

Dimensions of Thought

Current Explorations in
Time, Space, and Knowledge
Volume II

Produced under the Direction
of Tarhang Tulku

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Dharma  Publishing

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Human Development and
Ultimate Reality
The Perceptual Grounds
for Transformation

We did create the heaviest thought—now let us create the being to whom it will be light and blissful. . . . To celebrate the future, not the past. To write the myths of the future! To live in hope! Blissful moments! And then to draw the curtain shut again, and turn our thoughts to firm and present purposes.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

I. Introduction

Human development is of increasing concern to us. A new academic discipline, developmental psychology, has been created to study it. Many government and business institutions are now trying to foster it. The fate of the world may well depend on it. And we as individuals, in recognizing that our conflicts and pains stem from “smallness” and “narrowness,” are striving more than ever to achieve it. More and more we want to grow. The practical question, relevant as never before, is: *how?*

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This essay arises from a particular version of that question: How might we view the situations of our lives—our everyday reality—so that our perceptions more fully support this interest in growing?

Authentic Growth Versus Getting Ahead

Our abiding interest in growth has increased the likelihood that more and more people are caught up in a stultifying rush to get ahead. Any good therapist or teacher should know the difference between rushing ahead and allowing real growth to take place. But this practical knowledge has not yet been translated into clear ideas that can help others stay on track. The psychology taught in most schools and universities, the thinking that informs public policy, and the traditional theories of human development that have shaped our collective views of the matter primarily emphasize the order or sequence of developmental stages, and pay little attention to the way in which a new stage arises.

The prevailing doctrine enshrines a point of view that fixes attention exclusively on the next step, or some point beyond where we are now, as the way to advancement. Our most profound research indicates, however, that authentic movement depends just as much on our being more fully centered where we already are. The need is for a realignment in our thinking to help us see more clearly the difference between a headlong rush forward which may be no more than going through the motions, and what I will describe here as *authentic unfolding*.

Only if we know clearly where we are headed can we be certain that our steps are leading in the right direction.

The task of this essay is, therefore, to pursue the direction of authentic development to its ultimate reaches, and thereby generate a structure for thinking about it that will hopefully be a useful guide for others.¹

The Direction of Development and Ultimate Reality

When we reflect on our self-conceptions and allow restrictive versions to fall away, we sometimes experience a shift to more expansive ones. A common view, therefore, is that human development proceeds in a sequence of stages. Later cognitive structures or emotional and behavioral patterns are said to supersede or transcend those that go before. By adopting a different mode for observing development, I will challenge that view here.

Suppose, for example, that we ask where development ultimately leads. This question is not generally asked, because within the prevalent style of observing development, people assume that ultimates either do not exist or cannot be perceived. But if we step out of that vicious circle and entertain the legitimacy of at least raising the question, we may begin to see the inadequacy of the stage approach. It is not sufficient to answer the question of the ultimate direction of development by invoking the possibility of some new “last stage,” for stages, structures, and patterns are precisely what it is that we transcend as we shift. No stage can be ultimate—that is, beyond transcendence—because a stage inherently represents the possibility of shifting further. To answer the question “Where might development ultimately lead?” we must look elsewhere than to some stage or structure.

I will propose here that pursuing the direction of development ultimately leads us to the shift itself. Put otherwise, it is precisely what comes to us *through* the shift that is ultimate or beyond being transcended. What occurs at the moment when limiting views fall away and before new, albeit less limiting ones have congealed, is quite extraordinary and warrants far more attention than students of human development (in the West) have hitherto paid to it. I will try to show here that if we study it closely, what appears *through* the shift is far more ultimate than any stage or structure we might imagine.

I want to do more than simply look at the shift itself. The common ways we have of viewing reality are part of what obscures the shift from clear view. If we want to *see* the shift fully, that is, if we want to appreciate its most profound significance, we must allow our views of reality to become more supple. That, in any case, is another contention I would like to put forward here. I will attempt to support it by describing a set of experiences accessible to anyone who seeks them, and by invoking these experiences as the empirical basis for a nonstandard view of reality that is of considerable help in highlighting the shift.

As I will try to show more fully later on, it is possible to loosen our insistence that ordinary reality is preeminent. When we do, we are free to consider that it is, in fact, only derivative. If development ultimately leads us to shift, and if the shift opens onto a more fundamentally energizing realm, then the new stages that arise in a developmental sequence begin to appear as mere byproducts of a more central dynamism. The great attraction no longer seems to be the new structure or the next stage, but the contact

with the creative energy that gives rise to it. And rather than viewing the progression of steps as the most prominent feature, we may begin to recognize development as our particular kind of in-and-out dance, whose main movement is an occasional, but hopefully ever more frequent and full embrace of the ultimate, ecstatic ground of our existence.

This essay is divided into five major sections. In the next, Section II, I introduce what I mean by *shifts* by describing, quite concretely, techniques that facilitate experiencing them. Section III then raises a fundamental question: What would we perceive reality to be if we found that its most profound nature is to allow shifts and to appear to us *through* shifts? This section is longer than the others and contains a number of subsections devoted to the major theoretical argument. Section IV takes up again the question raised at the beginning and goes on to relate the common observation that development proceeds in steps to the qualities of Ultimate Reality. In the final section, I raise the question of what develops in development, and conclude with a reappraisal of the psychological notions of identity and the self, and with a sketch of the practical implications of the present perspective for meeting day-to-day situations.

II. The Experiential Way to the Shift

Historical Background

The purgative experience known among the Greeks as *catharsis* is one example of what I am calling the *shift*. Aristotle associated it primarily with tragic drama. In his *Poetics*, he maintained that a well-crafted tragedy

should arouse pity and fear, and then, through the de-nouement, bring about a sense of discovery.

Catharsis has also been one of the principal goals of modern psychotherapy, though Freud preferred the Latin, and somewhat more scientific-sounding name, *abreaction*. Contemporary clinical work has developed its own unique context, goals, and ways of defining the roles played by its participants. But despite the obvious and vast differences, ancient ritual and modern cure are fundamentally related through the experience at their core.

The experience known among psychologists as the “Aha!”—associated with all creative breakthroughs—is also a shift, as I use the term. Although it may require slow, patient, and determined effort to “set the stage,” the shift is an instantaneous experience of release, emotional expansiveness, and freshness. We may think of ourselves as the active agents who perform the preparatory ground-work, but we do not “do” shifts. They happen or come upon us. Our options are to allow, open to, welcome, or invite them.

Clinical research has been one of the most fertile grounds for careful study of the way in which shifts come about. Gendlin, after providing the philosophical grounding for a “science of the subjective,”² directed a series of studies in which a particular style of “experiencing” that maximizes the likelihood of shifts was found to be highly correlated with successful outcomes in therapy.³ Much work over the past decade by Gendlin and others has been devoted to refining specific instructions, called *focusing*, for making more explicit how we may attend to experience so that the shifts we seek are more likely to occur.⁴

I will present a version of these instructions in the following subsections. Your understanding of the remainder of this essay will depend on your doing more than simply reading through them.

Focusing: Attending to What Isn't Clear But Needs to Be

Focusing instructions are based on a particular method for operationalizing “inner” behavior. The focusing process itself is a way to approach directly what all good therapy accomplishes, though often indirectly. Whether therapists are of a behaviorist, gestalt, analytic, or other persuasion, they direct clients to talk about, analyze, make systematic plans for, or express feelings that relate to an aspect of their experience that requires special attention. During the most satisfactory therapy sessions, clients discover something fresh about such an experience—an insight, “new space,” or a more effective way to behave. What is most distinctive about focusing is that it indicates ways to refer to, attend to, and work with problematic aspects of our experience, *even before* it is clear what the problem actually is.

