingness, or somehow empty out the mind, until the sense of finite individuality disappears, along with all its projections, and only pure awareness is left?" He replied that even though the egoself is indeed fictional, it is important to first work through it and correct its defects because in order to find the truth, we must seek with a truthful mind and become it, merge with it, and becoming the truth means first becoming truthful as a human being. This cannot be skipped. All error is of the ego only. The self is the biggest obstacle to truth, as well as the vehicle to reach it.

This backing away from untruth thus actually involves the negating of the false self that is the very obstacle to truth. If one is still identifying with thoughts, values, perceptions, reactions, states of mind, physical habits, etc. that are false, then one cannot move past this level by any method to what is more comprehensively true because one's self-identification is functionally still caught up in delusion. One has to become a clear channel of awareness, with all egogenerated pollution of mental experience corrected, in order for the further development of "being" to take place and the inner Eye to open. One cannot just "leap" to reality straight out of maya. One cannot right away chop off one's head and simply be Spirit. The path must pass through self-knowledge and self-purification. God is not mocked, as the Bible warns us.

When initially contemplating this path of self-definition, of "Who am I?", one may be stuck with the answer: "I don't know." If one resists the temptation to create a desired identity, even a seemingly positive, virtuous one, one is left to wonder what direction to take. Rose says this concern is a misunderstanding: one should not decide what direction to take. One is taken. He explains how this works:

One should not get sidetracked in preconceptions of what they think becoming should be for them, rather than allowing themselves to change in response to the inevitable refinements of truthfulness, and the parallel labor of constantly retreating from untruth. (Rose, 1984, p. 29).

In other words, we do not make the rules; we are shown the rules if we pay attention. It is not even a matter of looking for guidance from a guru or from scripture. We must give ourselves to our fate, for as Rose says: "The real teacher speaks neither to the ear, nor the mind, nor the heart, but by

circumstances and acts. Yet the real teacher is not a man, and is known only in that circumstances befall us" (Rose, 1975, p. 68). Frankl had made the similar point that the meaning of life is not something learned or created, but rather by becoming one with the requirements of our mission in life as it unfolds, the meaning is discovered.

Along these lines, the question comes up in psychological work as to which faculty or mode of experience is more real, more fundamental, and hence, more dependable as a "guidance system" for exploration: the mind or the heart. Paths diverge on this issue, with some emphasizing one over the other. Some would say that feelings are derivative of thoughts, and others that thoughts are derivative of feelings. Actually, the cause and effect relationship between them seems to go in both directions simultaneously. They are interwoven aspects of a larger, holistic process of life. Regardless, the main point to acknowledge is that as we now are both are false, or at least highly unreliable. Much of the Albigen System of meditation is the work to correct the distortions in each mode of perceiving and interpreting experience and bring them into alignment with true thinking and feeling, which only then can lead into clear mindfulness and mature devotion. Ramana Maharshi has stated that when this purity and nonduality is achieved, both Mind and Heart, as supremely aware presence, are finally realized to be one and the same.

Rose has an exquisite passage in a mystical poem that explains this evolution of intuition and becoming:

That which is important is to know, and to listen to words that will enable thee to know. But logic has only the pretense of knowing. Then that which is important is feeling, but feeling without testing the feeling, even though it be a feeling of certainty, is but pretense. For even as disease at either end of a nerve renders unreliable feeling, so the subject or object of intuition may be rendered erratically. So that there is not one without the other. And together they are Being. To know, and to know nothing. To feel, and cease feeling and become. But before thou knowest nothing, thou must lie with the conceit of knowing... (Rose, 1975, p. 67).

In this kind of teaching, however, one cannot know in advance the entirety of one's path to its conclusion, as might be the case in traditional theological religions that assure one of salvation as soon as one pledges faithfulness within that beliefsystem, or in some spiritual teachings that employ mechanistic techniques and rituals that promise Godconsciousness if one repeats the familiar practices long enough.

The unavoidableness of uncertainty while on the path can be disconcerting to the seeker who feels the understandable desire for security during one's explorations and the assurance of final attainment. However, this need not be an obstacle. If one has some tentative faith in the path and one's own ability to inquire, one only needs to trust that intuition will reveal the next step. If one attends to the generic, introductory work on oneself as described in this paper, the progressively finer and more individualistic extensions of these actions that need to follow will make themselves known from there. This process of intuition can be likened to the headlights on a car: they cannot reveal the next 100 miles of one's journey, but can illuminate the next 100 yards. Then, if one is obeying the dictates of this "life as teacher" and continues to drive to the edge of what can be seen in that 100 yards, the light will continue to reveal the stretch of road beyond it, with increasingly greater clarity.

This manner of approach requires a quality of courage and integrity that is entirely selfgenerated and answers only to one's conscience. The proverbial image of the solitary, fearless Zen warrior, always in balance, who lives in silence, and is willing to die for his mission, is most accurate here.

