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## A Triad of Limitations

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Two decades ago I was a college student. My major was fine arts and industrial design. While wandering through a bookstore one day I came across a book by a distinguished professional designer Victor Papanek entitled *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* (Pantheon Books 1971).

Let's start with the concept of value he mentioned in the book.

"Human beings are enclosed by an iron triangle that forms a veritable prison cell for their race. The sides of this triangle are:

- the medium in which they must live,
- the equipment they have, or can fashion, with which to live, and
- the fact of their mortality."

He called the triangle "a triad of limitations" and stated that:

"If there is purpose to life, the purpose must be to break through the triangle ----- this is the end which gives meaning and substance to life."

After reading the book, I had a sense that Papanek's persuasive philosophy could provide a meaning to my study. He argued that designers should devote their skills to serving the real needs of people---especially the poor, the sick,

the handicapped, the aged, the obese and those in the Third World.

"But help, where? What is a need?" I kept inquiring of myself. Fortunately, I had an opportunity to work as a volunteer for during Indochinese refugees in Thailand in my school days. Involved in such an exciting movement, my sense of self was changed.

A decade ago I met a few visiting physical therapists from industrialized countries during my stay in Cambodia from 1988 to 1993. I was there for humanitarian aid, representing a Japanese non-governmental organization.

In those days, much of fighting often focused on the potholed highways, displacing thousands of villagers to safer places. Consider vulnerable people like mine amputees: how could they overcome any or all sides of the triad of limitations?

The physical therapists spent a large percent of their time training local rehabilitation workers, as well as working out the logistics of rehabilitation needs for the nation in collaboration with the authorities concerned. I was encouraged to work in this manner. That was one of the reasons why I came to an awareness of my calling to be a Physical Therapist (PT).