

Painful Time, Ecstatic Time

DAVID MICHAEL LEVIN

Introduction

In *Living by Zen*, Suzuki Daisetz writes:

When we hear a bell or see a bird flying, we must do so by means of a mind perfected by *satori* [*kenshō*]; that is to say, we hear the bell even prior to its ringing, and see the bird even prior to its flight. Once the bell rings or the bird flies, they are already in the world of the senses, which means that they are differentiated, subject to intellectual analysis and synthesis. . . .¹

What does he mean? What is he saying? Speaking personally, I must confess that I struggled for a long time with this passage in an effort to understand it. What I would like to share with you now is the clarification I have begun to enjoy. For this experiential "breakthrough," I am especially grateful to Tarthang Tulku, a Tibetan teacher (lama) in the ancient rNyingma-pa tradition of Buddhism, whose new book, *Time, Space, and Knowledge: A New Vision of Reality*, provides us with some extremely effective meditation practices and very helpful commentaries.²

Basically, Suzuki is attempting to characterize the Zen *experience* of time. What he offers us in language which is not just picturesque, but

¹ Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Living by Zen* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), p. 74. See also *op. cit.*, p. 63 for a brief discussion of the "neurotic" temporal patterning of our lives. On the relationship between Zen and therapy, see Thomas P. Kasulis, "Zen Buddhism, Freud, and Jung," *The Eastern Buddhist*, vol. 10, no. 1 (May, 1977), pp. 68-91. Also consider David Michael Levin, "Self-Knowledge and the Talking Cure," *Reviews of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. XV, nos. 2-3 (1977), pp. 95-111.

² Tarthang Tulku, *Time, Space, and Knowledge* (Emeryville, California: Dharma Press, 1977). See also his earlier book, *Gestures of Balance* (Emeryville: Dharma Press, 1976).

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indeed very accurate, is a *phenomenological description* of how, through meditative practice, we may learn to experience the temporal structure, or patterning, of our everyday life (the life which Husserl sets in the *Lebenswelt*)³ in a surprisingly new way.

In what follows, then, I would like to focus, first, on our ordinary (so-called "normal") experiencing of the structure of time. I would like to focus, that is, on *how we have temporally structured* our standard experience. Once we have achieved a very clear phenomenological sense of the felt meaning, or felt qualities, of our temporal experience as we naturally and habitually live it, perhaps we may begin to realize that there is a feasible alternative way of patterning our experience. Our analysis will close, then, with a concise and, I hope, clear diagnostic interpretation of the experiential characteristics of this alternative process of temporal structuring.

Although the phenomenological movement, fathered by Edmund Husserl and then cultured by the work of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty,⁴ will be extremely helpful in preparing the Western mind for the alternative experience of time, I wish to stress that there is no substitute for the focusing and visualization of meditative practice. And, from this standpoint, I can think of no source of instruction superior to Rinpoche's book, *Time, Space, and Knowledge*, in which his ancient Tibetan tradition has been blessed with new life through a powerful and exemplary transmission especially well suited to the present needs and capacities of our Western sensibility.

Past and future: inveterate tendencies

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty argues that "I am borne into personal existence by a time which I do not constitute."⁵ Now, as

³ See Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1964). Also consider Husserl's *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). And, for an excellent introduction to the concrete practice of phenomenology, I recommend Donald Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1977).

⁴ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Humanities Press, 1962).

⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 347. See also *op. cit.*, pp. 420-423.

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we know, Jean Piaget has shown that this originary time, a timing which is granted me at birth and which belongs to my anonymous and pre-egological existence, is structured very differently from the time which rules my life in its later stages, once the Ego is firmly ensconced on the throne.⁶ Thus, we undergo a process of temporal restructuring as we pass from infancy through childhood and into the adult world of temporal obligations. This fact is of decisive importance for the interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's observation, no less true of time, than of space: "What protects the sane man against delirium and hallucination is not his critical powers, but the structure of his space."⁷

Before we hasten to concur, however, we should perhaps pause to consider the consequences of recognizing the fact that such appeals to the concept of sanity will always be relative, perforce, to a certain norm, a certain standard of health. Suppose we ask, then, the following questions: Granted that the structuring of time (that is to say, the temporal structuring of our experience) is not only *a priori* necessary as a condition of human consciousness, but is indeed necessary for the maintenance of some basic condition of psycho-physical satisfaction or health, could it be that there are *alternative* modalities of temporal structuring? In other words, we agree that *some* (kind of) structuring is needed; and, in any case, as Kant proved so well, it is *a priori* necessary for the unity of consciousness. But we may contest the assumption that what passes for the normal structuring of the "sane man" could not be fundamentally different, fundamentally changed or modified. To be sure, we need protection against delirium and hallucination. But what kind of protection? And how much? Is it not entirely conceivable that adults, having safely passed through the infantile years of vulnerability, could allow themselves a greater degree of openness? To what extent do we protect ourselves against quite *imaginary* dangers of delirium and hallucination? To what extent do we temporally structure our experience in a way that is needlessly defensive and aversive? Perhaps, when we focus more rigorously on the *felt quality* of our temporal structuration, we will begin

⁶ See, the work of Jean Piaget, for example: *The Child's Conception of the World* (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, & Co., 1969); *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality* (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, & Co., 1972); and *The Construction of Reality in the Child* (New York: Ballantine, 1975).

⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

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to realize not only how frustrating, how unsatisfactory this process actually is, but also how profoundly (if obscurely) responsible we are for maintaining this temporal pattern.

We will return to this theme later on, when we examine the difference between representation and presence as ways of responding to and patterning the temporality of our existential situation. Suffice it for now to stress a point which Merleau-Ponty makes in his discussion of the development (*Sinnesgenesis*) of human temporality:

The past, therefore, is not past, nor the future, future. They exist only when a subjectivity is there to disrupt the plenitude of being in itself, to adumbrate a perspective, and to introduce non-being into it.⁸

What happens when a new "subjectivity" is thrown into the plenitude of being? What happens, in other words, when a child is borne into the world? Well, let us answer this question in phenomenological terms by entering into the child's experience and interpreting it, as it were, from within. According to the phenomenologists, even the child's earliest experience is inherently organized into what they call a rudimentary "temporal *ek-stasis*": a primordial centrifugal dispersal of awareness, essentially involving passing phases of "retentional" and "protentional" consciousness. Experience is, in brief, a flowing process of figure/ground focusings (Husserl: *lebendig-strömende Gegenwart*), such that every now-present phase of focus is experienced as receding without interruption into the distance (the horizontal past) while, at the same time, phases or aspects of that same now-present which is now past—phases or aspects which were *then* experienced as foreshadowing, or protending, something horizontally future—move, or pass, into the novelty of the living, focused present, either confirming or surprising our orientation. This rudimentary, founding time-structure (*Gestaltung*) is the primordial ecstasy of infantile experience, a sort of paradisiacal stage, out of which there gradually develops, in more or less the way that Piaget has carefully established, a more reflectively involuted, less tenuously differentiated structuring of experience: the familiar patternings, namely, of past(s), present(s), and future(s), constituted through various simple and nested acts of remember-

⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

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ing, recollecting, anticipating, expecting, and so forth.⁹ (Philosophers tend, unfortunately, to consider our temporal experience as though it belonged to the re-presentations of a disembodied Cartesian *cogito*, rather than to an embodied, sentient being. It would be worthwhile pondering, perhaps, how the child's acquisition of temporal language—the use of tenses, for example—is related to his developing proprioceptive awareness, or feeling, of bodily tensions.)

Now, I am not trying to argue that such re-presentational structuring, which in any case is not only our essential human destiny, but also our needed and privileged endowment, is inherently undesirable or painful. On the contrary! But I do wish to diagnose the way in which such structuring tends, as we grow older, to become unnecessarily and—what is worse—painfully rigid and fixed and solidified. The flowing, but still structured, process tends to become increasingly partitioned, patterned into relatively isolated, partially alien (or heteronomous) units, very much like, in fact, the irreversible, linear series of punctiform “nows” which, according to David Hume, we somehow hold together.¹⁰ (So Hume's analysis of our experience of time is, in a certain sense, quite accurate. We might say that he accurately portrays the *psychopathology* of temporal experience. For the “punctual” person characteristically embodies,

⁹ See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: A General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*. Translated by W. R. Boyce-Gibson. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), esp. sections 81–84 (pp. 215–224) and section 100 (pp. 269–270).