Rose describes what the serious seeker can expect:

If you're a student of the truth, you have to accept what comes, not what you can create; no phony answers. THAT WHICH IS is all you want. You never learn the answer; you can only become the answer. You become the Truth, and you find it through an amazingly twisted, persistent, painful process. (Rose, 1985, p. 252).

The cover of Rose's book, *Psychology of the Observer*, depicts this image most vividly. Appearing on it is a statue of a man. Much of the man's figure is still undefined, being born or emerging from within an amorphous slab of stone. Yet, with a tremendous effort of will, he is using the chisel found in each hand to chip away the stone in which he is imbedded to reveal his true form. The sculpture is entitled: "Man carving his own destiny." This is how the Fourth Way psychology of the Albigen System is best visualized. This title is not to imply that one exactly chooses one's destiny, as this would again be dualistic. Rather, one discovers one's destiny as it presents itself and acts it out, thus becoming it. Then, there is no longer a division between the actor and the role life has written for him.

Rose added a corollary to Meister Eckart's famous aphorism: "The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me" (Stace, 1960, p. 157). He said: "God calls you [the voice of Intuition], but you have to meet Him halfway [our commitment and vector]. When He answers you, you realize you answer yourself. This (desire for the truth) is the becoming [when acted upon]." In another passage, he refers once again to that Catholic dictum, "The finite mind can never perceive the infinite." However, he counters this seemingly unassailable "stopper" with another key principle in his teaching: "The mind can become less finite; it can become infinite" (Rose, 1982, p. 139). It is the search and struggle that brings about this becoming.

It is difficult to convey the meaning of "becoming" in words for the same reason it is difficult to *become*: its reality is not the linear product of ideas or causes on the same level on which they are generated. This is why Rose rejects mechanistic, ritualistic practices that are supposed to result in a cumulative, predictable outcome. This is also a part of the meaning of his above quote about the path being a "twisted, persistent, painful process." We do not always know exactly what we are doing or what waits for us down the road. We can only know what life is demanding of us at the moment, and answer it by living it. Likewise, the philosophical search demands fastidious honesty and thoroughness in one's mental assessments. The process of inquiry carries us along. It is no longer a question of whether we are "doing" the work or it is "happening to" us. Whether one's approach is more the masculine mode of inquiry, or the feminine mode of surrender, this holistic action is the "becoming."

Rose's earlier statements about "results being proportional to energy applied" may misleadingly imply just such a mechanistic principle. However, it would be more accurate to understand the nature of this law not as being:

efforts efforts efforts = results, but rather:

r e s u l t s

..... efforts efforts efforts efforts

The real results are not so much in the improvements one may experience in one's own life or mental state, but in the development of this "being" behind the scenes due to the effort one is making on the stage of life.

This effort consists of many things: desire, commitment, conviction, intuition of factors, work, faith, more work, watching, and waiting at attention. All this results in the becoming. This is the graduate phase in philosophy. We tend to start out life with belief in the goodness and rightness of everything, and the inherent validity of our own identities, as we find them to be. Then, either through trauma, maturation, or fortunate accident, some enter the phase of doubt and disillusionment. Those few who graduate intact to the Fourth Way and fully live the life are the *becomers*.

One may feel inspired at this point with a noble sense of purpose. However, Rose points out a difficulty in one's effectively living this life of search and transformation. It is the same objection which Gurdjieff had repeatedly hammered home to his listeners and which his system was devised to address: that nobody can "do" anything, as they are now. This not only refers to mature spiritual work, but to anything. Both teachers consider human beings in their "normal" state to be animalistic automatons, with only pretensions of free will, or even divinity. Any effort such a person makes could only be done mechanically, in a state of total identification, leaving one on the same level as where one started, even if somehow "new and improved". Any discipline or ritual that does not bring about greater selfawareness (or Gurdjieff's term: objective consciousness) can only succeed in manipulating mundane consciousness into different patterns. True, complete devotion or surrender to a higher power can lead to such transformation also, if one submits to and serves this spiritual vector from innocent desire and not a subtle ego that slyly intends to hold on to itself.

Gurdjieff said people are asleep. Rose says people are robots, although admits that "sleep" is a more accurate term because a robot can never become anything more than a wellfunctioning robot, whereas a person who is asleep has the possibility of waking up. Later, it will be seen how an even more precise assessment is that "people" are ghosts who identify with robots.

