



Richard Rose and the Assimilation of his Enlightenment Experience

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December 13, 2012

In the course of examining the life of Richard Rose from the time his enlightenment experience occurred in Seattle in 1947 at the age of thirty until he began to write *The Albigen Papers* and actively teach after 1970, an important question has remained unanswered. Why did Rose remain silent about his experience for so many years when he corresponded with a large number of people? The answer to this question is my contention that Rose was assimilating his experience, an idea first presented to me by a friend. This assimilation process of understanding what happened to him took time as Rose grappled to find the necessary philosophic language and concepts for him to be able to talk about his experience to others. The assimilation process did not reach its completion until Rose had acquired the philosophic context to explain the profundity of a complete enlightenment experience; a context which he did not possess previously.

The historical record of enlightened people, some of whom were contemporaries of Rose, shows that Rose was not alone. It is evident

that only a very few could talk about their experience in a comprehensive philosophic context, while most others could not, to varying degrees. Rose himself said in many lectures after 1970 when he had successfully assimilated his experience that just because you have an enlightenment experience, meaning death of the ego, this doesn't mean that you can comprehend what has happened and communicate it effectively or tell others about it once you return to your mundane self. Rather, I believe an enlightened person like Rose needs to have both understanding and language key to assimilating that experience.

The assimilation of an enlightenment experience means in practical terms that the relative small-s self, as Rose liked to call it, struggles post-experience to understand what has happened to itself that is, at face value, incomprehensible. Words are not adequate to describe the experience. Consequently, assimilation may be relatively easy or more difficult depending upon the philosophic context that the person has been exposed to prior to the experience. That struggle involves a progression of thinking utilizing relative terms, concepts, and words available at the time to attempt to come to an explanation that is understandable to the self.

In Rose's case, because he has told us that he realized after the experience that what happened to him in Seattle did not fit the explanation of reaching a state of bliss that he had previously read about in books of yoga, Rose subsequently had no language, words or concepts to adequately understand it. The best that he could do at

the time, while the experience was still fresh in his mind, was write a poetic account called *Three Books of the Absolute*. [1,1a] Aside from that, Rose said many years later in recalling the post-experience trauma that he went through, that he thought that he had lost his mind momentarily, and gone insane. [2]

1. Link opens a 7-page pdf, size 24 KB: selfdefinition.org/rose/Richard-Rose-Three-Books-of-the-Absolute-7-pages.pdf 1a. Html version: albigen.com/writings/three-books-of-the-absolute.htm

2. “When I was 30 years of age ... something snapped in my head and I went nuts – according to definitions. In other words, I blew through the top and I visited a dimension I couldn’t describe.” ~ 1979-0418-Direct-Mind-Approach-to-Absolute-OSU [Wiki]

Subsequently, it would take years of assimilating his experience in conjunction with coming into contact with many new philosophic concepts acquired along the way. His complete understanding of his experience would culminate in reading the explanation given by Ramana Maharshi in the book *The Spiritual Teachings of Ramana Maharshi*. [3,3a] Therein Maharshi explained the ultimate enlightenment experience as “a drop of water flowing into the ocean” and called it Sahaja Samadhi, which Rose immediately realized was the delineation he was still looking for. But the assimilation of Marharshi’s explanation would come more than twenty years later for Rose after he wrote *Three Books of the Absolute*, his first attempt at understanding.

3. Which Rose first “discovered” in the fall of 1974, although he had read about Ramana in an earlier book by Paul Brunton. See [Related Teachings #ramana](#) .

3a. Re. Ramana, in Brunton’s book: “... and yet as the years passed I carried little with me from the reading until I had an experience of my own. When this occurred, I looked about for words to describe the strange trauma I endured and the even stranger realization which followed the trauma.” ~ [Yoga: Hatha, Shabd, Raja](#).

There is proof in the historical written record left to us by Rose to support this. First, everything that anyone is acquainted with Rose saying about his experience in books and lectures was said after 1970. So when you read or hear what he said in a lecture, Rose is philosophizing after 1970 and not before. Aside from the initial *Three Books of the Absolute* written very soon after his experience, Rose did not discuss his experience with anyone until post-1970. He did not talk about it with his close personal friend Bob Martin until 1958 [4,4a] in the context of commenting to Martin about a significant book he had just read. There is no other reference in their correspondence.