Although related, focusing is *not* meditation in any of the forms I know—Transcendental Meditation, Samatha, Vipassana, Zen, Kundalini Yoga, and those catalogued by Naranjo and Ornstein⁵ or LeShan.⁶ It is not thinking, ruminating, or getting in touch with feelings. It is a way of (1) attending to features of our experience that usually do not enter awareness, and (2) providing a kind of “inner framework” through which those features may emerge more clearly.

Felt Sense. The first of the two crucial features is known in focusing as a *felt sense*. If you leave your home in the morning, take a few steps out the door, and then are struck with a feeling of “I’ve forgotten something, but I don’t know what it is,” where would you locate such a feeling? Where do we feel such knowing-that-we-don’t-know?

To contact a felt sense, it often helps to close the eyes, to de-emphasize words or pictures, and to attend primarily to bodily sensations or to the feeling quality of whatever is being evoked. Note that this sense is likely to be more intricate than a feeling such as anger or sadness. These standard emotions are more definite. The felt sense of a situation may have its own idiosyncratic flavor or quality, but it may not be easily translatable into words that others would readily understand.

A felt sense can only be located by using a faculty other than sight, hearing, taste, smell, or touch. The ‘places’ or ‘realms’ in which we encounter a felt sense will be noted here in single quotation marks, to differentiate them from the physical places we see, touch, and so on.

Open Questions. The way in which a felt sense manifests itself can be shaped or molded by the subtle qualities of the attention we pay to it. This fact is simply an “inner” correlate of the easily observable relation between the attitudes we bring to situations and the way we experience them. *A hazy felt sense often becomes clearer when we attend to it with an “inner” expectation that greater clarity will come.*

Focusing instructions make use of this relation by employing a set of open questions to shape the sensing process toward a desired end. These open questions provide a

kind of “inner” pathway, so that the vast intricacy of what we sense implicitly with respect to some situation can become explicit in a form that serves our greater mastery of it.

Focusing Steps

The focusing process is presented here as a series of discrete steps for the sake of clarity. Your experience of it may not, of course, be so neatly delineated.

1. Find a comfortable way to be right now. This is more crucial than it might sound. Much of this process depends on your ‘making room’ for yourself right at the start, and returning to repeat this step anytime your mind wanders, or you become upset, troubled, or cramped by what follows. I find it useful to perform this first step by attending to bodily sensations, particularly to breathing. If, in sensing my body, I note any muscular tension, I allow my awareness to center on those areas until I feel some new ease.

2. Turn toward your experience and *get with a widened sense* of yourself. That is, allow your sense of yourself to broaden by asking a question like “How am I?” and instead of answering automatically, allow the various relevant situations of your life to become ‘present’. Rather than thinking about each one, see if you can lend your attention broadly to any situation that comes, acknowledging it in such a way that you ‘make room’ for it to be just as it is (however unfinished or in need of “fixing” it might be).

3. By repeatedly turning toward your experience, providing a series of fresh invitations for your sense of

yourself to widen, you can develop an up-to-date inventory of the situations, questions, issues, problems, and concerns that are relevant to you now.

4. In developing such an inventory, you can also 'reach' with your attention toward a very calm and satisfying felt 'terrain' I call *home*. I achieve this by asking, while taking stock, "Outside of these situations and pre-occupations that have just come to me, everything is fine, right?" and I wait to 'see' what comes. Perhaps another situation or problem. After asking this question several times, usually within several minutes, my list of issues will be complete for now, and I can place them all 'to one side'. Each item on my list has the 'room' it needs by virtue of the acknowledgment I have been willing to give to it, and I am left with a soothing feeling as well—'home' or the "outside of my list of issues everything's fine" feeling.

5. Once 'home' (it takes some people a bit of practice to 'locate' this 'place'), the next step is to allow one of the issues or situations on your list to be more fully 'present', something you want to work on. Take care not to let it loom so large that you are dislodged from 'home'. Approach the felt sense, the intricate, bodily, feeling-quality of the situation that interests you. Words, images, and the many interpretations, explanations, justifications, and ruminations you associate with it can simply be acknowledged and set aside so that you can sense the whole of it directly.

6. Allow an open question to form that clarifies or points in the general direction toward which your situation needs to evolve. "What is it about all this that I

haven't seen?" you might ask. Or, "What's the thing I can't admit or say about this?" Or, "What is the piece that will unlock this puzzle?" Or, "What needs to happen with all of this?" Or some other question that fits your sense of what the situation requires, as it feels to you right now. Rather than answer your question, direct your attention to your felt sense of the whole of the situation, making room for all you now know about it as well as all you don't know but may need to discover.

7. Look for a word, image, or phrase to emerge from your felt sense that, in responding to the question you pose, just captures, as a *handle*, the sense of your situation as it is right now. Any lack of fit—a handle that "sort of" captures the way it is—is an indication that something needs to change. Perhaps the question needs reformulating, or the handle is not yet right.

8. You will know very clearly when you "have it." A fresh handle that just captures the sense of a problematic situation and marks a step toward its resolution, *announces itself with a shift*, a feeling of "Ah, yes, there is something I can use. How nice. Whew!"

To work further on your issue or problem, simply repeat these steps until you sense that the whole situation has shifted adequately. After each bit of work, allow yourself some 'room' before you push ahead.

Sensuous Reflection: 'Making Space' and "Little Shifts"

The more difficult your issue, the less likely that it will shift right away. But we can move toward dramatic shifts by taking smaller steps. Just 'looking' at some

troubling situation, problem, or issue that needs to shift or open can provide a small measure of ease. To be effective, this 'looking' needs to be more grounded in direct sensing than habitual ways of thinking, and more 'spacious' than "getting in touch with feelings." *Sensuous reflection* is the way I refer to an "inner" act in which we 'look' at some aspect of experience by allowing its intricately felt qualities to register, but not flood us. This needs to be a careful process; it requires that we proceed with self-respect.

A brief 'look' at what you otherwise might ignore 'makes space' for that aspect of your experience to be as it is. Sensuous reflection is thereby an act of affirmation, and with it comes what I call a *little shift*. Take, for example, what is most difficult, challenging, or threatening in your life right now. Without feeling that you must resolve or fix it, allow yourself simply to 'look' at it. What is it like to 'look' in this way? For me, each such 'look' is a statement that I need not be overwhelmed even by what is beyond my grasp. The turning toward my experience that is the act of sensuous reflection sensitizes me to the possibility of engaging more fully what may initially have seemed impossible to acknowledge. Little shifts such as this will become important to the discussion later on.

III. Seeing Reality as Bring-the-Openness-to

How many ways do we know of seeing reality? We know the child's way and the adult's way, the man's way and the woman's way. We know a Western way and an Eastern way, a Marxist way and a Freudian way, a Latin American way and a Germanic way, a working-class way

and a school administrator's way, and so on. These are not all equivalent ways, by any means, but the point is clear enough. The number of ways of seeing reality is unlimited. Each way has its own set of presuppositions and interests or purposes. A Marxist way serves the interests of class struggle and proletarian revolution; a Freudian way proceeds on the assumption that early family relations are determinative of later life experiences; and so on. And to a certain extent, we can choose how we wish to see reality, depending on what presuppositions and interests are most dear to us.

What if human development is our interest and, not one *stage* of development, but rather the stageless break between stages, the shift, is what we see as the central nexus from which any developmental trajectory unfolds? And what if we wish to see reality as a facilitating context that allows and encourages shifts? How might we perceive reality so that our perceptions could allow us to see, through the shift, that it (^{the shift} ~~reality~~) opens onto a wider context, rather than being forced, as with our ordinary perceptions, to see it as nothing more than some curious but instantaneous flash? To proceed with an answer, I must first go back over the instructions that have been found useful in facilitating shifts and elevate a few observations to the status of essential reference points for the exploration to follow.