By the inability to "do" something, what is meant is that freedom of will, even some measure of freedom qualified by circumstances, is solely in the domain of an awake mind; one that is not hypnotized by conditioning nor identified with either the egos that have been programmed into that mind or the resultant actions of the body. As we are now, both Gurdjieff and Rose assert that our conviction of will, choice, selfdetermination, etc. is a fraud, as we are nothing more than the product of every factor that has come together to form us. We identify with the sequence of factors defining our experience of selfhood, including inner processes of reaction and desire as well as outer conditions, and then confidently announce that we are forging our own paththe belief in which was also placed into our minds. Or, as Jim Burns vividly puts it: "We are the identification with the face of the wave. We are the crossroads of what happens to us."

In the human being's common state, one no more chooses to "do" anything than does the billiard ball choose to go in a particular direction when it is struck, or a dog chooses to salivate at the sound of a bell. In fact, our very conviction of being selfconscious experiencers of life is also an illusion within consciousness, so long as there is no awareness apart from and anterior to that consciousness. To that extent, such a life can be considered no more than a hallucination in the mind of someone who never was.

What actually happens, according to both teachers, is that we are unaware of the million and one factors comprising our experience of life at any moment, and merely assume that what we are experiencing is the result of our "own" doing. Who precisely is this "we"? In fact, the reality is that we are the endresult of the interaction of these myriad factors and are thus generally helpless to be other than as we are. Those who seem to be dynamic, forceful, successful, etc. are in their own way no less programmed or compelled than those who are ineffectual victims of life. Gurdjieff's Work was aimed at gradually transforming people into seekers who have some partial capacity to "do" something from a conditional will, beyond what they were being made to do by circumstances. The first

step is to become aware of ourselves and realize we are automatons.

Rose acknowledges the reality of the paradox here and says we cannot afford to wait until we are really able to "do" something before actually doing something. We have to go ahead and do something now anyway, whether we really can or not. In fact, this doing, when properly intended and aimed, and however mechanical it may later be recognized to have been in retrospect from a higher vantage point, may be what is required to generate such a qualified will in the first place and transform one by this means into a genuine doer. It should be noted, though, that even this "philosophical 'I'" is only a functional ego, and not a crystallized entity. This distinction can be visualized as the difference between a human figure embedded in a painted scene and one that is drawn in a cartoon with a solid black line outlining its shape, discretely separating it from its environment. This ego is to be used in service of the inquiry and then let fall back into the flux of life when it has done its job; not to be taken seriously as the self. This understanding also reconciles Gurdjieff's and Rose's divergent views on the role of the ego in the quest. Further comments on what it means to live artfully with a transparent ego will be made in the section on betweenness.

Strictly speaking, one cannot help being a "robot." Our bodies are programmed by Nature and most of our mental and emotional processes are directly tied in with this biological programming, however individualistic and spontaneous they may seem to us subjectively. Our moods, values, desires, fears, perceptions, and reactions are largely derived from our physical natures, which are in turn a part of a blueprint millions of years old, according to Rose. Our minds are impressed with more diverse and insidious forms of conditioning than we can keep track of: genetic, organic, social, cultural, psychic, and even planetary.

The study of hypnosis gives us a frightening clue as to how our minds really work, and brings into question how much of our experience of life is actually in some form of hypnosis instead of clear awareness, as we like to assume. All these factors result in our living within a paradigm that is so thick and so pervasive that we have little chance of ever getting a glimpse of objective reality through the cracks, or even suspecting the nature of our bondage. We are fully chained in Plato's Cave. Our "freedom" is in our choice of shadows we cast on the wall, if even that.

Rose's assessment of the human condition is pitiful; the confrontation harsh:

You are a robot. Your name is legion. The pain you suffer is inflicted by your own claws and teeth. The joys you pretend are only programmed "BELIEFS OF PLEASURE", worthless checks for an actors' farce. Your knowledge is an ability to read the actors' lines. Religion and Psychology are two "actor manias", compulsions that "the show must go on and on." Behavioristic Psychology is a traumatic reaction to DISILLUSIONED ACTORS. Your concept of Heaven is ridiculous; your hopes for Hell are masochistic. The man in the audience is the observer. His name is not legion. THE ULTIMATE OBSERVER IS ONE (Rose, lecture poster).

Fourth Way Work is not for robots. Robots can do no more than eat, reproduce, seek entertainment, security, and egoaffirmation, and then die when the organism is used up or that particular character has completed its role in the story. This is all for which the human animal is seemingly built, and to strive for something beyond this paradigm of the "normal" requires a quality of independent thought and intuition that are not in the robot's programming. However, by some chance, trauma, or unusual maturity, the beginning of an external awareness can dawn on the robot, in which it gets wise to its state and from that moment becomes less of a robot. Rose describes his intention in reaching out with his teaching: "We're trying to contact those robots who have been progressed to the

accidental computerization that makes them aware of their robot state" (Rose, 1978, p. 227).

One significant indication of budding spiritual maturity is that of a person realizing being helpless, but yet not being prevented by this from acting anyway. This acknowledgement and understanding is what allows one to "do" something; to take some tentative steps away from the wellworn path of organic functioning in another direction for which there is not yet a map.

