

Chapter 8

Obstacles and Laws

These are serious questions, and they need to be faced with courage and honesty before one can hope to arrive at the state beyond all questions. One message that may be recognized in this series of questions is that there is a particular direction to the search that is recommended, as well as an attitude of rigorous doubt. Many of the more crucial comments refer to the common theme of one's needing to "become." How exactly does one go about such an abstract endeavor when the path is admittedly a very individualistic, subjective process, with few clear signposts? Nevertheless, even in abstractions, patterns may be discovered.

The greatest difficulties on the path are our imperfect vision, and our limited ability to accurately process and comprehend the information or experiences we receive. So, the next step is to come to understand our limitations and learn how to overcome them. Doing this requires that we know ourselves and our weaknesses so that we can find the obstacles that have their roots within us. Our blind spots do not wish to be seen. Without perfected intuition, we are lost. *But – seeing blindness is already a form of vision.*

Rose says it is advisable to be aware of the rules of the game one wishes to play (the Master Game), in order to bolster one's likelihood of winning. To this end, he has provided detailed information about two of the more important aspects of the path of which every seeker must be aware. One is a "List of Obstacles," and the other is a "List of Laws." The former systematically describes all the major hindrances to one's efforts that will be encountered. These are not necessarily conscious "forces of adversity," but they are factors that work contrary to one's intended spiritual aspirations. One must take them into account so as to be able to compensate for them or sidestep them. Also involved are a collection of possible traps to which almost every seeker will fall victim at some point, including a list of rationalizations which the dishonest or immature mind will use as a gambit for avoiding real work.

The common denominator in the mental obstacles is the ego, which is the identification with the conglomerate of voices, drives, desires, fears, and conceits that make up the human personality, and which is understood to be false.

Most of the following is self-explanatory, although a few comments of elaboration are added.

List of Obstacles

1. Of External Nature:
 - A. Visible, terrestrial life and planetary relationships (the programming by Nature to promote organic life).
 - B. Invisible, or dimensions beyond our senses (possible psychic influences and from agencies outside of this material plane).
2. Of Internal Nature:

The appetites (these are the motives that take up most of our attention and energy):

 - A. Sex
 - B. Security
 - C. Food
 - D. Pleasures other than sex
 - E. Curiosity
3. The Fears:
 - A. Fear of dying
 - B. Fear of scorn or social harm
 - C. Fear of mental or spiritual harm (referring to the apprehension about embarking upon a spiritual path).
4. The Blocks:
 - A. The "seven deadly sins" (obstacles to understanding or clear thinking):
 1. Pride
 2. Covetousness
 3. Lust
 4. Hatred
 5. Anger
 6. Envy
 7. Sloth (who can claim to be entirely free of all seven?).
 - B. The "six catches" (from DeRopp's The Master Game):
 1. The think-talk syndrome
 2. The starry-eyed syndrome
 3. The false-Messiah syndrome
 4. The personal salvation syndrome
 5. The Sunday-go-to-meeting syndrome
 6. The hunt-the-guru syndrome

These all refer to common states-of-mind or patterns that can claim immature seekers who get involved in some form of spiritual work or group activity, but who are unwilling or unable to accept the full responsibility for their own paths or have naive misconceptions about what constitutes esoteric work.
 - C. Physical limitations (fatigue, poor health, fallible senses, limited brain capacity, etc.).
 - D. Economic exigencies (one's time and resources needing to be devoted largely to daily, mundane survival, at the expense of spiritual concerns).
5. Forms of Rationalization:
 - A. Procrastination: that we will be able to do the thing better at a later date (includes excessive leaning upon the expectation of reincarnation).
 - B. That we will ride the tide of humanity into heaven (or, the philosophy of: "Me too").
 - C. That social services or "good works" have spiritual gain (as commodities of barter, as versus means of self-confrontation and change).

- D. That the gods have ears: salvation through prayers (unless one is listening to oneself).
- E. That the gods have noses and eyes: incense and displays (for whose benefit?).
- F. That positive thinking will make gods of us or lead us to liberation (this is a technique or psychological lever, not an absolute law of spiritual consequence).
- G. That the guru will save us. (Can we count on this? Should we? Can the guru save us? Should he? Can the guru do much more than show the way and goad or inspire us on?).
- H. That faith (alone) will save us (without the action to prove the genuineness of our faith).
- I. That the merit of spiritual paths may be evaluated by their popularity (validity determined by voting) or aesthetic appeal (truth measured by its ability to please us).
- J. That we can “feel” our way alone: intuition alone (unchecked by reason).
- K. That we can do it with our omnipotent reason (that is not in service of the intuition).
- L. That God (or Mr. X) will take care of everything. This is a variation of the “Knight on the white horse” rationalization (a blend of lazy vanity and simplistic fatalism).
- M. That our present belief shall be our final evaluation of Truth (one is certain that either there is nothing more to be known or that nothing more can be known, and that one’s faculty of knowing is now operating at maximum capacity).
- N. That everything is hopeless or useless (that all of the above obstacles are a sufficient excuse for one to make no further efforts). (Rose, 1978, p. 176-77.)