Getting with a Widened Sense (or 'Turning Toward' Experience). I can have a shift while taking a shower or walking down the street. But I wouldn't recommend showers or walks as a reliable way for myself or others. The

reliable way requires me to make some concerted effort to get with a wider sense of myself than the one that usually accompanies me through the hurry and bustle of everyday life. I can't usually do this in the midst of traditional socializing or in the middle of most office or school routines. I *can* do it with any of the people I know who also know focusing, but what I do with them is to say, "I need to look at something. Can you give me the space?" And if they feel all right about it, I will fall silent, and so will they, and we will both ready ourselves to have that silence last for up to a few minutes or more while I 'look'.

Having a shift, then, involves getting with a wider sense of ourselves than the one that usually attends everyday occurrences. It requires expanding attention beyond the rapid chain of events in conversations, jobs, routine duties, and usual thought patterns, by turning toward what we can experience directly.

Finding 'Home'. The movements that prepare the way for a shift not only involve getting with a sense that is wider than the one that is ordinarily most real, but also engaging this sense in such a way that a special 'place' or feeling quality emerges. I called it 'home' in the instructions. It is well known to meditators of all persuasions. This experience is accessible if, after turning toward our experiences, we acknowledge whatever comes, avoid the temptations to unravel and become entangled in the complexity of any issues, and simply allow them to pass or move aside. Depending on how much is on our minds, we may need a minute or two, or considerably longer, to find a restful 'place' that is no longer beset by issues or things that make demands on us.

Once 'home,' we may note and feel sensitive to more than usual, without feeling that anything in particular is on our minds. We can sense greater openness to all manner of inner and outer stimuli. The restfulness of 'home' is very different from being asleep. In fact, it may feel more wakeful than usual states.

Bringing-Openness-to. After we 'turn toward' our experience, allow a widened sense to form, and find 'home', the next move toward a shift involves allowing some particular situation to come to mind and bringing the openness of 'home' *to* that situation—or, put differently, allowing a situation to come to mind in the presence of 'home's' openness.

The consummation of the shift itself is a moment in which the sense of the situation that was allowed to return yields to the openness of 'home'. It literally feels to me as if I have brought new openness to that situation when it shifts and 'breaks open' for me. For that reason I can say, however clumsily, that the moment of the shift itself involves *bringing-openness-to*.

Ordinarily, the shift is some curious but only instantaneous flash that barely interrupts the way things go on in everyday reality. For everyday reality is a construction that arises from the usual ways we organize our perceptions, and our ordinary way leaves little room for shifts to capture our attention. *This is a bias that has profound consequences for human life.* It amounts to the pervasive working assumption that reality is a fixed and determining prison for life; profound change does not occur, at least not regularly; transformations of consciousness may arise through wars and revolutions, but essentially the contents

of the human mind are fixed, much the way physical objects are.

What if we challenged this bias directly? What if we traced these presuppositions to their perceptual roots and provided alternative ways of perceiving? How might appearances occur to us if we began to recognize the possibility that shifts are the breaking through of a far more Ultimate and Eternally Present Reality than the one we usually limit ourselves to perceiving?

If we wish to see such an Ultimate Reality—the facilitating context that gives rise to and is manifest through shifts—we need to perceive “bringing-openness-to” as Reality itself. I will try to build toward such a perception by first weaving ‘turning toward’ experience and finding ‘home’ into more general, theoretical possibilities erected on their respective experiential bases.

‘Turning Toward’ Experience: Widened Sensing as a Transitional ‘Reality’

Ordinary reality is what most people would agree is in front of your eyes right now. You are reading some words that are printed on a piece of paper, in the place where you find yourself, which you can locate by looking around you. Within the temporal scheme of reality, we locate this moment as some time after I have written this and before you get to the point when, whether you actually read all the way through or not, you will have finished with it. *Ordinary reality* (or simply *reality*, as distinct from either the transitional ‘reality’ we sense or the *Ultimate Reality* that engenders shifts) consists of the

events we can see happen in space and time as we usually understand these dimensions.

What is the altered ‘reality’ we enter when we ‘turn toward’ direct experience? Am I recommending insanity? No. Rather than suggest a loss of differentiation or regression to more primitive or less developed modes of functioning, I want to sketch a way to a mode of perception that is more highly differentiated than the one that ordinary reality demands of us. Ordinarily, we see reality with our eyes, and any other perceptual possibilities that may not fully accord with conventional ones are subordinated. What if we could differentiate ordinary seeing and other perceptual modes so as to allow finer distinctions, such as one between seeing (with our eyes) and ‘seeing’ (by means of a capacity to sense that is not located in any one sensory organ)?

In Book III, chapter 2, of *De Anima*, Aristotle wrote that we can only know that sugar is both white and sweet by virtue of some unifying sensory capacity that allows us to integrate taste and sight. What if we make use of that central, integrative sensibility directly? Can we just *sense*?

Direct sensing is possible. Various yogic and meditative disciplines attempt to teach it. So do the various offshoots of Elsa Gindler’s work in Germany in the early 1900s (Charlotte Selver’s “Sensory Awareness,” Carola Speads’s “Physical Re-education,” etc.). Fritz Perls incorporated direct sensing into his “Gestalt” approach to psychotherapy, and many other popular figures in American psychology, from Alan Watts and Erich Fromm to George Leonard and Werner Erhard, have studied sensing and

made it part of their work, too. Those who practice and teach sensing know and expound its virtues. But in their zeal for avoiding intellectualistic detours away from direct sense, devotees of sensing rarely provide conceptually sharp explications of the way in which cultivating direct sense differs from the ways we ordinarily relate to experience.

Sensing is a kind of 'seeing' that does not depend on use of our eyes. What we 'see' with direct sense is, in fact, a 'reality' that differs sharply from the reality we take for granted as the world that appears to us through ordinary vision. *Our ordinary reality consists of things that are opaque, delimited, and stand in some unidirectional relation with us, to mention only a few of their more obvious attributes. The 'reality' we sense, however, is transparent, merging, and multi-directional, as you can 'see' for yourself by engaging in the following short experiments:*

1. **'Seeing' through the head.** It is useful to begin by sitting comfortably and spending a few moments to allow some ease in your body. Then, closing your eyes, hold your hands out in front of you, arms comfortably bent, with palms about a foot apart and facing one another. Note the sensation of 'distance' between your palms. Can you sense the space that extends from one hand to another? Is it not true that you can tell, *without opening your eyes*, that both hands are there, that they are separated by about a foot, and that the 'space' between them has a definite quality? Sensing in this way is what I mean by 'seeing'.

Now, having 'seen' through the space between one hand and the other in front of you, bring your palms

backward so that they are positioned on either side of your head, around the area of your ears but several inches away, so that nothing touches the skin of your hands. Again, have your palms facing one another. Now note the sensation of 'distance' between your palms. Can you? Is it still possible to sense a 'space' between them, even though you can also sense your head 'in' that 'space'? It must be that sensing is not impeded by whatever might block visual sight. The 'reality' we sense is one in which we can 'see through' whatever is 'there'. Sensed 'reality' may therefore be said to be 'transparent'.

2. **'Seeing' the blurring of "inner" and "outer."** We construe ordinary reality not only with our eyes but also with our other organ-based senses: touch, taste, smell, and hearing. If we 'turn' toward sensed experience, which is 'wider' than what we ordinarily see, touch, taste, hear, or smell, we can begin to perceive a relation between what is "inside" of us and what is "outside" that is unlike what appears to be true in reality. *Ordinary reality is characterized by differences or distinctions; we use our five senses to distinguish one thing from another, this from that, what is us from what is not.* Direct sensing provides us with an altogether different kind of perception.