In this context, "robot" can be defined as one's identifying with an uncorrected, mechanical creature, functioning in a world of interdependent, relative factors, for an entirely mundane purpose, and without awareness of (or from) one's anterior or true Self. "Uncorrected" means that not only is the experience of this entity strictly a product of everything that combined together to create it, but that it is usually malfunctioning and not at all even a "healthy" robot. Rose sees humanity as a wretched lot of pathological windup toys, who have dreams of building utopia, while not knowing the first thing about their own real nature or the reasons for their continued suffering.

Actually, as will be further explained in the section on "point of reference," the objective in this Work is not that to which this line of reasoning seems to be obviously leading. The implication of "waking up" is not that the person is not really a robot and should simply stop being one. The goal is not to not be a robot. The goal is to realize who one's self truly is, and at the end, the self is found to not be the person who really is a robot and cannot be anything else. Making this shift in identity also corrects the egocausal errors of the robot.

The real relationship between the robotperson and oneself has to be discovered. But, in order for this to occur, a part of the paradox is that one first has to accept being a robot as one currently is and reprogram oneself into being a seeker of something greater. One can reach behind one's head and poke around inside the cover plate, rearranging the wires and pressing different buttons back there, resulting in a mechanical creature that has some limited ability to function as a selfmotivating entity, serving the cause of its own ultimate welfare, rather than automatically going down the beaten path to fulfill the unintelligible purpose for which it was built, by an unknown Engineer, and nothing more.

At this point, it is important to make a clear distinction between the philosophy of Rose/Gurdjieff and that of behavioral psychology in its purest form, which it may seem to resemble. These two teachings are radically different, however. The key factor is, again: the point of reference of identity. In other words: **who is the self?**

Rose does not disagree for a moment that we are conditioned beings, responding to reward and punishment, mimicking others' behavior and values, and so on. Where Rose violently disagrees with the strict behavioral philosophy is in its implication that this programmed creature is what we really are and all we can be. The aim of the behavioral approach is primarily to reprogram the robot into being a "happy" and productive one, and interacting harmoniously with the other robots. This is the essence of most of modern psychology in its various forms, which Rose emphatically condemns.

The intent of both teachers is to help the self who is imprisoned in the delusory identification with this automaton to first come to know the workings of this psychophysical machine in its entirety, to correct its pathological and selfdestructive actions, to redirect its energies into the work towards selfdefinition, and to finally sever the identification with this fictional "person," as the anterior Self wakes up to its real nature. Behaviorism essentially justifies and reinforces the robotcondition by making it "better." Rose confronts it as a tragic curse that must be lifted.

There is a way to accomplish this. Rose claims that when Christ said: "I am the Truth, the Way, and the Life," he was not merely uttering grandiose poetry to impress the peasantry. Christ

was defining a specific and complete formula for the spiritual life. Rose also sees these three principles of work as being almost identical to the Buddhist terms: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sanghat.

In the Albigen System, Rose is recommending, "for those not otherwise addicted", a three fold path (Rose, 1978, p. 184). The symbol of the pyramid is used to remind the student at all times the necessity for working on all three levels at once. The manner of following these three directives in turn involves work on three levels within each of them: the Physical, the Mental, and the Essential (or Essence). Much of the work is expedited by working with one's associates, while some of the work on these levels can only be done by the individual for oneself. Rose adds, however, that the final realization of Essence comes about by the help of another person, or by accident. To gamble upon accidental happenings is to risk the dangers involved and to run the risk that Essential realization may never come about.

Following is an outline of the ThreeFold Path (Rose, unpublished group papers). First will be described the subcategories (physical, mental, and essential) that are levels within each of the three primary aspects of this Path. The specific terms and principles that have not yet been defined will be explained later in their appropriate sections of the paper. This outline here is to provide an overview of the recommended manner of search.

PHYSICAL STEPS:

1. Set the house in order. This means we must find some economic security, keep the physical house healthy, as otherwise it will either quit thinking or think unreliably, and we must adjust the domestic scene so that the people with whom we associate will be amenable to the search.
2. Find a person or persons who have been down the road that we wish to follow. Look for books that will advise accordingly or furnish coordinative material. Travel in this regard, if necessary, but never allow travel to become an escape in itself from interior work.
3. Find your fellow seekers.
4. Find a place to meet, and work together with these teachers and fellow seekers.

MENTAL STEPS:

1. Implement regular, periodic, mental exercises with directed meditation.
2. Or use koan concentration.
3. Use self confrontation, meaning finding for yourself ways and means of selfanalysis.