¹⁰ See David Michael Levin, “Freud's Divided Heart and Saraha's Cure,” *Inquiry*, vol. 20, nos. 2–3 (Summer, 1977), pp. 165–188. (I would like to point out, however, that there are some errors in this paper. First, my interpretation of “Nirmāṇakāya,” p. 188, n. 53, should read: “the painful but self-transforming ego-body.” Second, the interpretation of “Sambhogakāya” should read: “the blissful body which, through mythopoetic imagination, creatively perfects the discipline of the super-ego.”) Also consider the pathbreaking work of Eugene Gendlin: “A Theory of Personality Change,” in P. Worchel and D. Byrne (eds.), *Personality Change* (New York: John Wiley, 1964); “Focusing Ability in Psychotherapy, Personality, and Creativity,” in J. M. Shlien, ed.), *Research in Psychotherapy*, vol. III (Washington: American Psychological Association, 1968); “Focusing,” in *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Winter, 1969); and “Experiential Phenomenology,” in Maurice Natanson (ed.), *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973). I don't know of any better technique, outside the Buddhist traditions of meditation practice, for helping us to focus on our present experiential processes in a fully open and accepting way, so that the various painful and frustrating patternings of temporality can be seen through, penetrated, and abandoned (abolished).

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and exemplifies, this neurotic, i.e., painful and frustrating, tendency to pattern time into an irreversible series of now-points: his need for punctuality requires, is expressed in, and is reflected by, a punctuated timeline. Such punctuality is a source of distress, not just for ourselves, but also for the others whom we press into the narrow tube of time. The problem, of course, is that the portrait Hume offers is not at all *intended* to reflect any real pathology.)

Let me spell out this argument as concretely as I can. First, we will consider the nature of this tendency in our so-called "normal" experience of, or relationship with, the past. Then we will turn to the working of this same tendency in our experiencing of the future. You will undoubtedly recognize at once the sort of experience in question: experiential patternings we are all too familiar with. Bearing in mind the root meaning of the word "ek-stasis" ("standing out"), we will see that these common patternings are symptomatic of a process of "maturing" in which the original ecstasy of the child's temporal openness has gradually come down to a form of ek-static *distraction*. Pascal, it seems, understood this very clearly, when he warns us, in his *Pensées*: "But diversion amuses us, and leads us unconsciously to death."¹¹

Basically, there are two kinds of re-presentational experience which are related to the past and are, as forms of attachment (desire or aversion), equally painful, frustrating, and unfulfilling. In the one, we turn away from the present (the gift or present, of the present) in order to return to a past which we *imagine* to have been more pleasing, more joyful, and more fulfilling. (It is crucial to realize that the past we are returning to is an *imaginary* past, and not a past we simply recall. I can indeed recall a wonderful and joyful past; but I certainly *cannot* recall that past as *more* joyful, or *more* wonderful than my present. The diagnostic implications of this fact are, I am sure, quite obvious.) We have an "inveterate tendency," as Professor Herbert Guenther puts it, to make excessive and uncompromising demands, in our infantile desire for "perfect satisfaction" from the present. We approach the present situation with a jaundiced eye, setting it up, in effect, such that we are *bound* to be frustrated, *bound* to experience it as unsatisfactory. The present can't possibly match up to our cleverly idealized reconstruction of the past (a past which, undoubtedly, never was). The present is paradise lost. So we cling with

¹¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), section 171, p. 49.

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desire to our re-presentation of the past and foolishly reject the present. But, since we do this repeatedly, with one present after another, is it not true that we are merely passing from one frustration to another, and repeating the same fundamental error over and over again?

We might call this the pattern of nostalgia. It is often charged with an intensely melancholy, perhaps depressive, tone. And it frequently carries not only a feeling of dullness or ennui, but also even a feeling of compulsion, a sense of overwhelming flight and distraction. (Buddhist texts will speak of the realm of "hungry ghosts.") This re-presentational patterning is doubly self-destructive and self-punishing, since, on the one hand, we cannot wilfully retrieve the satisfactions of the past (if such they were) as still present. We must learn the truth of impermanence and the practice of "releasement" (Heidegger: "*Gelassenheit*").¹² Nor, on the other hand, can we begin to find any satisfaction in the present so long as we rage against it and persist in refusing what the present has to offer.

Now, the second distressing relationship with the past involves a constant return to, and a constant repetition of, its most painful and frustrating aspects. Montaigne observes: "We take our chains along with us; our freedom is not complete; we still turn our eyes to what we have left behind, our fancy is full of it."¹³ And he adds: "How many times we trouble our mind with anger or sadness by such shadows, and involve ourselves in fanciful passions which transform both our soul and our body."¹⁴ Freud's studies of the "repetition compulsion" diagnose with very penetrating insight this tendency we have to punish ourselves again and again by clinging to a past which, in Merleau-Ponty's words, "remains like a wound through which our strength ebbs away."¹⁵ Thus do we poison the gift of memory, turning it into the cruelest of judges. But, what is much worse than the repeated experience of pain as such is the fact that this recalling of pain will not at all help us to master that past which still, which now haunts us. We cannot undo what is gone except by letting it go, letting it *be past*, so that we may concentrate wholeheartedly on

¹² See Martin Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche's account of "the will's revulsion against time," in *What Is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

¹³ Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*. Translated by Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), Book I: 39: 176.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, Book III: 4: 637.

¹⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

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the auspicious opportunities which right now present themselves. If we want to enjoy our past, then we must learn how to forget it! To get the past as a wonderful gift, we must first be *free* to for-get it!

The compulsive need to repeat past pain and frustration begins to take hold of us as soon as we do not directly face, and fully deal with, the situation that confronts us in the present. When what the present presents does not immediately please us, we tend, rather, to avoid it; we defer an appropriate response. We do not seem to understand that this re-presentationally postponed response to the present, this distant future, will return to haunt us, sooner or later, as the present of our earlier irresponsibility. In the present we harvest the seeds of the past—what kind of seeds are we *now* sowing for our future?

Corresponding to these two constitutive patterns of re-presentationally experiencing our past, there are two patterns of experiencing our future: re-presentational patterns of attachment (desire or aversion) no less painful and unfulfilling. Together, the four patterns of emotional attachment, intimately interwoven, make up the warp and woof of time as we normally experience it. Now, it is not because of any inexorable *ekstasis* as such (the dispersal of time, namely, as past, present, and future) that time is so painful and frustrating. Rather, time's structure manifests with this "wrathful" aspect only because, at the meeting point of warp and woof, we discover the knot of the present, into which, through countless unwholesome attitudes, we have tightly bound ourselves. As such, the threefold nature of time is neither pleasure nor pain. So, for the temporal qualities we will experience, we have only our own attitudes to blame.

The first of the distressing *futural* patterns which we will consider begins to take shape, and thus to shape and twist the skein of time, in our patterning attitude towards the present. We are restless, not easily satisfied. The present presents problems; it's not exactly the gift we wanted, or hoped for. But, instead of accepting this present, we reject it and turn away. We despair, it seems, of working with, and working our way through, the given problem. Soon, we are dreaming, lost in our own sweet fantasies. The present is denied in favor of an *imaginary* (re-presented) future. The future, we think, is our only hope: and we convince ourselves that it will bring the desired gift of bliss. We are so sure! In fact, this attitude becomes so deeply insinuated into the very texture of our temporal experience that, finally, we do not even give the

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present a second's chance. We meet each and every present with a catalogue (re-presentation) of unconditional demands and expectations. No matter what we receive, we *hoped* for something better. With this (representational) approach, is it any wonder that the present always fails to provide satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment or accomplishment?