The most insidious trap to look out for is the belief that one’s acknowledgement of all the possible traps exempts one from being vulnerable to them, due to one’s now supposedly superior understanding. But Rose warns: “You may say, ‘Oh yes, we know all about the traps...’ while uttering the words from the midst of several traps that have been nobly rationalized” (Rose, 1978, p. 162). It may even be impossible to free ourselves completely from all traps, but we can free ourselves to the extent of knowing our chains and being able to resist them in incidents really critical to our spiritual growth.

In case this above list intimidates the seeker into believing every possible step is blocked by any combination of diabolical forces, mundane priorities, or personal handicaps (hence, the final rationalization), Rose does also provide a list of Laws that offers hope. By “Laws”, he means existent principles of both life and spiritual work; the knowledge and utilization of which allows one to search more efficiently and save some unnecessary hardships born of ignorance. The Laws are not absolute and all-encompassing in themselves. They are in relationship to and qualified by each other. The application of these Laws must be kept within the dimension in which they are intended and operative.

The Laws

1. The Law of Equilibrium. (All forces and objects are in balance, operating in pre-established degrees of influence and compensation within their domain, however paradoxical they may seem in our limited understanding of things. The spiritual form of this is the regulatory law referred to as Karma.)
2. The Law of Change. (We desperately look for changelessness, yet this Law negates anything as being constant, outside of the Absolute state. Everything is in a state of flux. This is directly related to the Laws of Equilibrium and Relativity. Our final satisfaction and resting place is not within experience, but outside of it.)
3. The Law of Inertia. (Things tend to remain inert or in status quo. Yet, this is paradoxical in that things are also constantly changing. The process of dying is simultaneous with the process of

birth. There is an innate force that goads all forms of life against the inert tendency, specifically in the form of curiosity and desire.)

4. The Law of Proportional Returns. (You get what you give. Effort is rewarded, as long as it works within the laws of our dimension. Helping others inspires help. To implement this Law most wisely requires the concurrent adherence to the Law of the Ladder – [see #11].)
5. The Law of Extra-Proportional Returns. (Also known as the Contractor's Law or synergism. This requires cooperation with like-minded co-workers in an esoteric school. More can be accomplished in a group than by solitary efforts.)
6. The Law of Relativity. (All factors are relative and conditional to all other factors. Nothing exists in a vacuum. All our thoughts and actions are associative, yet we can never think or act clearly until we cease to identify with this tangle of relative associations.)
7. The Law of Paradoxical Immanence in All Things Relative. (This relativity is perceived by the dualistic mind as paradox. Every evaluation is found to have an opposite or complement that is possibly as valid. No one assessment should be considered absolute. Perhaps this should be better called Immanent Paradoxicalness).
8. The Law of Complexity. (Although this could also be called the Law of Life, as complexity seems to be required to produce life-forms, over-complexity also tends to result in instability and decay. Spiritual systems and groups must likewise follow the path of simplification rather than elaboration and dogmatism.)
9. The Law of Love. (Related to Laws #4 & 11. Love invites love and hate invites hate. Yet, this must be exercised judiciously, as it is qualified by other laws in the relative world, especially the Law of the Jungle. Love must take the form of unselfish friendship and compassion, not egotistical manipulation or consumption.)
10. The Law of Faith. (This also has limitations, by other Laws and by other people's counter-faith. This Law has to do with the changing of the apparent status of matter by means of human belief. Its efficacy is dependent upon the mind-quantum factor or faith-power of a person or group of persons.)
11. The Law of the Ladder. (One of the most important Laws. People exist on ascending rungs of the ladder of comprehension, capacity, and spiritual maturity. One must work with those on one's own level, while helping those one rung below and receiving help from persons or sources of influence one rung above. To rise, one must help another to reach one's own level. To reach down too low is vanity and futility, as the people cannot hear you and may tear your arm off. Likewise, one cannot expect to work with a teacher too high above one's own level as one would not be able to recognize the requirements of work on that level. One is being pulled up by the person above, while being pushed a bit by those below. This Law also involves the principle of the Pyramid – the rungs are of decreasing population the higher one goes.)
12. The Law of the Vector (Reversed). (The most important Law. One must become a vector of spiritual work, in order to achieve results. Yet, one cannot approach the Truth, so must back away from untruth. The vector must be reversed and one's discrimination guided by intuition. There are two further applications. One's life-vector, if it exists at all, is usually aimed "outward," at the material world. The meaning of real esoteric work is to invert this attention and pull it back into the source of the awareness of all such experience. Related to this is the reversing of the vital energy from its usual downward expenditure, transmuting it upward into mental and spiritual achievement.)
13. The Law of Progression. (Related to Laws #11 & 12. Any series of events or circumstances that indicates consistent direction also indicates a possible continuance of that direction beyond the series presently witnessable. If one step can be taken, there may exist another step after it. One