ESSENTIAL STEPS:

Reverse the vector:

- a. Find the Obstacles that you must learn in order to avoid them in the process of reversal.
- b. Allow the Ego to be eliminated, as it is the main obstacle.
- c. Constantly implement the mental and spiritual Laws that govern the process of Work.
- d. Find Transmission from someone who has "attained." This is the final realization of the Absolute.

The actual ThreeFold Path, which intersects with all three of these levels, is as follows:

THE WAY [the Dharma]:

1. Set the house in order (as described).
2. Learn to conserve the vital energies. Find determination and desire for direction with the success of conserving the energies.
3. Direct the energies profitably (see sections on meditation, Jacob's Ladder, and betweenness).

THE LIFE [the Sanghat]:

1. Value brotherhood and cooperation. Brotherhood involves spiritual, mental, and physical help, in that order.
2. Utilize and understand the Law of the Ladder. The Sanghat is the matrix in which the Law of the Ladder bears fruit.
3. Become a vector. You must become a vector before you become the truth.

THE TRUTH [the Buddha]:

1. Speak and act the truth in all things relative (physical or vocal truth).
2. Do not rationalize (mental truth).
3. Become the truth (Absolute Truth).

All of the above aspects of work must be done simultaneously. One should not concentrate on personal affairs exclusively and forget the brotherhood or the practice of truth.

One must remove the urgency of habits. Habits are not sins, but can sap one's energy and even cause trouble or death. One should not allow slavery to any habit or appetite. These include a wide range of distractions and obsessions which may not be negative except in relation to the path.

With this energy and desire thus salvaged, add to the intensity of the vector, harmonizing the body, and raising somatic energy to the head. With this mental energy one will then engage in philosophical research by investigating the systems taught in the different schools of spiritual and psychological work. We also meditate upon our reactions, learn discrimination, and learn to react with discrimination. Finally, when the observation of reactions becomes intense enough the mind will stop.

The group or sanghat serves to sustain and remind the members, thus keeping them on the path and stimulating their progress. The Law of the Ladder is used. One does not advance without helping and being helped. The Law of the Ladder is the formula by which the group is able to find for all someone to help and someone who can use help.

One must become a vector, and to fully implement the Law of the Vector, one usually needs someone to monitor progress and function as a catalyst at the proper moment. The full understanding of the Law of the Vector involves the knowledge of reversing it. As it is now, it is aimed at the relative world scene.

In order to insure individual and group success, we must once again realize the significance of the term: commitment. As in all things, the commitment should be three fold: body, mind, and essence. One cannot commit one's essence, as it is already committed. We are essentially one as far as the Absolute is concerned. However, there is a paradox in this, which first requires the semblance of individual effort from within the illusion in order for this realization of noindividuality and noeffort to occur.

The ThreeFold Path can be summed up like this: to act and relate truthfully in all ways, and promote parallel effort in working with others is the Life; to thoroughly know the truth about oneself and the world through mental purification is the Way; and to eliminate the false egoself, to see the

truth as opposed to human positivism, and *become* is the Truth.

Rose considers this to be a genuine formula for bringing about Realization, and not only a neat conceptstructure. He declares: "I feel that a sincere seeker, who possessed the determination to find the Truth at any cost, suffering, or expenditure of energy, would most certainly find the Truth, if he followed the ThreeFold Path with an open mind" (Rose, 1978, p. 189).

There is one principle that has been touched upon several times thus far, yet is so critical to one's successfully navigating the path that it requires a more deliberate acknowledgement here. The hard question we face is: How can we come to know the objective truth about things in a world which is not drawn in black and white terms and with a mind that is unable to see the totality of anything with direct perception? Rose describes our predicament: "We can conceive of relative things as being both valid and invalid. Philosophically, the attempt to establish validity in regard to relative things brings us immediately to the paradox" (Rose, 1982, p. 133).

"Paradox" does not simply mean contradiction or the balance of complementary opposites, for these notions are still along the same plane of experience. Recognizing the reality of the paradox involves seeing the entire range of possible values and perspectives from a higher vantage point, and thus seeing how incomplete one's view of an issue will be from any one position on the relative plane. According to Ken Wilber, a simple way of stating this is that the paradox is how the mind in duality sees reality (Wilber, 1983). The directmind view from Reality sees no paradoxes. We do.

This becomes an especially troubling obstacle on the path. Since the paradox permeates all relative inquiry, we never have the final, comprehensive understanding of anything while we are still functioning and processing information within a world of conditional, incomplete perspectives. This is much of the cause of disagreements between people regarding religious principles, interpersonal issues, and cultural values. A large part of this is also due to the nature of language, which does not communicate reality holistically and directly between two clear minds, but further distorts understandings which are already garbled to begin with. Collectively, this is what Rose refers to as the Tower of Babel syndrome in regards the quest for Truth.