Moreover, we are substituting an unknowable, uncertain and indeed essentially *illusory* future for the opportunity to learn, through what Buddhists call "skillful means," an appropriate way of experiencing the present, however disappointing it may at first appear, so that, in the end, we can discover, hidden within it, its dynamic potentialities for real satisfaction. When we representationally defer the present, when we postpone receiving its treasures (often hidden), how do we know—and why do we suppose—that the future will present us with a more easily opened treasure? We may not even have a future. So we should remember, as Kant once said, that one hundred merely possible thalers are worth nothing when balanced against the value of one real one!

The other attachment is a patterning which consists, so to speak, in turning over and over the old wheel of anxiety. Instead of staying with the present, even when what it presents us with is something in which we *could* find a measure of fulfillment, we turn away from it, preferring to *lose* ourselves in the representation of an imaginary future, into which we have projected all our fears, doubts, anxieties, and confusions. Thus, for example, a friend may very kindly give us, as a present, something he knows we have long desired. It is such a wonderful present! But we are so attached to it, so much in the grip of desire and the hunger of possessiveness, that we cannot let ourselves relax to enjoy it. I rather like the way Montaigne portrays this pattern: "As if he were not in time to suffer the pain when he is in it, he anticipates it in the imagination and runs to meet it."¹⁶ Our enjoyment immediately clouds over, darkens, as we settle into the familiar vice of anxiety, and sinking deeper and deeper into inveterate tendencies, we persist in imagining the future loss or destruction of the present. Of course, it is well that we know all things to be impermanent. But why suffer? And, above all, why suffer in advance? As Montaigne writes so sagely, "He who fears he will suffer, already suffers from his fear."¹⁷ And he earnestly asks us: "What good does it

¹⁶ Montaigne, *op. cit.*, Book II: 12: 362.

¹⁷ Montaigne, *op. cit.*, Book III: 13: 840.

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do you to welcome and anticipate your bad fortune, to lose the present through fear of the future?"¹⁸

Pascal, in fact, left us with a penetrating diagnosis of our normal condition. I can do no better than to let him speak:

We do not rest satisfied with the present. We anticipate the future as too slow in coming, as if in order to hasten its course; or we recall the past, to stop its too rapid flight. So imprudent are we that we wander in the times which are not ours, and do not think of the only one which belongs to us; and so idle are we that we dream of those times which are no more, and thoughtlessly overlook that which alone exists. For the present is often too painful for us. We conceal it from our attention when it troubles us; and if it be delightful to us, we regret to see it pass away. We try to sustain it by the future, and seek to arrange matters which are not in our power, for a time which we have no certainty of reaching.

Let each one examine his thoughts, and he will find them all occupied with the past and the future. We scarcely ever think of the present; and if we think of it, it is only to take light from it to arrange the future. The present is never our end [or focus]. The past and the present are always only our means; the future alone is our end. So we never live, but we hope to live; and, as we are always preparing to be happy, it is inevitable we should never be so.¹⁹

It is time to focus, I think, on how we experience the present.

The present

Let us recall Merleau-Ponty's words, cited earlier, but in a context which brought out a different configuration of meaning: "I am borne into personal existence by a time which I do not constitute." This time, then, is a gift, something I do not produce, but am granted. Do I know how to *accept* and *receive* it? When we focus on how we experience the present of time, perhaps in the course of our meditation, or sitting practice, we may begin to understand the true nature and unfolding of that elusive

¹⁸ Montaigne, *op. cit.*, Book III: 12: 804.

¹⁹ Pascal, *op. cit.*, section 172, pp. 49-50. I have slightly modified the translation.

process wherein the ek-static, threefold structure of time, originally experienced as, or anyway with, a sort of unknowing infantile ecstasy, progressively loses its blissful and radiant qualities, its flow and openness, and becomes ever more objectified, partitioned, and closed off within the narrowest possible confines of a punctate now-present, strung along in a lusterless series of such "nows." The problem with this now-point, then, is not so much the logician's "specious present," which Nāgārjuna so brilliantly destroys in his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (c. 200 A.D.), as rather the fact that it presents us with an emotional delusion: imperceptibly, we have been reduced, cheated, confined by our own inveterate tendencies and errant habits, within the partitions of a dull, counterfeit, death-like present. (With an implacable logic, Nāgārjuna's relentless dialectic "deconstructs" with but one stroke every position and its opposite, doing so even "in advance" and, thus, in a sense, timelessly—until there is nothing to rely on, not even the being of nothingness. Every *reification* of the concrete experiential process, whether it be only in our conceptualizing or also in our practical existence, is dialectically penetrated, seen through, and "deconstructed." Nāgārjuna has much to say about the unwholesome temporal partitions—representations—we tend to erect.)

Of course, it cannot be a question of returning to the inarticulate bliss of childhood. What we need to ponder, though, is the possibility of focusing very intensely and very sharply on the dullness, the painfulness, the frustration, and the suffering in our normal experiencing of the present, so that we may achieve a clear and limpid understanding of the experiential process we are normally caught in, and gain the insight and courage to rouse ourselves, to concentrate our mindfulness and learn how to open up the present, how to receive and enjoy the present with wisdom and trust and gratitude.

When we do get down to focusing on our patterning experience of temporality—focusing, that is, *right now* on the felt qualities we experience in (and as) the present—we may begin to understand how the past is progressively constituted in (and as) the experience of loss and resignation. (Consider Freud's analysis of "object-loss," here, and of our need to undergo a process of mourning. In *The Ego and the Id*, he says that "the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and contains the history of those object-choices."²⁰ The passage of time, the

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), p. 19. See also Freud's argument that the ego is both the *product* of anxiety and also what he calls

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passing away (or death) of the present is a continuing lesson in the *letting go* of both pleasure and pain (non-attachment). The passage of time, so often a source of frustration, can in fact be worked with: it can actually *teach* us how to forget—and how to remember, too. (In his *Dohās*, the great Indian *mahāsiddha* called Saraha gives helpful instructions in what he terms “non-memory.”²¹ Non-memory is not at all the forgetfulness of a lazy or absent-minded person, but rather the spontaneous, non-fixated, non-resentful functioning of our innate capacity to preserve, return and recall.)

Likewise, when we focus on how we presently experience the protendential (futural) dimensions of the present, if we focus on how we feel as the present opens outwards toward an uncertain future which, despite its unknowability, we always find already foreshadowed, then we may begin to realize how the present of the future (i.e., its presencing) is progressively constituted in (and as) the experience of *imaginary* expectancy. Such expectancy, however, can have many different motives. Thus, for example, it may be, primarily, a form of escape, a refusal to accept, or appreciate, the present of reality. Or it may be, primarily, a form of anxiety, an expression of a deep-seated insecurity. The present of the future is not to be trusted, though we can't say why. But what matters is whether or not the exploratory attitude, the posture of anticipation and inquiry, is properly balanced, properly centered, within the present. Sometimes, our exploration is mere distraction, like the frivolity of Kierkegaard's “aesthete.” Sometimes, it is basically a deluded, paranoid attempt to solidify our situation, to fill in the holes in the net of time: even the slightest gap of uncertainty is unbearable; so excruciatingly unbearable, in fact, that we prefer to be like a helpless fish, caught in the fisherman's net.²² But the primordial presence, or im-

its “seat,” the source from which anxiety and its consequent frustrations are endlessly perpetuated. His argument is clearest in *Inhibition, Symptom, and Anxiety* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976). An earlier edition with the same publisher (1963) bears a different title: *The Problem of Anxiety*.

²¹ See *The Royal Song of Saraha*. Translated with commentaries by Herbert V. Guenther (Berkeley: Shambhala Press, 1973).

²² For an excellent historical survey of “ontological insecurity” in the experiencing of time, I recommend Georges Poulet, *Studies in Human Time* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1956). His interpretation of Descartes is especially exciting.

minence, of the absent future *can* be worked with. It presents us, right now, with an auspicious occasion to learn both trust and commitment. We can learn to trust ourselves, so that we develop the self-confidence and self-reliance we need in order to face the uncertainty of the future and confront what the future presents with skillful means. And we can learn resolute commitment, or focus, so that we develop the balance and centeredness that we need in order to *stay* with the present and open up its treasures. As we learn these attitudes and cultivate their intrinsic openness, we are able to *go forward* into the future precisely by *fore-going* the fictions of future pleasure and pain which tend, perpetually, to upset us, and to deny us the much deeper, much more fulfilling experience of *abiding* in, and with, the present. As Tarthang Tulku says, "The 'going' picture *can* be replaced with alternatives."²³ Because what *appears* to be our *irreversible* "movement" through a linear series of now-points is, in truth, a function of our own *restless* experiential patternings.