If, again after finding some comfort and ease, you close your eyes and sense whatever is present for you, you might give some attention to the question of what you sense "inside" of you and what you sense "outside." Note the movements of your breathing, for example. Where do they begin and where do they end? Certainly you should be able to sense your chest and belly moving, and it is almost

as certain (if you are new to this) that you do *not* sense the movements of breathing in your feet. But where is the dividing line between what moves and what doesn't? Wherever you locate that division, is it as sharp, say, as the distinction your eyes make between your shape in the mirror and what is not you?

If you stay a moment with what you sense "inside" and "outside," you may notice that this distinction, as well, is quite blurry. What we 'see' through sensing is a 'reality' in which we swim or are bathed in a 'field' of sensation. The envelope of our skin becomes quite distinct to the touch (touch being one of the senses that engender sharply delimited perceptions). But if we withhold or "bracket" our habitual tendency to consider ordinary reality as fundamental and simply *sense*, what do we note of this envelope we call our skin? Is it even there as skin? Can we even tell where "outer" ends and "inner" begins? Is it not true that in 'reality' "inner" and "outer" merge, and that the distinction between the two does not have much *sense* attached to it?

3. 'Seeing' can reach in all directions. Resume the initial position of ease and comfort, close your eyes, and allow yourself to draw away from identifying yourself with what you last saw before your eyes. In sensing now, notice if you can be aware of sensations 'located' in front of you, around your chest region, for example. Then try to 'locate' your back, your head, your feet, and your sides. Now begin again, and instead of sensing just your chest, allow your sensing to 'project' or to 'see out' beyond your chest, as if you were sensing in order to tell if some other

presence were out there. Maybe it would help to treat this as an experiment to see if you who have use of your eyes can 'glimpse' for a moment the way in which blind people are able to 'see' whether someone or something is present with them.

Once you have glimpsed the possibility of 'seeing out' in front of you, allow the same 'projecting' of your 'seeing' to reach out in back, and then upwards over your head, down through your feet, and out to either side. With a bit of practice, you might be able to sense in all of these directions at once. Even if you can't do it right away, can you at least sense the possibility of 'seeing' in all directions at once?

The things we see in ordinary reality bear a unidirectional and unequivocal directional relation with us. With a few exceptions, like mirages and jet planes, anything we see or locate in reality has a specific place in time and space. What we 'see' through sensing is distinctive as some definite mood or sensation set, with clear proprioceptive experiences as a kind of foreground. *But our 'viewing' of sensed 'reality', unlike the way we look at ordinary reality, can extend in multiple directions at once.*

Note, too, that this multidirectional 'seeing' need not even originate from one fixed 'source' or 'point of viewing'. Recall, now, the first experiment, in which you 'saw' through your head by sensing with your palms. You could do the same experiment again, but this time giving attention to what you sense over your head while you are also sensing with your palms. *'Seeing' as sensing can extend 'out from' as many centers or loci as we give attention to.*

Before going on to the next subsection, recall that I emphasized three aspects of the instructions that indicate the way to a shift. 'Getting with' a widened sense is the first aspect. Having shown some of the ways in which sensing opens onto a 'wider realm' than ordinary reality, I now need to raise the question of how it is that this widened sense brings us 'home', which is the second crucial aspect of the way to a shift. What is so 'homey' about what happens as we 'turn toward' our experience? What is it about 'reality' that makes it so comfortable?

'Finding Home'

That sensed 'reality' is more comfortable than ordinary reality is a fact I can verify easily with myself. Even more striking is the effect on disturbed patients in a psychiatric hospital when I ask them to close their eyes and, with the comforting assistance of my voice, have them turn their attention away from whatever draws their ordinarily riveted gaze, toward whatever they can 'see' simply through sensing. Sensing is the most powerful relaxation technique I know.

How is it that 'reality' is soft? How can we grasp what it is we do in sensing that allows us to 'find home'? Providing answers to such questions will generate important groundwork for widening our perceptions still further. This subsection will lead beyond sensed 'reality' to the brink of Seeing Ultimate Reality itself.

Conventional modes of perception invariably carry with them the experience of separation, isolation, and limitation on the range of our being. Our habitual mode of perception is the ultimate source of the alienation and

estrangement of everyday life. In ordinary reality, we are constantly bombarded with the "fact" that we are stuck in an "environment" which wholly consists of what is other, distant, and separate from ourselves. Furthermore, the experience of ordinary reality is marked by the impossibility of making anything but superficial contact with what is other, even if we make the effort to cover the distance that separates us from it, since what we see is hard and impenetrable.

We can go up to something or approach somebody other than ourselves; we can touch them and even embrace them. But in ordinary reality our "true" perceptions, and the "truth" of a modern psychology erected on these perceptions, reinforces the belief that we remain totally separate no matter what we do. The experience of 'home' becomes accessible to us in 'reality' precisely because *the perceptions available through sensing allow us to 'see' through or 'dissolve' certain of the 'distances', 'separations', and distinctions that would otherwise be isolating and limiting in ordinary reality.*

To show this more thoroughly, I will now discuss two ways in which 'seeing' penetrates the barriers and limitations of ordinary reality: (1) by allowing us to 'be with' any emotion, person, or situation in our experience; and (2) by 'melting through' the initially given qualities of a particular experience to a sense of how many experiences are 'present' for us. This second way will lead to a discussion of the expansive spatio-temporal structure of 'reality', which should help clarify even further what the nature of this special 'domain' is and why it feels like 'home' when we 'get there'.

'Seeing' as 'being with' any 'thing' in our experience. Where *are* we when we sense? As long as we hold tightly to the presuppositions of ordinary perception, we will insist that, in spite of whatever sensations come to us, we *really* are only here, where any observer would agree we are. But if we can 'get with' a widened sense, thereby neutralizing the presupposition that only conventional reality can *really* be taken seriously, then we begin to see that in 'reality' we can 'extend' very much 'further' than our assumptions rooted in ordinary viewing would lead us to expect.

In 'reality', I identify the range of my 'self' by what I sense. I '*am*' wherever I sense myself, and no more or less 'far' than that. Whatever ordinary perception may have to say about it, 'seeing', since it carries the sense of myself to whatever I sense, takes me wherever I 'look'. This means that if I 'look' at some 'thing' that enters my experience, my very 'viewing' of it carries *me* along with it, encompassing whatever I 'see'. I am 'there' with whatever I 'see' in this way.

From this 'view' of how my 'seeing' and I are inextricably the same, I can begin to grasp how it is that the beginning steps of the focusing instructions may bring me to a feeling of 'home'. Any 'thing'—any emotion, person, or situation—that becomes 'present' for me once I 'turn toward' my experience, can be treated as an invitation for me to 'look'. If I allow myself to 'see' thoroughly in this way, I have thereby begun to relate sensuously with a whole set of concerns that I cannot relate with in ordinary reality. For ordinarily, they impinge on me pri-

marily in the mode of separate or limiting conditions of my being—things that block, trap, or isolate me from a more expansive sense of myself. If, by sensing the whole of each thing that comes to mind, I am, in effect, allowing myself in 'reality' to be 'there' where in ordinary reality I feel prevented from being, I have just afforded myself a thoroughly relieving experience. (Note that if we translate Freud's famous dictum—where Id was Ego shall be—into English, rather than into Latin, it reads: "Where *it* was, I shall be.")