may have faith that the path progresses past what one now knows and experiences, and in fact, should humbly assume one's current status is not the final point of realization.) (Rose, 1975, p. 16; 1978, p. 196-205).

A few comments need to be added to the above for elaboration. The power of Faith as a factor in life is not in dispute, however it cannot be regarded as the ultimate factor in determining or finding Truth. "To move mountains, requires agreeable, believing mountains," notes Rose (1975, p. 6), and no greater counter-faith from those who prefer the mountain to remain right where it is. He adds that after-death states – whether heavens, hells, or in-between – are very possibly created by the faith-power of individuals or congregations over a period of years and generations, even if unconsciously maintained, although the objective reality of these "places" remains in question.

Some seekers entertain naive notions of the magical powers that those who have achieved God-Realization are presumed to possess and imagine with delight the manipulations of the physical world such beings could accomplish. Rose does not deny that such options do open up to those who have "attained," yet adds that assorted yogic or magical powers can also be acquired through knowing discipline and demonstrated while being far short of the goal, and are no proof of Realization. Whether one's motives are altruistic or self-serving, he points out there being a catch to this, however. The proper exercise of faith could very well move a mountain. But – in order to move the mountain, you would have to first be in that state-of-being in which you could move the mountain, and if you were, you would not move the mountain because you would know that the mountain is already exactly where it is supposed to be. And you would know this because you would also inherently realize that you were the One who put that mountain there in the first place.

Rose suggests that playing around with projections of mind-force is an egotistical waste of potential in a dimension that is not exactly real. While still embedded in duality, no ego-generated expression of "positive thinking" or acquisitiveness can escape engendering some measure of negativity to counter-balance it. This method cannot work in the long run to further the aim of true spirituality. Regardless, demonstrating such an identification with the picture-show is an indication of one's lack of true spiritual desire, not its presence. This is still ego-centered, rather than Truth centered. He explains:

All things are possible, after the knowledge of all things. But when things are known, we do not have the same promptings as we did when we possessed vain wishes without maturity – without the knowledge of the mechanism of the Ultimate blueprints... Knowledge of the workings of the world lessens our desire to manipulate because our knowledge also lets us know that there are always superior factors not yet reached by the continuous process of evaluation...(but) which we know will continually change our values. ...As we progress in knowledge or understanding, how can such maturity lead to any vanity of action? (Rose, 1979c, p. 34-35).

The correct application of faith is in one's having faith that a path from illusion to reality exists, that one has the capacity to do the work involved, and that there may be some guidance and aid provided to those who are sincere and who act on that sincerity. This faith may well actually be the dim awareness of the inner Self that is what sets up the whole path to begin with. The Law of the Ladder is a critical principle in the Albigen System and has several implications:

1. It is most advantageous to work with others, not only for the tangible help received from group interaction, but because of the benefit to oneself from helping others. The effort of teaching (or facilitating) transforms what you know into what you are.

2. It is also important to know one's own level in order to be able to work most productively towards one's goals. This involves knowing oneself well enough to know the real nature of one's desire and the most expedient path to fulfilling it. This is contrasted with wasting one's efforts by pursuing lower level values that are at best only crude symbols for what one really desires, or one's practicing a form of seeking that does not fully utilize one's capacity, but settles for indirect or simplistic means of attainment, i.e. dwelling on systems of divination or fundamentalistic theologies.
3. In working thus with others along psychological or spiritual lines, it is important to work only with those who are within one's own range of understanding, otherwise one's efforts are wasted and one may even come to harm at the hands of the mob. This is a part of being the "sly man" and not indiscriminately casting pearls. As Rose warns, "Helping people is vanity. Teach without ego, to those who can hear you." Likewise, it is good to suspect that there may be levels of work and being above one's own current level, even if not yet known.