Opening the present

Ultimately, as the preceding diagnosis has implied, our temporal distress is rooted, not in the passage of the past *as such* nor in the uncertainties of the future *as such*, but always in the disposition with which we greet and experience the present.²⁴ For it is the *present*, after all, which recedes from our reach and constitutes in its withdrawal that time we call "past." Likewise, every future eventually comes forth in, and as, a *present*. Furthermore, it is *in the present* that the past, as past, is constituted, just as it is *in the present* that the future is constituted as future. So the present is indeed the experiential fulcrum on which our process of "enlightenment" pivots.

In *Time, Space, and Knowledge*, Tarthang Tulku argues that:

"'Now' and 'two billion years from now' are essentially the same time. They are both 'here and now' without their *being* involving *existence*, an exclusive and aggressive occupation of a

²³ Tarthang Tulku, *Time, Space and Knowledge*, pp. 105-106.

²⁴ See Mario Mantredi, *L'irrazionale vissuto* (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1972) for an analysis of temporal experience in schizophrenia. Also consider Eugene Minkowski, *Lined Time* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970); Harald Weinrich, *Tempus: Besprochene und Erzählte Welt* (Stuttgart, 1964), André Jacob, *Temps et langage* (Paris, 1967) and William E. Bull, *Time, Tense and the Verb* (Berkeley, 1960).

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temporal niche. The partition that separates them is not one which constitutes a condition of temporal distance. We can open that partition."²⁵

As Rinpoche states: "Essentially, what is needed is a more experiential acquaintance with time."²⁶ Above all, we need to focus on, and give our thought to, the intrinsic, but perhaps not immediately obvious nature of the present, *just as we ordinarily experience it*. Then we may discover, much to our surprise, that, in his words:

Many different ways of viewing the world are available to us. Very precise and specialized views, theories, or models of reality are currently being defined according to our various perspectives. But none of these available models can provide a sufficient basis for fully confronting reality, and they often merely give theoretical confirmation to a common feeling of helplessness in the face of situations over which we 'have no control.' We need a different approach to confronting reality, which, aside from affording us a greater measure of theoretical accuracy, also facilitates the discovery of personal freedom and satisfaction.²⁷

Attempting to make phenomenologically explicit the patternings of temporality as we ordinarily live (i.e., experience) them, Rinpoche points out that:

No empirical text can bear on the question of why 'time passes.' Yet everything in our realm, including our status as living and perceiving beings, depends on the 'flow' of time. We must pass from moment to moment.²⁸

Perhaps this passage of time, which we experience as "compelling, inexorable, and merciless,"²⁹ is really a function of our emotional patterning of

²⁵ *Time, Space and Knowledge*, p. 106.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 117. See also p. 122: "The dissatisfaction and helplessness we feel are definite signs that some principle vital to our being in the world has not yet been taken into account. We are controlled only to the degree that we allow ourselves to be by failing to confront all factors relevant to our existence."

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

time. But if the painfulness and frustration of our temporal experience is really a "psychophysical" function of our basic *attitude* toward existence, is it any wonder that so-called "empirical" (objective) investigations have proven to be so fruitless?

Rinpoche thus observes:

Commonly, time is thought of as a segmented tube extending into the future. But the transitoriness of the segments *need not* be taken as evidence of a serial process or of the reality and finiteness of such segments. Rather, transitoriness can be taken as the way in which Great Time dismantles or shakes off superficial constructs, in order to free us from clinging to a lower time view. With sufficient sensitivity, transitional views may then emerge which do not accept lower time as the only reality. Then all emphasis on such superficial partitions dividing time can be relaxed, and the whole tube-like picture of time (whether segmented or not) may collapse.¹⁰

In what does this special "sensitivity" consist? And how may we develop it? What is the "experiential acquaintance with time" which Rinpoche tries to encourage? Stated succinctly, the practices he recommends are processes of experiential openness and unfolding:

By opening ourselves up to 'time,' it can act and speak more freely through us. Our speech and gestures become totally irrepressible and spontaneous, welling up from 'time,' the dynamic center of our being. Everything we are and do becomes a direct and overtly faithful expression of the inner structure of of 'time' itself.¹¹

This description lucidly conveys the phenomenological (i.e., purely lived) character of temporal experience liberated from the painful patternings that prevail in our samsaric existence. But, of course, we still have not heard how to prepare ourselves for such a dramatic experiential shift.

This instruction we cannot really hear, however, until we have fully conceded the "absence" of (or our absent-minded absence from) the present—fully conceded, that is, that *we* are normally *closed* to the offering

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 105. My italics.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 207.

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of the present. Somehow, because of our attachments, our cravings, aversions, re-presentations and egological stories; or because of dullness and absent-mindedness, we normally miss it. We are unmindful, unfocused. But, on closer inspection, we may discover, much to our chagrin and bewilderment, that the conditions of normal life "actually *require* that time be ignored. We relegate time to the status of a stable background within which objects and identities are preserved intact."³² (Let us note, here, that in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger analyzed how our experiencing of time tends to become fixated, or frozen, into a figure/ground patterning which he called *Vor-handen-sein*: the being of time reduced to a stable readiness, degraded to mere "stock.")

For Rinpoche, the intensification of awareness can, by itself and quite spontaneously, deconstruct these egological patterns:

If, on the other hand, we appreciate 'time' more, then all things and situations are seen as 'timed out.' When seen in this way, our encounters with things *challenge, rather than presuppose*, their general, stable identities and their founding background.³³

To the degree that we are egolessly open, experientially open, to the presencing and granting of time, "each situation is, at least potentially, through its [implicit and primordial] connection to Great Time, infinite or all-embracing."³⁴

But we must return to the question: why do we not experience ourselves within the embrace of "Great Time"? And how, more specifically, can we respond to, and work with, the present? Let us consider once again, our normal experiential process. Instead of focusing our awareness and gathering our concentration in an attitude of appreciative mindfulness, we *ek-sist* in painful or unfulfilling dispersal (*ek-stasis*). But this "absent-minded" dispersal of energies, this scattering, is *not* an authentic, beneficial, and truly ecstatic, or blissful, openness. Rather, it is a compulsive, perhaps even obsessive (karmic) preoccupation with loss or gain, presence or absence: a willful containment within temporal partitions (distances, postponements, departures, etc.), felt to be fixed, final, and closed. This attitude, however, inevitably threatens to *reduce* the present, to fix

³² *Op. cit.*, p. 193.

³³ *Op. cit.*, p. 194. My italics.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

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it within the meaninglessness of a now-point, chained in *irreversible, linear order* to an extensive series of such pointless points. Instead of "presence of mind," a deeply meaningful and meaningfully deep experiencing of the present, we are upset, thrown off center. We lose the wonderful balance of the present, which is the present of balance, the present of health and sanity. We are held in the thrall of a past we cannot let be; or we lean over the abyss of an unfathomable future into which our way of experiencing the present (either anxiety over the impermanence and vulnerability and uncertainty of what attracts us or else aversiveness toward what it offers) may at any point violently throw us. We must learn to *give up* every form of attachment, especially our attachment to the future, whether it be in the nature of desire (fascination) or aversion (hostility), or even merely the assumption of a hope which encourages us to postpone, or defer, accepting and responding to the present. (The future is present right now. So is the past. If this seems very strange, or paradoxical, let us say, simply, that the presence of the past and future, our experience of the fact that they are present, is a gracious and wonderful gift: in brief, a present. Thus, it *cannot* be willed: it can only be *received and enjoyed*. Consider Proust's so-called "*mémoire involontaire*": the capacity, which is amazing, certainly, and yet intrinsically so simple, to enjoy the *spontaneous presencing* of past experiences.)