'Melting-through' and the Source of All Space-Time Arrangements. Any situation can be taken as the subject of sensuous reflection, through which we can 'melt through' to a widened sense of what is relevant for us in that situation. Take a situation, the one you are in or any one that preoccupies you right now. Allow yourself a few minutes to clear away some room for yourself to 'look' at that situation, to sense your way into it. What is there? How long does it take before you 'see' past the first, most obvious circumstances?

For example, I am writing now. What is that? Well, it is me sitting on a stool, working at my typewriter, struggling to convey an idea clearly. Okay, but what is this situation for me? I can associate freely off the top of my head: "typewriter," "machine," "plugged in," "learning to type," "the army," "being a veteran," "I can't get into that in this paper," and so on. Associating in this way is not what I mean. In order to allow a full and grounded reflection to take place, I gather those isolated bits together and simply *sense through* the whole of the situation

as it is, rather than let my mind's helter-skelter wanderings lead me astray. I become increasingly attentive to what is happening in the situation that interests me, staying with it, perhaps needing to return my attention repeatedly to it if my mind wanders. In this way, I 'melt through' the first appearances of the situation to a wider sense of it.

In now doing what I just asked you to do, I first encounter an expansive richness that reaches to include my intention for writing in general, the meaning that the point I am trying to make here has for my life, an ironic appreciation for the difficulty of conveying this point through writing, and the many times I have tried to make this point in face-to-face teaching.

I only contacted the way in which these many other aspects of my experience (seemingly distant times and places) are 'here' for me by *sensing through* the situation to the wider 'reality' it opens to. Invariably, when I do this, I experience myself reaching 'back' and 'under' an immediate appearance by sensing my way. Whatever the reality or spatio-temporal facts may have seemed initially, sensuous reflection can bring me into contact with the way some particular situation draws on and relates with many others as the source of meaning in which the particulars are grounded.

I have learned to expect that if I 'go back' now and reflect further, I can penetrate whatever came to me previously to some still wider sense. In fact, I did it just this moment, and what came was the sense that what I am now doing is no different from what I ever do, at least not

fundamentally. This one moment just happens to be an instance of what my life is usually about. I frequently find myself trying to convey, through some medium or other, an aspect of my experience to others. Notice that I just encountered the sense that *all* the situations of my life are somehow 'present' in this one.

I know I could go still further. And each time, the realm I enter through sensuous reflection may eventually reveal itself as 'wider' and 'richer' than the particulars of the situation that served as the 'door' or 'entryway' for getting there. Sensing in this way leads 'home', because it provides a way to widen my 'reality', to penetrate the habituated restrictions on my consciousness, and to allow me to contact whatever situations or aspects of experience are relevant to me now.

This is an appropriate point to observe that we have just made fleeting contact with Ultimate Reality. With each reflective step it is possible for us to pass from a restrictive view of this time and place to a wider and richer sense that many times and places that are relevant for our lives are 'present' (or potentially 'present') 'here'. By virtue of what do we begin with some delimited set of particulars and end up with something more? What comes into play? What is the source of the enriching of our experience? What is it that we 'touch' or that 'touches' us through such reflective steps? To answer, I would like to introduce a term that, for most purposes, is synonymous with *Ultimate Reality*, but which has its own distinctive usefulness. What we contact through sensuous reflection

that allows a widened sense to enter experience is the *Source of All Spatio-Temporal Arrangements*, which I will subsequently refer to as SASTA.

Ultimate Reality: Grounding Transformation

Sensed 'reality', the feel of both the vague and the recognizable aspects of lived experience, is a transitional state in the scheme I am presenting. As comfortable as we might be at those times when we sense our way toward the condition I have called 'home', this condition is not, in itself, the Ultimate Reality we are tracking here. (Note that capitalized terms, such as *Seeing* and *Looking*, refer to Ultimate capacities, which are even more penetrating than the sensing, or 'seeing', that allows us to enter a transitional 'reality' and to find 'home'.)

Our experience in 'reality' can open further, as we have seen repeatedly. But *what* we sense (the determinate qualities, flavors, and distinctive colorings of all that washes through our experience) is not the *Bringing-of-Openness*, but only the grounds on which such Opening comes into play. Whatever we designate through a subtle "inner" pointing as this experience (or this complex of experiences in this 'here' of 'present reality') is only recognizable to us by virtue of our having given it at least the rudiments of form, a fixedness or closed quality. To encounter the *Bringing-of-Openness* directly, we must *Look through* or *Look past* any given experience to the act through which it arises in the first instance. This is the act I have repeatedly referred to here as *sensuous reflection*.

The Transcendental Reversal: Letting the Sensed Sense. A crucial preliminary for seeing Ultimate Reality is to decondition further our habituated assumptions as to the locus of our actions. What I call the *transcendental reversal* helps in this task. We have already 'seen' throughout the discussion of 'reality' that the real, spatio-temporal characteristics that a commonsense observer would ascribe to me, as I sit here writing, do not begin to exhaust the experienced realm that is my lived 'reality'. Through sensuous reflection I can discover that *this* real (space-time) situation, here and now in this room, in fact opens onto the 'presence' of all other possible 'real' (sensed) situations of my life. I am not merely this objectifiable physical body that observers designate as me. But even if this 'real' fact is clear, we may still persist in *locating* the act through which we sense ourselves, as if it were no more than some determinate event in the spatio-temporal matrix of ordinary reality.

To see whether this limiting assumption is at work, 'look' to discover where the sensing goes on for you if I ask you to reflect sensuously on how you are now. I have described this act from the outset as a bodily experience, grounded in physical sensations. But it would be a mistake to simply leave it at that. The mistake would be to think of the sensing as something done by us, by the selves we ordinarily take ourselves to be.

It is only true to say, on the basis of careful observation of 'reality', that 'we' are what it is that 'does' the sensing if by 'we' is meant 'wherever' sense 'extends itself'. Usu-

ally we are not that careful. The sensations occur, and we conclude that they are occurring to us, and that we are what we have always recognized ourselves to be—that person we see in front of us whenever we look in a mirror. But if the ‘real’ ‘us’ ‘extends’ or is ‘carried along to’ ‘wherever’ ‘we’ ‘look’ (as discussed above), then the mirror image is a gross simplification. In ‘reality,’ it is as true to say that ‘whatever is sensed does the sensing’ as that ‘we do the sensing of whatever we sense’. And the way toward Seeing is facilitated, in my experience, by the deliberate practice of taking the ‘view’ that ‘whatever is sensed does the sensing’.

Frequently I allow the ‘sensed to sense’ when I run. I begin by letting a clear sense develop of the ‘space’ that ‘surrounds’ me. This is simply a practice of multidirectional sensing. Then I allow the sensing to open to the possibility that ‘what surrounds me’ is engendering the running: the ‘space’ out ‘front’ opens and draws the movements into it, while the ‘space’ out ‘in back’ provides a corresponding array of encouraging pressures to shape the movements forward. Rather than ‘viewing’ the multidirectional ‘space’ as something *I* sense, this alternative ‘view’ ‘sees’ a converging of ‘sensuous space’ on a localized eruption (the running) that is ‘welded’ to it, like a marionette poised by an infinity of strings radiating out and dissolving in thin air.

You can try this for yourself. Take a ‘look’ and ‘see’ what’s going on for you now. Once you have a sense of it, try the transcendental reversal: allow whatever you sense to do the sensing. Does this help you ‘see’ that the reflective act arises through a ‘realm’ that is far more encom-

passing than your ordinary view of yourself? If you ask, “How is my life?” and begin to sense all the situations that become ‘present’, can you allow the ‘view’ that it is the situations of your life that are sensing themselves through this vehicle called “you”?