There is a positive note in all this. The further along the path one goes, the more one becomes aware of the numerous instances of paradox in one's experience of life; whereas the view may have been misleadingly simple and seemingly obvious previously, while one had been identified with one selective pointofview as the stable truth. One realizes that everything is not entirely as it appears to be and alternate assessments are possible from what one currently maintains. This brings one to a phase of insecurity and confusion, as there are no longer any simple answers in which to seek refuge, yet one must still attempt to discern the more valid from the less valid. However, the more one becomes aware of these multiple perspectives on the relative worldscene and lessens one's egohold on any one of them as having to be exclusively correct and final, the further one is actually retreating into objective awareness above this dualistic plane, and the closer one gets to the absolute, comprehending Mind in which all things are seen as they truly are. Resting in this GroundofBeing is the security.

The path Rose describes is not easy or pretty. It does not promise immediate peace or comfort, social betterment, a loving God, or eventual celestial delights. It promises work at selfunderstanding. The anxious uncertainty of doubt. The dissolution of the mirage of "enjoyment" and egotism that we have used to justify continued living. The tension of existing in conscious ignorance. The challenge of countering adverse forces. The increasing loneliness. The quiet frustration of being stuck between Heaven and Earth, yet having home in neither. The pain of an awareness that is as yet inadequate to answer itself. And, finally, the inescapable appointment with Death that mercilessly exposes all our

lies and makes a mockery of our dreams. Unless one's desire is for the unembellished truth, regardless of the price, one will have little motivation to continue on this kind of path, as long as more attractive sideroads are available.

To recognize the Albigen System as holding out hope for one's attaining that pristine state of sanity outside all relative paradigms and beliefstates currently known requires an unmeasurable, undefinable ripeness, a clarity of perception, a resonant intuition. Some impatient, righteous anger doesn't hurt either. Or perhaps a person needs to be very old inside. This spiritual intuition is not correlated with I.Q., education, psychological sophistication, upbringing, religious indoctrination, or seemingly anything else. It is a singular state of readiness. Rose puts great emphasis upon having people recognize the nonsense all around us and within us; the dream world in which we spend our entire lives. He regards humanity as being lost in a maze of mirrors in a madhouse. He sees little benefit in tantalizing the student with descriptions of exalted states of being and experiences of cosmic rapture. He is more concerned with pointing out how we are constantly fooling ourselves at every turn and preventing ourselves from facing the truth of our condition.

He does add, however, that people do sometimes get wise to the foolishness of their games in life. Unfortunately, this all too often occurs at about the time of death, when it is too late to do much about the admission. It is important to clearly realize the direness of one's real status, yet while still having enough time, energy, and opportunity left to work on solving the problem. Rose has explained his purpose in teaching as being: "I'm trying to age a few young people" (Rose, 1982, p. 143).

Yet, he offers solace in the midst of one's troubles in this work. As in any other pursuit in life, one must pay one's dues in order to achieve. In response to an early question of mine regarding my frustrations in resolving some personal issues, while those around me having fewer evident questions or existential concerns seemed to be having a much better time of it, he said: "Evolution, even through agony and hardship, is growth. Involution can only be a descent into the abyss of confusion on all planes."

This attitude of the necessity for confronting one's koans in life and enduring the struggle and uncertainty involved in this commitment is a consistent theme throughout Rose's teaching. It does seem that all too often we learn more through suffering than from wisdom. His point is not that we need to deliberately pursue hardship, but to recognize the hard questions that life is constantly posing to us regarding our identity, purpose, and eventual extinction, and accept the price that must be paid to answer them.

This is again why Rose does not encourage those forms of meditation or ritual that bring about a state of "bliss" or peacefulness, yet without their being justified by one's having earned that Realization of which these could be considered symptoms. He sees this as one's being "bought off," so to speak, short of the goal by a lesser state of mind; one that is counterproductive to real inner work. Although spontaneous insights do certainly come during those inbetween moments of quietude when the ego mind relaxes, it usually requires some form of outer conflict to bring about the awareness of one's confusion and the motivation to turn inwardly to actively look for the solution.

All this, plus the nature of his own final experience, results in Rose's humorously grim assertion about the course the path must take, up to the period preceding the final breakthrough: "The preparatory condition for Enlightenment is trauma. Indulge in it while you can. You will have enough peace in the cemetery" (Rose, lecture, 1984). From this, it can be seen why Rose does not endorse those teachings that seduce the weary or lazy traveler by promoting a quality of contentment he claims is superficial and only serves to waste time, when there is serious work to be done.

By "trauma" he means whatever it takes to shake loose one's entrenched convictions about

oneself and the apparent nature of things. The ongoing state of trauma he recommends is self-induced and takes the form of being willing to confront oneself in full awareness of one's unknowing and all the suffering this entails. The death of the egos that keep these mental patterns alive is likewise generally the result of trauma and is experienced as traumatic by the parts of oneself that are dying.