But how do we learn non-attachment? Letting-go (Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*) is not easy: it is not a "result" we can *will*. Wilfulness, which is just another entanglement, must finally give way, as Heidegger says, to an attitude of willingness. Finally, it is a question of how we *respond* to the present. Here I want to suggest that the appropriate response is openness, understood, more concretely, as *opening the present*. But we need to say *more* about this openness than that it is a more "neutralized" attitude towards past and future (less tenacity, less anxiety, less blind craving and yearning). This is helpful, but not helpful enough.

So I propose that we analyze the *process* of non-attachment ("equanimity") into three "stages": (1) concentration in the present (mindfulness, attentiveness, being-where-we-are),³³ (2) focusing on the present,

³³ Heidegger's word for "human being" is *Da-sein*: "being-there". But, whereas Heidegger's interpretation of this word emphasizes our existential situatedness (*Be-findlichkeit*), I would like to stress its concentrative meaning, its Zen-like reminder of our intrinsic need for situational mindfulness. How often are we really present, really "right there"?

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and (3) opening the present. The *first* "stage" involves developing a certain concentration of energy: deliberately, and with progressive skill, we learn to stay in, and with, the present. As the Zen masters of old liked to say: When I am eating, I eat; when I am sitting, I sit; when I am walking, I walk. This present, *right now*, is the time when the precious gift of the *whole* of Time comes forth and is granted us. *This* time is the time when the gift is really present, rather than absent (as when the event of granting is isolated and partitioned, and regarded simply as past or still to come). So this present (the present time) is very precious; it is of decisive, pivotal importance, and should not be refused, despised, denied or ignored. Our well-being essentially *depends* on our capacity to receive and cherish the present, and enjoy its challenge—or its opportunities. What the present offers will not always be pleasant or easy to accept. Even so, the most skillful way of turning it to our advantage, or at least a situation not completely devoid of positive meaningfulness, is to accept it, concentrate on working it, and do whatever needs to be, and can be, done. However disagreeable the situation in which we may find ourselves, we only make it worse when, instead of accepting it as the "partner" we have been granted to work with, we refuse and avoid it. Every situation *in which* we find ourselves is a challenge, and an auspicious occasion to *find* ourselves.

The *second* "stage," involving the skillful therapeutic technique of what Dr. Eugene Gendlin calls "focusing," both deepens and clarifies our concentration, our mindfulness.³⁶ In focusing, we question, listen for, and listen to our bodily feelings, letting them spontaneously arise from the centers of bodily energy (*chakras*), and move toward getting a basic feeling for *the whole meaning* (whole configuration) of our situation. This develops a vital sense of proportion, a sense of perspective; and it brings with it not only a certain clarity and accuracy of self-understanding, meaningfully rooted in our bodily-centered feelings, but also a crucial realization of our intrinsic capacity to cope, to deal effectively and skillfully with our present situation.

Focusing, however, will be counterproductive, and perhaps even destructive, unless it is "perfected," so to speak, within a *third* stage:

³⁶ See footnote 10, *supra*. On the *experiential qualities* of openness in the context of personality change, see Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), especially pp. 73-196 and 347-359.

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the stage, namely, of process openness. We must learn how to focus with concentration, but also openly, and without fixation. Without such openness, focusing works like a cookie cutter: it cuts out a figure and sharply abstracts it from its vitality-sustaining ground. Focusing will then reinforce "inveterate tendencies" (Tibetan: *bag-chags*; Sanskrit: *vāsanā*) toward narrow-mindedness, rigidity, and a prejudgemental or dogmatic posture. Focusing needs, rather, to be a process akin to dipping our cupped hands into the water of a lively stream and lifting some up for a drink. In other words, focusing needs to be a *means of refreshment*: thus, we will "lift up" a felt meaning (Gendlin's phrase) into the light of explicitation, but take care not to *uproot* this configuration of meaning from the vitality of the feeling-process which grounds and sustains all potentialities for meaningfulness.

Focusing must take place in a certain "stillness" or "silence." It needs to be undergone in an attitude of affective receptivity that really is *not* a mode of passive resignation, but rather a sort of lively, alert *readiness* to listen, to learn, and to undergo experiential change. The energies present in the *chakras*, which are fundamentally centers of bodily feeling, are profoundly meaningful; and, if we are willing to listen, to create for them a certain stillness, a space, a clearing (Heidegger's word is *Lichtung*), then we may hear the sounds of *their* own "speech." These elementary soundings, these sensuous, bodily modulations resonant with sound sense, convey a very accurate primordial wisdom. The openness of focusing helps us to get in touch with what is really happening, what is really going on. The situation at least makes sense. Spontaneously, then, it generates, or induces, the appropriate response.

Openness "perfects" the process of non-attachment, which begins with concentration, moves, with focusing, into the "Stage of Development," and reaches the "Fulfillment Stage" with open, non-dualistic expansion. Expansive openness makes it possible for the present to *grant us the whole presence* of Time: an expanding wholeness, or self-sufficiency, in the very presence of the present. (This is not, by the way, a *denial* of absence: the past is past, and the future has yet to come. But the point is that, once we have attained the openness of non-duality, our bliss is such that the absence of the absent is enjoyed for what it is, along with the presence of what is present.) Then, indeed, the fullness of the present, its treasury of presents, will be opened up.

In the present, we harvest ripened fruits, presents from the past, and we

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conceal new seeds in the earth, presents which will come forth to us in a present from out of the future. Not only do we immediately enjoy the present (i.e., enjoy it without defensive representations, whether aversive or aggressive) as the present of past and future; but we discover, in this present, a treasury of wonderful presents of meaningfulness: realms and depths of meaningfulness, some "pleasant" and some not, which *immediately* open up to us so soon as we ourselves open up, through thoughtful concentration and skillfully focused awareness, to the *whole* of the present. What matters, ultimately, is *not* whether our experiences are "pleasant" or "unpleasant" in some standard sense, but *whether or not they are felt to be existentially meaningful*. And this requires, as Gendlin has argued, that we *feel* such experiences to belong to a life in which they are continuously reintegrated into new, and thus changing, interpretive contexts. Experiencing the present without the egological defenses of re-presentation, we will be able to feel the reality of the present; and it will be very satisfying, very fulfilling, very complete and whole in its significance.

We may even want to speak, cautiously, of "timelessness." Well, time is certainly passing, passing away; but we are not overwhelmed, not exceedingly disturbed, not threatened: we will feel that we "did what we did." We really "lived" the present, wholeheartedly responded to the challenge of its invitation, and "completed" our participation in its moment, now past, of meaningfully felt-through presence.³⁷ We may feel some regret; but we feel it without its normal quality of painfully compulsive craving. We are not entrapped, for example, in the feeling that we left something undone, something we "now" (in a subsequent now) must repeat in order to complete. This is not to deny our experience of time passing. Nor is it to deny the horizontal *absence*, not only of the past, but also of the future. On the contrary. This experience of "timelessness," with which we, or rather our gestures, conduct, and doings may be graced, in varying degrees of clarity and intensity, and also in proportion to the nature and quality of our openness, is not at all a denial, or refusal, of the temporal *ek-stasis*, the tripartite "vectoriality" of time, but rather *the felt meaningfulness of its final acceptance*. We acknowledge the presence of

³⁷ In *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (New York: Delta Books, 1951), the authors (Frederick Perls, Ralph Hefnerline and Paul Goodman) call this "leaving no unfinished business."

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the "abyss," the openness we cannot fix and claim, the impermanence, or ultimate nothingness, of the present situation: we learn a *holistic* attitude which enables us to be very clear and accurate about the nature of the present, and to experience its meaningfulness in an appropriately *effective* way.

This effectiveness is worthy of note. As our concentration and mindfulness progressively balance us and center us in the present, and as our attachments to the past and future correspondingly vanish, like the fog of the night with the rising of the sun, we find it not only easier, but also more meaningful, to attend wholeheartedly to the situation we find ourselves in "at present." Such attentiveness, however, makes it progressively easier to vanquish our absentmindedness and de-centering attachments to the past and future, attachments of desire and aversion, *since each present, while and as present, is (more or less) effectively dealt with.* Thus, when it withdraws into the past, we need feel no distress: nothing that "should have been done" (as we say so often) was left undone. Likewise, we need not attach ourselves, with hope or anxiety, to the non-being of the future, since, in working with the present, our self-reliance has been strengthened, and we may trust ourselves to respond more satisfactorily to whatever presents come forth from out of our unknowable future.