Distinguishing the ‘viewing’ and the ‘view’. Throughout the discussion of sensing and of the ‘reality’ that opens to us when we ‘turn toward’ our experience, I invariably fell into a way of referring to ‘reality’ as if it were some fixed state or condition. We ordinarily assume this static quality as characteristic of the physical world, and of anything we perceive. Science knows better, and so do we when we stop to think about it. But ordinarily we do not stop. Now it is time to do so.

Sensed ‘reality’ is not fixed at all. As soon as I close my eyes, I ‘see’ movement, change, and dynamism. Breathing, heartbeat, welling sensation, warmth turning to slight chill, twitch here and moving there—all swimming in a runny ooze of sensuous colorations and flavors, a stew of feeling called “now.”

Even that description misses a crucial aspect of the activity I can ‘see’ through sensing. I ‘see’ that ‘seeing’ only occurs in something like a fluid engagement of my ‘looking’ with whatever is there to be ‘looked at’. The analogy comes to mind of the studies of eye movements in psychophysics. Ordinary seeing follows more closely the principles of moving pictures than those of still photography. Our visual images only arise through a continually refreshed encounter of sight with the seen. Similarly, I can observe that my own sensuous reflection does not occur

as a single event that informs me how things are. Once I 'look', a pulseline process begins of 'looking', 'looking', 'looking', and so on, until some 'appearance' of sufficient resolution comes into 'view'.

This observation is crucial for our Seeing all the way to Ultimate Reality. The Ultimate Realm is beyond any and all views or 'views'. It is not to be found in any experiential aspect sufficiently formed or fixed to have a feeling tone or sensed quality. We can only See this Realm by looking *through* the act of sensuous reflection itself. The path is through the 'viewing', not the 'view'.

Making Do with Little Shifts. From the beginning of this essay, I have promised that Ultimate Reality can be Seen through the shift. Recall that I distinguished "big shifts" and "little shifts." Ultimate Reality comes upon us most obtrusively through big shifts. But these are not so easy to bring about, especially when we first learn the techniques I am presenting. The tougher the situation, the more we may need to reflect on it until it shifts and opens. Little shifts are very readily available, however. Once we learn to recognize them and to allow them to register, we can have them virtually at will. So we will work with the more modest version here.

Little shifts are often subtle. The more sensitive you are, the easier they are to recognize. *Whenever we 'turn toward' some hitherto obscure aspect of what is now relevant in experience, a little shift occurs.* The experience of it is like an "inner" nod or act of recognition. One of the more obvious signs I often notice is a deepening in my breathing. When I am reflecting in a determined fashion,

people who do not know me think I am sighing, since deep breaths occur repeatedly as I 'look' and 'look' again.

You can verify the ready availability of little shifts simply by asking yourself, "What important aspects of my experience may be 'there', although obscure, waiting for my attention?" If you allow yourself to 'look' (that is, close your eyes and sense), *without feeling the need to do anything other than acknowledge the 'presence' of those aspects*, what do you notice? Is there anything like a slight feeling of relief? Does a sense of freshness come? How about the lightened feeling that now you do not have to struggle to focus your attention, that whatever is "knocking on your door" can "come in and join you" in what you are doing? Just 'looking' provides me with a little shift. Does it for you?

Allowing Dynamism: Approaching the Ultimate Energy. 'Looking' is usually paired with the expectation of 'seeing'. We begin to reflect sensuously by engaging some sense of the entire 'realm' of what we are now experiencing, and then by allowing parts, aspects, and 'territories' to come into focus. For example, as I 'look' now, I 'see' first my writing and the feelings attendant to it, then my work life comes to me, my relationship with my mate, and so on. Further reflection, normally, would lead me to focus more narrowly still. But for now, I would like you to suspend the expectation of 'seeing'. Instead of 'looking' and then focusing within or 'melting through' what first appears, I would like to suggest an exercise through which you may begin to generate for yourself an experience of the Infinite Dynamism of Ultimate Reality.

Begin by 'looking', but instead of waiting to 'see' anything clearly, 'look' again, taking into your 'viewing' as wide a sense as you can of all that occurs to you: your body, your surroundings, the important situations of your life, your past, your future, and the world as you know it. And then, once again, without waiting for any well-resolved clarity, 'look' again freshly. Can you allow "little shifts" to register each time you 'look'? See if you can 'reach' to 'embrace' as much of your experience as possible this time, allow a little shift to occur and 'look', then 'look', then 'look,' and 'look' again, as rapidly as you can for a whole series of repeated reflections.

When I do this, I begin to experience a mood-heightening and almost dizzying energy. Although my breathing deepens and becomes more rapid, the experience of 'looking, looking, looking, and so on,' is quite distinct from the hyperventilation that occurs when I simply force my body to breathe more quickly than necessary. The rapid-fire 'looking' lightens me considerably, and I feel myself 'reaching out' and 'expanding' into 'reality'.

Transcendental Reversal II: Becoming the Energizing Dynamism. The next step is another transcendental reversal, but this one is harder than the first. In allowing the sensed to sense, there was at least something—some already partially formed bit of sensed experience—that could be 'located' and 'held onto'. This time I would like you to allow the 'looking' to be what 'looks'. Nothing is pinned down now. The 'looking' pervades and envelops both the 'looker' and the 'looked at', but it is not anywhere in ordinary space-time, nor is it in some 'place' in 'reality'

as we have been sensing it until now. Some new faculty must be allowed to come into play here to See the Light that is the Dynamism unleashed through 'looking'.

Imagine some Dimension we can neither see nor sense that is the source of whatever enters both ordinary reality and lived experience. Then allow the rapid-fire 'looking' to begin again, letting little shifts register with each 'reaching' to embrace more of the entirety of experience in each 'look'. As the series of 'looking, looking, looking' progresses, allow the 'looking' to be what 'looks', and let it emerge from this Dimension you can neither see nor sense, but can only allow by Opening to it.

This is a difficult exercise. It requires practice. After trying it a few times, relax, and then allow yourself to be distracted by whatever you like for a few minutes. When you begin the exercise again, 'look' just once. Do you experience a little shift? Can you see *through* that shift? Can you recognize that what happens is a bit of opening to Ultimate Reality, which leaves as its trace the freshness that comes with the shift?

The Structure of Ultimate Reality and the Bringing-of-Openness. The final step is a third transcendental reversal, equally as challenging as the last two. In this step, we repeat the previous one and add the first transcendental reversal to it. In the previous two steps I asked you first to approach the Dynamism through rapid-fire 'looking', and then to allow the 'looking' to be what 'looks'. Which *you* performed these exercises, the ordinary physical body or the lived 'reality'? Whichever it was, full Seeing requires still further Opening. The locus of "allowing" in either

ordinary space-time or living sense needs to be Seen more fundamentally. What we thereby See, however, cannot be rendered in ordinary language, because the structure of common speech presupposes subject-object distinctions and linear causal sequences that are transcended in Ultimate Reality.

In Ultimate Reality, Opening Is. Opening Does the Opening and Produces Openness. The Opening is Done by the Opening. All major parts of a standard sentence need to refer to the essential Act: In Ultimate Reality we See Openness Opened by the Opening it Opens to.

It is important that this reflexive formula be more than mere words. Ultimately, we are what Opens. We do the Opening. We are the Openness brought forth. Some theory may help "hold onto" what the formula points to.

All experience may be said to arise out of SASTA (the Source of All Space-Time Arrangements). Put otherwise, any aspect of what we see or sense is a particular way in which SASTA manifests itself. At any one instant only some particular manifesting occurs. We see or sense this situation; all others remain obscure or implicit (unless or until we 'melt through' to them). And what we see or sense is only what we are open or 'open' to.