It can be a heavy burden to carry the curse of knowing one does not know the Truth. Paradoxically, this struggle within a state of admitted uncertainty is an essential prerequisite for Realization, since it inexorably forces the relinquishment of the ego's attempted hold on reality. Jim Burns assures us this struggle has a purpose the seeker cannot yet appreciate: "**The unknowing is a part of the becoming.**" This relates to Gurdjieff's claim about the value of "conscious suffering" towards the development of one's soul or Being.

Few people are ever willing to question themselves enough to come to the disturbing conclusion that they are ignorant. Of those who do and are willing to make some effort to find valid answers, few seekers get to the point of being willing to remain in the state of conscious ignorance until the Truth is discovered, rather than desperately grasping for some straw of rationalization or make-believe to soothe the insecurity. Finally, once it is understood that the answer must be a direct realization of essence rather than the maintenance of some concept of dogma or self-induced mental state, one must exist and continue to work in this tension of unsatisfied desire for that state of valid being which is as yet unknown. This is commitment. To "believe in God" when one can no longer believe in God is really being spiritual.

This brings up another one of the many paradoxes on the path; one that is hard for an outsider to the path to understand, and possibly even for those involved in the Work. The usual expectation is that embarking upon a spiritual path will soon lead one to greater joy, tranquility, success, and security. Yet, when one gets involved in the kind of inner work being described here, life oftentimes becomes even harder and one's psychological condition can feel like a battle zone. All is not immediate harmony and bliss.

The outsider may then assume the path under consideration is spurious or not as worthwhile as one that does quickly bring about a state of calm, assurance, etc. The person who is seriously working on self study, philosophical contemplation, and conservation of energy may find the turbulence, uncertainty, fear, and even pain that is aroused by such digging to be disquieting, and may naturally wonder why this idealistic effort has brought one into a harsher condition than are those who forsake such efforts.

The reason is simply that sleep is more comfortable than the work of waking oneself up, however many bruises the sleepwalker may accumulate from bumping into things. Sleep also includes that category of religious belief that does not require personal inquiry nor the acknowledgement of the unknowing that would have to be the starting point for such seeking. Admitting that one does not know the truth about life is more troubling than to not know that one is ignorant. It requires more courage to face death consciously than to deny the reality of death until the last moment or to maintain some belief in a guaranteed heaven as a buffer against the piercing cold. To look inside oneself and admit to not knowing who one really is, fundamentally, can be terrifying. This is why the majority of people instinctively never risk turning their attention inward and asking themselves some hard questions, but would rather remain as puppets on a stage, never questioning who is pulling their strings.

While the devotee who is honorably living the life of faith will indeed experience less friction against life, and hence walk in Grace and with self-respect, much of the security and joy that is felt is dishonestly "borrowed" against a God that is truly unknown, but has been created in imagination, however inspired by budding intuition. It is not a total surrender. One is still hanging onto oneself,

subtly.

Gurdjieff summed up this issue with a quiet dignity and poignancy: “Blessed is he who has a soul. Blessed is he who has none. But woe and sorrow to him whose soul is developing” (Walker, 1969, p. 212). The pain of awareness of the unknowing is no disgrace. The bluff of certainty, is. Encountering hardships and setbacks in developing one’s soul, carving out one’s destiny, etc. is no cause for shame. This is another reason for Rose’s stress upon commitment. He does not promise an easy path, and knows that without a firm commitment, most seekers would not be able to endure the tension of such effort nor receive the aid that such a bold commitment elicits. Seeing all colors of meaning bleached from life, all gods exposed to be humbugs, and then looking inside and seeing one’s presumed identity devoid of substance leaves one empty and aching, with the resolute desire for an answer being all that remains, echoing within the heart. One’s prayers disappear into the void.

With a blend of compassion and anguish, Rose bleakly depicts humanity’s plight, in one of his most solemn lines: “In what pitiful hells are the wise; in what blackest abysses are the oblivious ignorant” (Rose, 1978, p. 231). The first half is not meant as justification for the seeker’s selfflattery, as the growing awareness that one is stuck within a flimsy, yet oppressive nightmare is no cause for haughty celebration. It is simply a statement of grim fact. The latter half also suggests the chilling prospect that one may be lost in a darkness so blackor, that state of functional oblivion we normally call “living” that one cannot even see the darkness, nor suspect that one’s identity, joys, life, and world are wholly illusory.