Obsessive attachments disseminate our energies in frustrating and unfulfilling ways. They make it virtually impossible to deal effectively with our situation. Concentrated focusing, however, *re-collects* these scattered energies and gathers them into the wholeness, or fullness, of the present. Such concentration, however, is experientially very different from the narrow-mindedness of an attitude which we will recognize at once in the familiar phrases, "living for the moment" and "living in (and for) the here-and-now." For what these phrases denote is an attitude which is the very denial of openness. Such an attitude involves a *reduction* of the present to a fictitious point of nowness. Where, then, is the meaningful richness, be it "pain" or "pleasure," which the present would grant us? Deprived of its passing away (I mean to embrace, here, though we cannot discuss it further, the disquieting hermeneutical experiencing of old traditions) and bereft of its promise, its ecstatic vitality, the present is no longer very precious. So concentration must be a focusing which is profoundly open, a focusing which receives and opens up the present, a focusing which *frees* the flowing of the present from our fixations. There

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is, then, an expansion of awareness, a deepening of satisfaction, a meaningful opening up. Aspects of our present situation now present themselves for our appreciation; new and unnoticed aspects may emerge. We find our understanding to be more "realistic," more effective, and more fruitful; yet it is also, at the same time, rather less vulnerable to frustration and other forms of samsaric suffering.

What mystics (for example, accomplished yogins practicing the *Mahāmudrā*)³⁸ have often wanted to call "timelessness" is just this openness, this experiential concentration which does not need to fixate the flow (the passage) of time, to protect us against the experience of absence: absence of the past, absence of the future. Openness to the future, for example, is then *not at all* a predictive omniscience; not at all an occult power of "clairvoyance." The Buddha's so-called "knowledge of past, present, and future" is indeed a wonderful and extraordinary human accomplishment. But there is no need to glorify its difficulty and rarity by regarding it as a feat of magic: as if it were some sort of occult cognitive power that must defy scientific explanation and experiential understanding. The Buddha's knowledge is "simply" the ecstatic (blissful) wisdom which comes from understanding how to live comfortably and meaningfully in the "flux" of time: how fittingly to experience, and work with, the never-ending temporal *ek-stasis* of samsaric *ex-sistence*. His knowledge is a wisdom which frees him from repetitions of, and attachments to, the past, and which frees him, likewise, from hopes and anxieties that cling to the future. His knowledge is a wisdom which, thus freed, enables him to concentrate serenely on the present, so that the beneficent presence of the past and the present opportunities for receiving the future are not missed, but fully appreciated. His knowledge is the wisdom of feelings, attuned to the essentially open nature of temporal experience. His knowledge of temporality is an *experiential wisdom* which effectively liberates him from the karmic wheel of endless pain, suffering and frustration. To experience the present of such liberation is to experience the ecstasy of *ek-static* temporality. *Opening* the present, we may really be able to discover, and inhabit, the vectorial *whole* of Time.³⁹

³⁸ See Herbert V. Guenther, *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 222-235. Also consider pp. 162 and 186. Nāropa's breathtaking *Mahāmudrā* is said to span and embrace the *whole* of time, for he was capable of experiencing past, present and future without any defensive partitioning.

³⁹ See Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, pp. 420-421.

Death

"We are literally," as Rinpoche says, "timing ourselves away."⁴⁰ Such is the temporal fate of *samsaric* consciousness. "Death is a totally opaque partition. We cannot see beyond it, nor can we see it clearly enough to discover other options or ways around it."⁴¹ Thus, as he asserts: "Death is the ultimate lesson presented by 'time,' exposing the bankruptcy of our [ordinary and accustomed] view."⁴² To speak rather bluntly, the fact of the matter is that, in a certain sense, we "kill" ourselves. Our experiencing of time, our way of patterning the presencing and passage of time, is responsible for the fact that our lives are fatefully thrown into the terrible powers of Death.

We dimly sense that there *may* be a "way out." What about the attitude of resignation espoused by the Stoics? Montaigne tells us that familiarity can diminish the terror of death: "I have formed the habit of having death continually present, not merely in my imagination, but in my mouth."⁴³ Living *towards* one's death (Heidegger's *Sein-zum-Tode*), we are living *with* death. But once we recognize the intimate presence of death in the very shadow which constantly stalks our earthly embodiment, perhaps we can begin to experience an even more intimate, and even less "negative," relationship with our own death. Heidegger's concern is centered around the insight that, in heightening our awareness in, through, and as being-towards-death, we may learn to dwell in the whole of Time, progressively deepening and expanding our interpolation, as it were, into the textures of the Book of Time. But, until we have so intimately embraced our own death that *we surrender every possible defense, including "resignation,"* against the pressure of its presence, can we say that we are really *open* to the present which presents the whole of Time?

In the *Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre proclaims that "The transcendental ego is the death of consciousness."⁴⁴ Buddhist experience supports his insight. So long as we cannot recognize, or cannot accept, the death

⁴⁰ Tarthang Tulku, *Time, Space, and Knowledge*, p. 127.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

⁴³ Montaigne, *op. cit.*, Book I: 20: p. 62. See also pp. 57-61.

⁴⁴ Jean Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego* (New York: Noonday Press, 1957), p. 40. See also pp. 60-68 and 70-83 for a brilliant discussion of how we attempt to root and secure our emotional "states" in patterns of temporality.

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of our Ego, and thus, too, the incessant interplay between birth and death in, and as, the nature of our experiential processes, are we not maintaining our defenses by seeking refuge from death within the stronghold of the Ego? The Ego's only function, ultimately, is to preserve, by representation, the "comfortable" illusion of "continuity," of "solidity," in the face of dying and birth.

Blaise Pascal tells us that "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me."⁴⁵ But is he frightened by the openness of merely *exterior* spaces? Are there not also certain interior spaces, spaces of non-being, of anonymity, spaces which are inhabited by the silence of death, and of which he was even more frightened? The Ego functions as a system of defense to fill in, or conceal, by means of its re-presentations, the "gaps" which seem, *for egological reflection*, to interrupt personal identity and to erase the signature of our pride. Every experiential process, however, is, *as such*, a process involving the experience of change, impermanence, birth, and death. As Merleau-Ponty states, in a phenomenological description which corresponds precisely to the analysis of the *skandhas* in the *Abhidharma*,⁴⁶ an ancient text on the epistemology of Indian Buddhism: "Each sensation, being, strictly speaking, the first, last and only of its kind, is a birth and a death. The subject who experiences it begins and ends with it. . . ."⁴⁷ This, a truth about our experience which hermeneutical phenomenology brings to light, needs to be correlated with the biophysical fact, the objective scientific truth, that the human body consists of cells which are involved in a continuous process of birth-and-death transformations.⁴⁸ Lest the significance of these points for the status of the Ego be missed, we should heed Merleau-Ponty's observation that "Every perception takes place in an atmosphere of generality and is presented to us anonymously."⁴⁹ And he adds:

⁴⁵ Pascal, *op. cit.*, section 206, p. 61. See also section 194, p. 55.

⁴⁶ See Herbert V. Guenther, *Philosophy and Psychology in the Abhidharma* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1974) and *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1976).

⁴⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

⁴⁸ Phenomenology *must* be hermeneutical, since human experience is errant and self-deceptive. The Tibetans speak of *ma-rig-pa*, or "loss of pristine cognitiveness," thus interpreting the Sanskrit notion of *avidya*.