We, ourselves, are also a manifesting of SASTA. The vast 'expanse' of all the past and future possibilities of this lived realm I call my life is a particular way of forming SASTA, which gives rise to this "me." What allows this way of forming to arise from SASTA if not SASTA itself? I, in the widest sense in which I See myself, am the capacity to Open that SASTA Opens to itself. And in allowing this

capacity (called "me") to be Pervaded by the Vibrant, Energizing Openness (shifts), the Bringing forth of Openness (SASTA) Opens the capacity it has Opened (me) to Open to Itself.

Since this reflexive formula is not easy to grasp, it may help, if you are interested, to go back over this section several times. The point is to help See through the personalized and, therefore, fictive and limiting qualities we ordinarily assume to be defining of ourselves. These qualities are indispensable for self-recognition in ordinary space-time and in lived 'reality'. But they hamper the Seeing of Ultimate Reality.

With some practice, I believe, these exercises can help one to See. In this way of Viewing, all shifts, even little ones, begin to appear as momentary manifestations of the Bringing of Openness. *Any situation, when taken, not as a fixed circumstance, but as an invitation to be looked at freshly and thoroughly, reveals itself as a manifesting of the bringing of openness.* Rather than view our sensuous reflections in some ordinary way, as something we do, we can See within an Ultimate Perspective that each 'looking' is simply an Opening to the situation, that the situation Opens the Opening, and that any situation 'looked' at is therefore an instance of Openness Brought forth by the Opening it Opens to.

IV. Implications for Development

What does all this mean for our understanding of development? What light does this perspective shed on our concern with growth? To answer, I will first

present a theoretical formulation that describes developmental steps in terms that are consistent with the framework discussed thus far. Then I will use this formulation to argue for the need to reorient our assumptions about the value of development to accord with the dawning Knowledge of what is most nourishing and fulfilling for us.

Ordinary and Transitional Events

Any event that emerges into ordinary reality, recognizable to a perceiver as *this* defined occurrence, presupposes a viewing of SASTA that narrows the focus until only this particular event and no other occurs. Such a viewing may Ultimately be Seen as itself a Manifesting of SASTA. But note that when an event manifests SASTA in the absence of that further reflection, it does so in such a way that SASTA, as anything other than *this* ordinary appearance, remains obscured.

Ordinary events leave the basic structure of narrow viewing undisturbed and have little developmental significance for us. Moments that signal a developmental step or shift are a different class of occurrences. *Transitional events* are those moments in which we perceive not only an event but some aspect of the 'viewing' that is their engendering context. Since that context grounds both the event and the perceiver, its emergence into awareness presupposes both a widening of the perceiver's field of perception and a new, more ample contexting that grounds the widening.

Transitional events have both the character of ordinary events (they are locatable in ordinary space-time) and

the quality of revelation. They allow us to perceive what was formerly presupposed, but inaccessible to prior seeing. Beyond our capacities to see at any definable instant lie all the possible manifestations of SASTA that remain obscured by ordinary viewing. Revelations are only possible when we make contact with these implicit realms by allowing ourselves to sense beyond whatever is already obvious to us.

Developmental Steps and the Return to Ordinary Form

The full cycle of any developmental step includes both widened contact with some hitherto obscured aspect of SASTA and the return to some restrictive form. The return is necessary, for it is our only way of allowing the hitherto obscured aspect to manifest itself through us in reality, as an image, formulation, way of behaving, or the like. Anything less than such a full return would leave us with a vague intuition or promise arising from a revelatory brush with Ultimate Reality, but not the realized step that marks our movement forward. The manifestations of a developmental step—the new images, forms, or behaviors that mark our progress in reality—may then be grounded in a newly widened 'viewing'. But while this new context may reach further toward SASTA than what was previously possible for us, no realized context, by virtue of its engendering certain particular events and not others, can embrace SASTA itself.

Developmental steps, therefore, can approach but never lead us to take up permanent residence in Ultimate Reality. No new form, stage, or structure we achieve through development can ever fully embody this un-

bounded fullness, precisely because the completeness of each step requires us to return to a realm that leaves SASTA largely obscured.

In recognizing this fact, we can no longer delude ourselves that development, or moving forward as we have traditionally understood it, is what we most seek. The more we intuit Ultimate Reality, the more we See that our going leads Nowhere; for Wherever we are headed is already Here.

From this perspective, the seeming forward movements traced by developmental sequences are artifacts of our repetitive return to a viewing that squeezes SASTA into packets we recognize as moments of experience. When we See clearly, we recognize that what draws us most fundamentally is not the promise of an enlarged packet, but the Ultimate Possibility—the at first tentative, awesome, and intermittent contact with a vast Beyond that is the Source of All that we are or ever can be. Opening and allowing this contact inevitably registers in reality as steps (or perhaps leaps) forward, since upon our return from an Encounter with the Ultimate, we cannot squeeze ourselves back into the forms we left behind. Such forms, even widened ones, are not what is most profoundly nourishing for us. Fulfillment is There, but only when we stretch beyond reality to touch the Real.

V. Summary: Three Realities, Four Levels of Selfhood, and Problems in Living

We cannot fully appreciate development without asking what it is that develops in development. It

is easy enough to respond that *we* are what it is that develops; we develop our *selves*. But what is this self? In what terms do we come to know it? Each of the three realities I have discussed—ordinary, transitional, and Ultimate—provides its own unique way of considering ourselves. Transitional ‘reality’ actually provides two such ‘views’. By way of summary, I will first review these three realities and the four levels of selfhood associated with them. The final subsection will then draw out the implications of Seeing our Ultimate Self for the posture we assume toward day-to-day problems.

Ordinary Reality and the Physicalist Self

The here and now of ordinary reality consists of this narrowly circumscribed location in space and this moment in time, observations which any common sense observer would validate. Ordinarily, we view reality as a single succession of such time-space points. Any differences in the ways people construe reality we attribute to the limitations of individual and subculturally conditioned versions of it.

The first level of selfhood arises through a reflection that is limited to ordinary ways of seeing things. According to this view, I remain no more nor less than the distinctive physical body I inhabit, a member of my species and a product of a foregone past in a determining environment. The ordinary, physical me is the focus of classical Western medicine and traditional social science (behaviorist psychology, positivist social theory and research, etc.). A self that is exclusively defined in such terms—variously system-

atized as traditional realism, materialism, and positivism—is constrained to alienated status (mind split from body, subject split from object, me separated from you, etc.).

Transitional ‘Reality’, Identity and the ‘Life Realm’

Once we begin to reflect sensuously, the ordinary view of reality itself appears limited. The ‘reality’ we encounter through sense is not locatable as a succession of single space-time points. It is pervaded by the interwoven ‘presence’, at various degrees of clarity, of various situations in our lives. This sensed ‘reality’ comprises many ‘places’ and ‘times’—some that we can ascribe to a real past, along with others that would have to be called, in ordinary language, the “could have been,” the “possibly will be,” or “the only dimly imaginable.”

For many reasons (historic, cultural, economic, political, religious, psychological, philosophical, etc.) scholarship has primarily been devoted to refining models based on the ordinary and more limited view of things. The amazing precision achieved through this effort has given rise to a global, technological culture. Our machines are monuments to the steadfastness and practical usefulness of our adherence to this ancient conception of time and space, now enshrined as common sense. But whenever we relax that adherence to consult directly the data of experience, we ‘see’ that our lives unfold within the second, far more richly textured realm.

Through disciplined attention to the realm of sense, we can specify qualities and characteristics that are unique to it. The dimensions of this ‘reality’—its widened

‘timefulness’ and ‘spaciousness’—are more inclusive, encompassing, and hospitable to our own and others’ ‘presence’. When we find ourselves at ‘home’, it is in the realm of sense and not in the staid, fixed, impersonal, and highly abstracted realm of time-space points.