4. See *Peace to the Wanderer: The Philosophy and Friendship of Richard Rose* by Robert J. Martin. PDF, 137 pages, 601K at [SelfDefinition.Org/rose/](#) or here at [Albigen.Net](#).

4a. Rose: “[Martin’s wife] made a remark I’ll never forget. She was just a young one at the time – I don’t think she was over twenty years of age. She said,

‘Dick, I think you lost your ego.’ I didn’t realize this until much later, that was the procedure – that my egos had collapsed.” ~ 1984-0428-Peace-of-Mind-in-Spite-of-Success-Akron [PDF](#) (31 pages, 240K, SearchWithin.Org) [\[Wiki\]](#)

Rose did not talk to those who responded to his ad in *Fate Magazine* in 1967, nor did he discuss it with the Steubenville Psychic Research Group that he attended from 1956-58, as there is no reference to his experience in the correspondence he kept with group members. [5] Nor did Rose talk about his experience with Alfred Pulyan during their weekly letter exchange from 1960-1961. [6,6a] Rose apparently did not discuss his experience with Paul Wood in 1963 but tells us post-1970 that in that meeting with Wood he listened to what Paul Wood had to say and marveled at how profound an experience Wood had in regards to his own.

5. But Mrs. D’Aliberti gifted Rose a copy of *Cosmic Consciousness*, so it’s likely that they talked about it, although it was not mentioned in the correspondence. See below.

6. Rose briefly mentions it, in-passing only.

6a. selfdefinition.org/pulyan/letters/contents.htm

Why was Rose quiet about his experience all those years? Did he not know that he was enlightened?—or is the idea of enlightenment almost exclusively a post-1970 term of explanation that Rose had not assimilated as yet? I presume that his silence was due to the fact that he was searching for context and meaning that he did not possess in 1947 and had not fully assimilated what had happened to him until he

read Maharshi.

When you examine the enlightened individuals that Rose came across, the idea of assimilation becomes clearer. Paul Wood ^[7] did not have the language and concepts to explain to himself and others what happened to him. He could only assimilate his own experience in terms he was acquainted with at the time, which were Christian religious concepts. Wood explained his experience to others as a Christian God striking him dead after he prayed using the Lord's Prayer as a vehicle. Wood, like Rose in 1947, was not acquainted with Zen, dropping egos, union with the Absolute, Sahaja Samadhi, etc. Neither was the author of the story in *Reader's Digest* called, "I Died at 10:52 A.M." ^[8,8a] His explanation was simply that he had died and come back to life with the realization that there is some awareness after death.

7. See [Related Teachings #paul-wood](#)

8. Victor Solow. selfdefinition.org/afterlife/victor-solow/victor-solow-i-died-at-1052-am.htm 8a. Solow biographical information: selfdefinition.org/afterlife/victor-solow/victor-solow-obituary-and-personal.htm

Jim Burns ^[9,9a,10] might fit the description of a largely unassimilated experience as well, as he still found it difficult to explain his experience years after having undergone it. However Alfred Pulyan already had the context of Zen to understand almost immediately what had occurred to him because of working with his Zen teacher, just as anyone to whom Rose could have transmitted his experience

would have had the philosophic context in place for the relative personality to comprehend what happened once they returned from it.

9. *At Home With The Inner Self*, by Jim Burns. selfdefinition.org/burns/inner-self/contents.htm 9a. See [Related Teachings #jim-burns](#)

10. Burns re his teenage experience: “It was a death from remorse, from failure. I literally died from it, the pressure was so great. It got me to the other side ...” ~ [Chapter 8](#).

Finally, assimilating or creating the understanding of an enlightenment experience implies progression over time and there were key philosophic benchmarks along the way from 1947 until approximately 1970 that Rose acquired to broaden his understanding to the point he could now speak about his experience and also, at the same time, teach to students. First, Rose came across the writings of the mystic Gurdjieff in 1952. The philosophic ideas presented in Ouspensky’s *In Search of the Miraculous* inspired Rose to write Bob Martin saying, “I think it is one of the most valuable books I have ever read. Certain things were brought out very clearly that were not explained in anything else I have ever read.” Obviously Rose was assimilating the ideas he read and thinking about what it meant in relation to his experience.