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

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So if I wanted to render precisely the perceptual experience, I ought to say that *one* perceives in me, not that I perceive. Every sensation carries within it the germ of a dream of depersonalization, such as we experience in that quasi-stupor to which we are reduced when we really try to live at the level of sensation.³⁰

In this regard, it might be worthwhile to stray somewhat from the main argument of this paper, in order to ponder, from the standpoint of Ego, the significance of the overthrow, thanks to Gestalt psychology, of the once unassailable "constancy hypothesis." According to the hypothesis of classical Western psychology, it was supposed that there is a fixed conformity, or a co-ordination, element for element, between external stimuli and the organism's sensations. "Hence," in the words of Aron Gurwitsch, "if the same neural element (for example, a circumscribed region of the retina) is repeatedly stimulated in the same manner, the same sensation will arise each time."³¹ Thus, in brief, stimuli are construed atomistically as invariably *local* in nature. It was also supposed that, whenever sensations differed, the difference would be due only and exclusively to a difference in stimuli. But Gestalt psychology demonstrated, once and for all, that, contrary to expectations based on the constancy hypothesis, there was an "absence of stimuli corresponding to Gestalt-qualities."³² For example:

If I hear a melody . . . if I perceive geometrical figures, compare the lengths of two lines or the brightnesses of two colors, the impression of the melody, [the] musical interval, the figure, the differences of lengths or of brightnesses, *all constitute an enrichment of perception which has no additional stimulus corresponding to it.* Whether or not the difference of brightness between two shades of color is noticed, the stimuli are not thereby altered—hence, neither are the excitations produced by them nor the elementary sensations corresponding to them.³³

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ "Aspects of Gestalt Psychology," in Aron Gurwitsch, *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 5. Also see "The Phenomenological and the Psychological Approach to Consciousness," *op. cit.*, pp. 101–106.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Op. cit.*, p. 11. My italics.

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Now, the point I want to make is that, once we abandon the constancy hypothesis, so crucial to the methodology of classical (and basically behavioristic) psychology, we may then discover that *there are many changes in environmental stimuli which do not bring about any noticeable changes, or shifts, in our sensory, or perceptual, experience*. Gurwitsch was interested only in the fact that there could be certain *experiential* changes—essentially the effect of *Gestalt* perceptions—to which no elementary stimuli corresponded. But the abandonment of the constancy hypothesis also cleared the way for the discovery that we have a strong tendency not to notice (experience) stimulus-changes unless they are very abrupt or otherwise outstanding. In other words, *we tend to “impose” on our perceptions a certain constancy and stability and permanence*.

I suggest that this effect is partly related to the defensive functioning of the Ego. Undoubtedly, this tendency does serve a necessary *protective* function. But it could continue to function in this way *without being as defensive and as aversive as it is when under the sway of the Ego*. Our attitude “colors” our perception; it makes a difference. Accordingly we ask: What would our perceptual experience be like, to the degree that it was no longer filtered through the invertebrate re-presentational habits of Ego? Would not our perceptual experience become much richer, much more vibrant, more resonant, more multi-dimensional, more meaningful, more fulfilling? These are important questions—questions to which a profound tradition of Buddhist psychology, if it aspires to respond to the challenge of Western science, still needs to address itself.

Human life is, in essence, a transitory local gathering and enclosing of elemental energies, condensed, unified, and solidified into the form of a human body. Death, from this standpoint, is simply the return of these energies to their original dispersal in the openness of Being. Ego, then, is the illusion of a solid personal continuity that resists the ecstatic experience of (its) death. But, bearing in mind what Freud discovered about the Ego, namely, as we said earlier, that it is simultaneously the *product* of anxiety and also, once firmly established, the ongoing *source* of anxiety, we must begin to penetrate the depths of our delusion, in order to see very clearly that, although the Ego does indeed exist in order to provide a defense *against* death, it is the Ego's very own anxiety which accounts for the *origin* of what we call “death.” For the Ego's anxiety is *responsible* for the patterning and partitioning (Sanskrit, *kalpana*; Tibetan, *rlog-pa*) which prevent us from living in, and enjoying, the wholesome

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whole of Time. The Ego is responsible for the fact that we experience death as a terrible, meaningless event of total annihilation, coming at, and as, the end of our life. Such is the crazy dialectic of the samsaric Ego: in the beginning, our anxiety "creates" the partitioning we experience, through Ego, as "death"; in the middle, Ego recoils from a terror which we fail to understand as of our own making; and, in the end, we utterly fail, of course, in our attempt to defend ourselves against the threat of death by concealing it in every way we can. Thus it happens that, as Heidegger rightly insists, we mortals live out our lives inauthentically and without great joy.

But there is no absolute, substantial Self, or Ego, whose personal identity could stand, transcendently, outside the experience of the "streaming" of Time. So it is precisely by learning how to stand *within* Time, how to accept and joyfully embrace the *ek-static* temporality of our human condition, that we may some day achieve the ecstasy of a certain "timelessness." For the experience of such "timelessness" does *not* arise in (or as) a willful denial of time, nor will it come to reward us for seeking the refuge of a transcendental Ego outside the field of Time. It arises, rather, only when we begin—joyfully—to *accept* the present of Time, which is nothing other than the experience of abiding openness.

Heidegger's discussion of being-towards-death is very helpful. But, from the Buddhist standpoint, it articulates only the *beginning* of the process of experiential liberation and openness. Is there no experiential shift, or change, once we have "resolutely" plumbed the depths of existential anxiety and begun really to *live* our being toward death? The arduous path of Buddhism certainly *begins* with an intensification of existential anxiety and a sharpening of the experience of being-toward-death. (Traditionally, in fact, cemeteries and cremation grounds were strongly recommended as places for Buddhist novices to meditate.) But the path of Enlightenment winds and turns, eventually leaving the experience of anxiety in the face of death very far behind. To live our lives as being-toward-death requires that we experience the embrace of death so closely, so intimately, that it finally *dissolves* the imagined "solidity" of the Ego. And, with the passing away of the Ego, the oppressive partitions into which it forced the timing (Heidegger: *Zeitigung*) of "Great Time" also dissolve. According to esoteric traditions, this is experienced as a passage through death. Only with the death of the Ego are we utterly defenceless against, and thus truly opened towards, the meaningful

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event (for Heidegger, the *Ereignis*) of our ownmost death. Once we have moved beyond Ego and have begun to experience our life as a movement toward the event of our own death, we may begin to find, much to our surprise, that, when the resolute appropriation of death "takes place" within this attitude of openness, death itself—the terrible partner, that is, with which the Ego danced, and which was, in reality, but a projection or reflection, of the Ego's unknowingness—undergoes a profoundly felt *shift in meaning*. Death may then be experienced, not with dread but with joy, as the glorious portal of light, through which we will painlessly pass into the open embrace of Being.¹⁴ In birth, passing through the opened door of the womb, we open into the human world. In death, we simply pass through another door and enter what we imagine to be a different world. Birth and death are ultimately the same: opening into the openness of Time and Space.

Eternity

In his discussion of temporality, Merleau-Ponty states that "past time is wholly collected up and grasped in the present."¹⁵ Furthermore, "with my past, I have the horizon of futurity which surrounds it, and thus I have my actual present seen as the future of that past." And likewise, "with the imminent future, I have the horizon of past which will surround it, and therefore my actual present as the past of that future."

Now, in *Time, Space and Knowledge*, Rinpoche writes:

Insofar as the ego is self-protective and reluctant to surrender itself to permit the expression of a wider focal setting, ordinary time conforms to the ego's restrictions.¹⁶

In consequence,

Time's 'flow' is arranged in an orderly way corresponding to what has been experienced or presupposed—and what has

¹⁴ See Francesca Fremantle and Chogyam Trungpa (translators and editors), *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1975).

¹⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 69. The two immediately following quotations come from the same page.

¹⁶ *Time, Space, and Knowledge*, p. 126.