In a poem called “Truth,” Rose describes the existential landscape as seen from a vantage point beyond life; conveying a mood as if solitarily standing beside one’s own grave on a frigid, gray, wintry day, when even the memories of all one had known disappear into the fog. This offers a glimpse of what the commitment to truth entails. All of one’s buffers are stripped away, as are the props and crutches we rely upon to get us through our days. To see reality nakedly, without the projection of meaning we reflexively superimpose upon it to make the ego’s life bearable, leaves one cold and alone. Some excerpts:

...No one laughs in the winter like they do in the sun... One by one, the lights go out, or the eye grows dim, and our thoughts are like the wind in a reed, when the tide is leaving... Ah, Truth is a wonderful thing, but a lonely thing, and the fools who frolic on the green are happy fools, but makebelieve is not for hoary head or pedant’s brow. And the hollow laugh that finds echo far inside, will nevermore ring for thee. All that rings in memory is the hint, the haunting, wistful hint, that somewhere, back, in a warmer, sunnier clime, we lived and lied and drank of fantasy, more eternal than we. And but for some relentless, judicial clock, we might still be children dreaming in the meadow. But here it is, night...and Truth is too thin a blanket. (Rose, 1982, p. 109).

In another poem called “The Mirror,” Rose expresses the testimony of an old soul who, like Job, dares to confront God with unanswered questions. Some excerpts:

If all is God...can we pretend to be the soliloquy of God?... Can we pretend for a moment that we are all particles of God, enjoying his divinity?... Should we rejoice that God through tiny human nerves experiences all forms of horror and pain, despair and fear? ...Can we imagine the glories of a God so selfwatching, so identified with uswho are so identified with this pointless game? ...Unless we visualize God as infinitely introspective...that watches the eater and the eater, the beater and the beaten, there seems to be no point to this drama (Rose, 1982, p. 912).

Clearly, the message Rose is tossing out as a note in a bottle has a peculiarly solemn tone, staggering in its import, and sent from a place far away. This is not a teaching of celebration or comfort. It is a wakeup call; one that cares not whether one is dreaming of nightmares or ecstasy. Yet, it is a teaching that offers a unique brand of hope, after all other forms of hope are realized to be more illusions. His is a path that speaks of both foreboding and promise: "Only those who believe there is a path will ever find one. Only those with faith will find despair. And those who despair may come closer to truth" (Rose, 1975, p. 67). Truly, only one who can continue to seek after all hope is gone is a real seeker on the final path.

And yet, despite his seeming grimness, Rose never loses his sense of humor. He knows that Reality is neither happy nor sad, and his humor is the attempt to communicate the recognition of the paradox that encompasses both. The solemn tone of the previous poems are meant only to reflect the experience of the final remnants of the human mind as it becomes aware its dissolution in the transition to a nonrelative state. The experience is that of the self's (small "s") dying and so has the perspective of loss. Rose is more reluctant to describe Realization or its aftermath in "positive" terms, or as "affirmations", as this lends itself more readily to fantasy and simulation by the giddy student, who is short of attaining the goal. He is more concerned with teaching about death than "rebirth."

One of his longtime students, Al F., being distraught, wondered aloud if after many years of search and struggle one may reach a plateau or get over some critical hump, after which the rest of the way becomes smoother and more manageable. He asked: "Does the path get any easier after this?" Rose replied: "No, it doesn't but it gets funnier!" Not to the seeker, perhaps, but to an observer of the seeker, who sees the necessary folly of all the earnest squirming and comical ridiculousness of the one who battles absurdity.

Before proceeding to discussions of the specific methodology in the Albigen System and how they interrelate, a general summary of premises is offered here as an overview of the main themes in introducing the teaching.

1. The majority of the isms that serve as religious and philosophic guidelines for humanity are permeated by inconsistencies, and that in these isms many of the so-called facts are illusions or half-truths, and that most of humanity's beliefs are the products of fear and wishful thinking, rather than an unbiased search for Truth.
2. The human mind is not infallible in its processes, and it suffers errors as a result of many factors, such as the conflicting clamor of appetites, intellectual limitation, fatigue, inadequate intuition, inadequate reasoning (or common sense faculties), difficulties of the dual mind in solving abstract or absolute considerations, and the lack of individual control over states of mind. These obstacles can be countered by:
 - a. Progressive elimination of concepts and concept building by eliminating those not as consistent within themselves, not inclusive, and those whose scope does not bridge the range of unexplained phenomena as well as some other system of thinking does.
 - b. Self-observation.
 - c. Self-remembering (looking at our past).
 - d. The respectful doubt.
 - e. Application of the paradox.
 - f. Development of the Intuition.
 - g. Retaining the identity of the Real Observer in various states of mind.
3. There is a system of overcoming these errors, the system is practical, and Truth may be realized.

4. The rate of realization is directly proportional to the amount of and quality of energy and attention applied to the quest.
5. Illusions are the great obstacles to Truth, and the dispelling of these illusions involves the improvement of the inadequate factors mentioned in premise Number Two, and better control over them. This process involves an everconscious schooling of the mind, so that it will be an instrument of Truth. (Rose, 1978, p. 1945).