Next, while attending meetings in 1956 at the Steubenville Psychic Research Group in Steubenville, Ohio, a woman, Mrs. D’Aliberti gave Rose Bucke’s book, *Cosmic Consciousness*. For the first time, Rose

came to understand and assimilate into his own mind that other people like himself had spiritual experiences, and the significance of how deeply Rose assimilated the ideas in this book is that he rarely failed to mention it in his numerable post-1970 lectures. Rose's commented years later saying of his understanding or processing of Cosmic Consciousness, "I learned for the first time the extent to which it is possible for laymen to experience the same thing that I had." Bucke's book obviously meant a lot to Rose.

In 1958 a friend named "Mac" McIntyre from California recommended Rose read J.J. van der Leeuw's book *Conquest of Illusion*. [11,11a] Rose assimilated not only many of the concepts of this book but also some of the language directly, which he used in later writings and lectures, which was significant.

11. selfdefinition.org/van-der-leeuw/conquest-of-illusion/

11a. See [Related Teachings #van-der-leeuw](#)

After reading the book, Rose wrote his conclusions to Martin which are revealing.

"I am convinced that my enlightenment in Seattle is as close to God Realization as any man may come. This conclusion comes from comparing it with accounts in Van der Leeuw's *Conquest of Illusion*. Before reading him I thought that no man had experienced this the same as myself. Then Gurdjieff surprised me with his references to the Allness,

and his differentiation between the relative and the absolute.”

The assimilation of what Rose read was apparent and significant in his letter to Martin, for Rose now had much more to say about Gurdjieff than in 1952. He now was acquiring the conceptual language to understand Gurdjieff more comprehensively.

Rose’s correspondence with the Zen teacher Alfred Pulyan beginning in August of 1960 introduced Rose to Zen, Zen transmission and Zen confrontation, all ideas relatively unknown to Rose. Pulyan discussed with Rose Zen ideas, concepts and words that Rose would eventually assimilate into his own explanations and teachings that would follow post-1970. [12]

12. Books on Zen such as Hubert Benoit’s *The Supreme Doctrine* (1955) were also instrumental in Rose’s understanding, or at least communicating his understanding. See [Related Teachings #zen](#)

Then, in the summer of 1963, Rose met Paul Wood at a meeting held at Martin’s home in Akron, Ohio. Wood spoke at length to the small group present about a profound experience that he had undergone while he was in Texas. Rose recognized the similarity to his own experience and was able to assimilate from Paul Wood that a man could have an enlightenment experience without a philosophic background, causing Martin to comment that “Rose told me that Leon [Paul] Wood was likely the most advanced person he had ever met.”

From Wood Rose learned that dynamic determined effort as Wood had done could bring results – an idea Rose assimilated in the Albigen Papers as a “vector.”

Rose learned the most important assimilated idea of all derived from Wood – that one needed a language to be able to teach – and that language had to be composed of philosophic words and concepts, not religious ideology. Said Rose in a lecture many years later, concerning this understanding, “With what few people I did try to communicate [my experience], I realized that they had no cognizance of what I was talking about. So in most cases I gave up. And it wasn’t until I met one man, Paul Wood, and read a book called *Cosmic Consciousness* that I realized that other people did have these experiences, and they did talk about them.”

The idea that Rose needed to assimilate or understand his experience is evident by his initial lack of language to explain it in 1947 besides an emotional poetic account. Without acquiring the conceptual understanding he likely would have remained with the explanation that he simply lost his mind for a period of time in 1947, and most likely would have been unable to teach to others beyond advising them to read *Three Books of the Absolute*. In no way does his need to adequately explain what happened to him diminish how genuine and profound his enlightenment was. Complete assimilation of his experience occurred after Rose read Maharshi and came to understand the difference between Cosmic Consciousness and an Absolute experience, noting that Maharshi delineated two kinds of

Samadhi conditions. It is important to recognize Rose's assimilation of what Maharshi said. Rose did not invent the term Sahaja Samadhi but borrowed the Hindu term and incorporated it into his own conceptual framework as something useful in explaining what happened to him in Seattle. Calling his experience one of Sahaja Samadhi, the assimilation of understanding his experience was complete. Rose, the relative small-s self now had the language and philosophic concepts in place in his mind to be able to write, give lectures, explain his enlightenment experience to others, and teach to students the ways and means of following a spiritual path for an ultimate experience that is ultimately unexplainable with relative words.

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