A second level of selfhood comes into ‘view’ when I ‘see’ through *sensuous* reflection that certain aspects of my real past and my expectable future are nonetheless ‘really’ quite ‘present’ for me. Some constellation of ‘times’ and ‘places’—a set of relevant situations, whether real or imagined—is invariably ‘here’ in any ‘now’ in which I bother to ‘look’. The most crucial of all such sets is the one that constitutes what modern psychology calls my “identity.” In the standardized or repeatedly invoked version of what I sense myself to be, I am defined by a particular ‘view’ of key formative experiences that continually replay themselves as the daily dramas of my life. Identity, as so conceived, is a second level of selfhood.

Identity is not immutable, however. The routine data of psychotherapeutic inquiry suggests that identity yields, in fact, to further reflection. Through a still more penetrating ‘look’, I can even ‘melt through’ all of the definitions or versions of my experience that I may now apply to myself. Beyond them lies the broader truth that, not one set, but *all* the situations of my life, and all ‘views’ I could possibly take of them, are potentially ‘here’ with me ‘now’. What I am at this moment is, at the third level of selfhood, a manifesting of the entirety of the lived ‘realm’ I call my life. Although not reducible to one immutable characterization—whatever I call it now is subject to change the next time I ‘look’—this encompassing expanse

of all real and possible situations is available to sense. I can 'see' its 'presence' whenever I 'look' fully enough. In 'seeing' myself as the manifesting of the entirety of my life—the third level of selfhood—I may 'perceive' a purpose for my life as a whole. Unusual achievements are possible when we can bring to bear the energy of such purpose, grounded in a sense of our lives as a whole, and unconstrained by any one particular definition or way to identify it.

Ultimate Reality and the Self as Bringing-of-Openness

The very effort to specify our experience reveals to us a third and Ultimate Realm that resists all specificity. Even calling it a 'Realm' is a distortion; it would be truer to say that it is Everywhere and Nowhere. The crucial observation no longer consists of *what* we sense, but *that* we sense at all. When the object of study is reflection itself, we can verify that 'looking' is an ever-present propensity that arises from nothing in particular, consists of nothing in particular, and knows no bounds. There is nothing we cannot 'look' at. And whenever 'looking' allows us to 'see' freshly, a further Look allows us to See that 'seeing' only occurs through penetrating or transcending the formerly obscure. 'Seeing' is an instance of contact with Non-Particular-Knowing-of-No-Limits.

With this Ultimate View, a fourth level of selfhood emerges. Ultimately, I See that all 'views' of a self arise through reflection. Without 'looking', nothing would come into 'view'. It is, therefore, not the 'view'—not even one that encompasses all of my life—that Ultimately is my

Self, but rather, the capacity that Opens to first one 'view,' and then to a wider one. At the fourth and Ultimate level, I Am the Looking that is capable of each bit of 'seeing', that Opens in such a way that 'views' can occur at all, and that leads eventually to my Seeing that it is my Seeing that Sees. I Am the Opening, the Bringing-of-Openness. Needless to say, I can only See mySelf through Opening to this View. Contemplating this fourth level of selfhood—Opening sufficiently to allow such Seeing—is itself an exhilarating experience.

The fourth level is cosmic and eternal in its reach. It also brings us squarely down to earth. When I see mySelf as the Bringing of Openness, the Source of All Space-Time Arrangements, I Recognize mySelf Manifesting mySelf in whatever I Open to. All that Occurs to Me is a Manifesting of mySelf. Viewed Ultimately, that is, when allowed to be reflected upon thoroughly, even the most mundane events Appear as the Manifesting of Openness that I bring to whatever I open to. When Viewed in this Light, ordinary circumstances are Revealed as the Erupting of Ecstasy. This View Transforms the ordinary into the Sublime. And so we grasp that spiritual masters go about the simplest tasks with a knowing smile.

Problems in Living and the Need for Openness

The Seeing of our Ultimate Nature has important practical consequences. It provides a unitary way to consider all human problems, whether intellectual or emotional, professional or personal. All such difficulties may be Seen as artifacts of limited ways of viewing (or 'viewing') the situations in which they arise. Given this etiologi-

cal framework, the prescription is clear. The problematic situations that face me may be taken as announcements of my not having yet brought sufficient openness to bear. Each such problem indicates, if I 'look', an aspect of my experience 'where' I am not yet fully Present. Concretely, a problem is a situation in need of being 'looked at', one in which something needs to shift.

When I am most successful at such 'looking', I eventually 'see' the value of what began as a problem in helping me work out my life. Such 'seeing' invariably comes with a "big shift," which, if I Recognize it, announces the Ultimate Fact that the problem has served as an Opening through which I have come more fully to mySelf. *Ultimately, this Coming more fully to mySelf is the essence of development.* Problems are therefore welcomed opportunities, apart from their initial pain.

This orientation to problems is not only applicable to the personalistic concerns of traditional psychology. Opening, through reflecting and allowing shifts, can be pursued as a collective project. Rewarding dialogues and "brainstorming" sessions are everyday occurrences that attest to the possibilities for collective opening in even mundane settings. In fact, a pervasive motive that animates all manner of collective endeavor, from business and government to the arts, education, and religion, is the widening of human perspectives, the bringing of openness to our lives together.

To value opening is not new. The uniqueness of our times derives instead from the dimensions of our global problems, the urgency for further opening among us, and

the need for new tools for facilitating opening on a planetary scale.

In writing this, I have recalled several times the science fiction vision of humans who are able to transpose their energy from real forms to some other dimension and then return at will. This possibility used to fascinate me, but seemed preposterous. In fact, that vision is already materialized in the way to engage the challenges of (r)('r')(R)eality that I have sketched above. I used to think of it as some kind of magic disappearing act, but the real payoff, the implication I cherish most, is far more simple and concrete. It is the knowledge that when I am troubled, confused, or in pain the most nourishing thing I can do is not to strive to move beyond the experience or master the situation by developing myself this way or that. The culturally reinforced desire to move on, get ahead, graduate, or lay hold of tangible signs of success is difficult to neutralize. But when I do, when I turn *toward* what hurts me, I never regret it. I am learning to recognize discomfort as a signal that I am out of touch with what is most Real. Responding to that signal, Opening to what is Always There—rather than longing for what is several stages beyond—has become for me the Ultimate Calling.

Notes

1. This essay is part of a continuing effort, begun a decade ago, to address the phenomenon of developmental change. I am indebted to the writings of Kenneth Burke and Martin Heidegger for assisting me in beginning to think what I had previously only sensed. In the past few years, Eugene Gendlin has

guided me in further philosophical studies. Various experiential practices, from Sensory Awareness and Feldenkrais method to Zen, Tibetan *tantra*, and the *est* training have deepened my grasp of the central issues. Recently, *Time, Space, and Knowledge* (Tarthang Tulku, [Emeryville, Calif.: Dharma Publishing, 1977]) has provided a serviceable model for communicating about these issues with others. I will draw on aspects of that model, as I apprehend it, throughout the following.

2. Eugene T. Gendlin, *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1962).

3. Eugene T. Gendlin et al., "Focusing," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 6 (1969): 4-15.

4. See Eugene T. Gendlin, *Focusing* (New York: Everest House, 1978) and Arthur Egendorf, "Teaching Self-reflection as 'Focusing': An Experiential Approach to Problem-solving" (unpublished manuscript, 1979).

5. Claudio Naranjo and Robert E. Ornstein, *On the Psychology of Meditation* (New York: The Viking Press, 1971).

6. Lawrence LeShan, *How to Meditate: A Guide to Self-discovery* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974).