The Law of the Ladder ties in here with the Law of Progression. We can see the steps behind or below us and probably the one on which we are now standing, but we will not be able to recognize the steps ahead of or above us, as they will remain invisible until the feet are upon them. One can see progress in retrospect, if not always in the moment. Meanings and perspectives of a higher order cannot be appreciated until experienced.

The Albigen System acknowledges a paradox in regard to Advaita Vedanta's claim that there are no methods or steps of progressive spiritual development, but that it is a direct Realization. This is similar to the division in Zen Buddhism between the notion of Enlightenment as being a sudden, abrupt "happening" as versus a gradual process of refinement, focusing, clarification, transmutation, etc., culminating in the final experience. Rose teaches that both are true.

On one hand, he agrees that the finite, ego-mind is always trying to devise processes to attain something, but that the Mind or Self is wholly outside this mechanical gestalt, and there is nothing the former can do to escape itself and realize the latter. At the same time, such efforts at self-transcendence must be made through to exhaustion, all the while the Mind being aware of the intrinsic futility of all such efforts, as the small "s" self is not what does the transcending. What happens is the delusion that one is this self, ends.

Rose asserts that Realization is all at once, or not at all: "You don't go anywhere until you *arrive*." Yet, there is a qualifying aspect to this. One can "position" oneself for its happening. The task can be likened to a large balloon tied to the earth by a thousand cords. The balloon cannot fly away until every cord is cut. It either remains bound or it is free; there is nothing in-between. Yet, the work is in the form of severing each cord, one at a time; the cords being ignorance, identification, egotism, delusion, lust, and so on. Until the final cord is cut, it is true that the balloon remains fastened to the earth and it seems to the seeker that no progress has been made, despite all of one's efforts. Yet, progress can be considered to consist of the continual severance of the bonds, until the last one is finally cut—or the lift of the balloon's force impatiently tears it out of the ground, stake and all.

Another metaphor for this paradox is a ski-lift that would carry one up to the top of the mountain. In order for this to happen, one needs to be at the right spot at the right moment, so that one will be able to connect with the chair as it comes around and be carried away by it. Whether one is a step away or a hundred miles, one still misses that crucial connection and remains at the bottom of the mountain. However, progress can be regarded here in the form of every step one takes to move closer to that specific point of readiness, at which point one is taken. The actual work is not to get from here to there, but to realize more precisely where here is and *who* is here.

Other comparisons and differences between Rose's teaching and other similar philosophies will be discussed in later sections. Suffice it to say at this point that while the ego-mind cannot directly end itself, it must make efforts to bring itself more into alignment with the truth and lessen the density of its presence as an obstruction in the inquiry; all this being an aspect of "becoming." Rose points out a paradox that must be reconciled before the non-dualistic truth that Advaita expresses can be realized: "Before thou knowest nothing, thou must lie with the conceit of knowing... To avoid action, thou must first determine for great action" (Rose, 1975, p. 68).

All of the above described Laws as well as all the other principles of work discussed in this paper are generic in nature as presented. There is no standardized methodology to be followed by all. Each individual – as long as one believes oneself to be an individual – has different strengths to use, weaknesses to overcome, lessons to learn, and challenges to face. For this reason, Rose states that each seeker has to establish a personal "ways and means committee" to determine the specific tasks and practices one needs to undertake in order to apply these principles of the Way according to the needs of one's own unique nature. Some need to work on developing the reasoning ability more; others need to attend more to the feeling mode. Some need to do more work on the physical level; others need to turn away from the emphasis on the body and focus more on psychological or philosophical issues. Some need to develop power; others need to surrender to powerlessness. Some need to become somebody; others need to become nobody. Some need to feel greater hope; others are ready to realize there is no hope. One must devise one's own methodology to put these abstract principles into personal practice at the proper time.

A further comment should be made about intuition, especially in regards to the thorough implementation of Laws and principles of work. The term has different shades of meaning. In a practical sense, intuition here refers not so much to mystical vision or psychic insight as it does to mature common sense, tempered by refined emotional perception. Jean Klein refers to this simply as "Listening."

To conclude this section, here is Rose's curiously hypnotic explanation of this level of inquiry:

This Path is not visible even by many who profess to be on a "Path." It is true that there are many paths, and it is also true that most people on those paths are quite convinced that theirs is the only real path. It is not until after they become broad enough to see that their path is at most only equal to many other paths that they take another step and look about for a path that will lead them still further. The graduation from the field of many paths to a more selective path among the decreasing choices of paths (as the searcher retreats from incomplete or lesser paths) is a phase of entering the final Path. (Rose, 1978, p. 194-5).