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been repressed and avoided—regarding the founding dimensions of reality.⁵⁷

The truth of the matter is, as he says, that,

We have little capacity for opening to the infinity that 'time' really offers and communicates. We do not *let* satisfaction be a reality. We try always to *achieve* it in the future, to capture it and tie it down.⁵⁸

But despite such inveterate tendencies, there is time for an experiential shift:

Whether or not we are marked out and cut off by endless partitioning, or can see partitions as not obscuring a fundamental intimacy and fulfillment, is simply a matter of which view is taken. We can use the (ordinarily obscuring) partitioning tendency of time in new ways, gradually penetrating the walls that seal us off. Or we can awaken directly to Great Time.⁵⁹

Now, as long as we experience ourselves as, and thus remain, in his words, "trapped 'in time' we see things, differences, distances, [and deferments], but not the 'timing' which gives them."⁶⁰ (In *Being and Time*, and subsequently, in *Time and Being*, Heidegger makes essentially the same point. According to him, man "always remains approached continually by the presencing of something actually present without explicitly heeding the presencing [the *Ereignis*, the occurrence] itself.")⁶¹ Rinpoche develops it nicely:

The self [or Ego] cannot understand Great Space or Time because it is, precisely, the [very] embodiment of a lapse of such understanding. The self appreciates and deals with the 'infinity' of Space [and Time] only in the sense that it finds it possible to continue its ordinary knowing encounters indefinitely [i.e., *seriatim*]. It can know an 'infinity' of data, but without

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

⁵⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

⁶⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁶¹ *On Time and Being* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 13–14. This is a translation from *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Neimeyer, 1969), pp. 13–14.

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getting any insight into its own Space-Time nature or into the reason why that infinity of detail is available to it.⁶²

Although, as he states, "The self or subject is really an object timed out by time,"⁶³ the self we maintain blocks us off from undergoing an opening experience of this Great Time which times us. Heidegger argues very convincingly, for example, in his *Conversation on a Country Path*, that this blocking off, this obscuration or concealment, is a function of our calculative and re-presentational mode of thinking (experiencing).⁶⁴ According to him, this mode of thinking (experiencing) involves, in effect, a fixation of the dynamic figure/ground *Gestaltung*, such that we do not let the "*es gibt*" (the "it gives," or, with equal sense, the "there is"), for example, the timing (Heidegger: "temporalizing") of Time, be what, and as, it is. In truth, "Great Time is the self. But the self cannot fathom Time."⁶⁵ (In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant comes to this very same insight. But I submit that he failed to consider its experiential consequences for our lives.)

For the person who has passed through the death of the Ego and found himself abiding not in the irreversible, linear movement of a punctiform present, but in the temporal openness of being, the meaning of psychophysical death is very different. (Our normal "intentional directedness" is responsible, in fact, for an indwelling patterning of Time that, as Tarthang Tulku says, "impoverishes the present and gives rise to real, sequential, ordinary time—guaranteeing the emergence of further impoverished, but 'real' moments.")⁶⁶ To be sure, it is not a question of transmigration, or of an afterlife: these are mythopoeic symbols which once spoke with the power of conviction, but which now need to be hermeneutically deconstructed in relationship with our meditative experience. The human organism, the one I *am* experientially and with

⁶² *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁶³ *Op. cit.*, p. 170. In *Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre argues in favor of a similar point.

⁶⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row 1966). In this text, originally published in German under the title *Gelassenheit*, Heidegger gives us what may well be his clearest diagnosis of the pathological nature of the bond between the Ego, understood as "will," and re-presentation, which is an objectifying process that involves fixation, aversive distancing, temporal postponement and delay, and inevitably, of course, the frustrations that are so typical of samsaric existence.

⁶⁵ *Time, Space, and Knowledge*, p. 170.

⁶⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

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which I identify myself, is destined to die, as we say, at the end of my life. But *this* death can be experienced in two "moods": either in the mood of the Ego's attachments (anxiety, hope, desire, and aversion) or in that of openness (non-duality). Either as the sort of dispersal (diversion, *ek-stasis*, and what Heidegger calls "forgetfulness": in Tibetan, *ma-rig-pa*) of which Pascal, in the passage cited earlier, solemnly warned us; or as a dissemination of cognitive energies which returns to openness the "elements" of our being, the basic elemental energies which we gathered together and concentrated, for the duration of a "life-time," into the worldly semblance of solidity, greed, and willfulness—in brief, the many-storied, delusory manifestation which is Ego. So the basic point is that this gathering, this re-collection (akin to Plato's *anamnesis*) takes place *again and again*, and not only from the "subjective" standpoint of an awareness, a knowingness, liberated from the delusions and masks of Ego, but also from the "objective" standpoint of biochemistry.

Accepting this process of concentration (re-collection) and *ek-static* temporal dehiscence as *the very play of being*, we may experientially transcend our pressing enclosure within the defensive narrowness and fixation of Ego. We can open up. Merleau-Ponty writes: "The memory or the voice is recovered [like a gift] when the body once more *opens* itself to others or to the past, when it opens the way to co-existence and once more . . . acquires significance beyond itself."⁶⁷ Only by forgetting our past, i.e., giving up our attachment to it, can we open up to get (receive) it again, spontaneously granted to us as a gift, or present, of Great Time. Thus, *ek-static* (i.e., temporal) openness may even grant us the capacity to experience what, from an ordinary point of view, we might call the *reversibility* of the time flow, since our non-attachment *releases* cognitive energies, thereby facilitating spontaneous recollections, such as Proust's *mémoire involontaire*, as well as the clear and accurate imaginative insights into the future which traditionally have been called, but with the most naïve misunderstanding and confusion, the skill of "clairvoyance." (There is no such skill, not even among bodhisattvas and mahasiddhas. What these marvelous beings do enjoy, however, is a *presence* of mind which enables them to comprehend our future in light of what is already manifest, actually and virtually, in the fullness of the present.)

⁶⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 165. My italics.

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It may be tempting to liken such openness to the experience of abiding in what the Western tradition is wont to call "Eternity." But this temptation needs to be carefully and critically examined. Like the notion of transmigration ("afterlife"), the notion of Eternity is suspiciously attractive. Indeed, the Ego embraces "Eternity" with great pleasure. Merleau-Ponty is therefore in accord with the *Mādhyamika* teachings, which, by way of the notion of *pratītyasamutpāda* ("dependent origination," or contextual *Gestalt* relatedness), ruthlessly deconstructs every fantasy-construct of the Ego. Thus, he argues that, although this notion may *initially* be of help in freeing us from a certain worldly constriction of vision, it will, *ultimately*, block us off from "the infinite openness of those fields of presence."⁴⁸ So long as we hold on to the dream of dwelling in Eternity, we are still in the thrall of egological anxiety: our *Sein-zum-Tode* is constituted by, and as, the mood of anxiety, rather than in a temporal *ecstasy* which has even surrendered the *partitions* of attachment that ground our conceptualizations of primordially open experience. "Eternity" is just another representation, another hiding place for Ego. It is a *reflection*, or *echo*, of our need to solidify and ensure our position, to objectify it, when we are confronted, due to our own confusion, with the terror of openness. Perhaps the terror is so abysmal that we cannot expect to destroy completely its existential roots. Still, we *can* dismantle many of our old defenses. In this regard, moreover, it should be recalled that, for Freud, the "primary processes" (i.e., freely flowing libidinal energies, belonging to the earliest psychic stage) are "timeless." Or, better: they testify to our incarnation and participation in the primordial Time of non-duality (non-repression), and their timelessness strongly suggests that the timing we get caught up in is simply the *tension*, in duality, between Ego-desire and Ego-fulfillment.

When we reach a stage of openness where the "ontic" facts of birth and death, and the perpetual interplay of dying and rebirth no longer need to be resisted or craved, we may want to speak of abiding in what the ancient texts call the "unoriginated." For we transcend the trauma of birth, and indeed the trauma of all beginnings, as well as the trauma of temporal endings like death. "Eternity" is simply the present of the whole of Time (what Tarthang Tulku calls "Great Time"): a present we may *ecstatically* enjoy to the extent that we are able to *give up* our refuge

⁴⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 423.

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in egological re-presentation and entrust ourselves to the openness of being. Existing (*ek-sisting*) in, and as, such openness is, in its essence, simply being fully alive, fully awake: wonderfully receptive and responsive to the freshness of the present which Great Time has graciously and generously granted (*sent*) us.

If indeed, as Merleau-Ponty says, "the body is essentially an expressive space,"⁶⁹ i.e., if the human body is really space expressing itself, space at its most expressive, how could we experience our space-time field of sensuous existence as a clearing that *continues to express* what is past (for example, the presence-with-us of deceased family and friends)? How can we "create a space of expressiveness" so open that even the absent may be expressively present? These questions may spur us to ponder the satisfactoriness of our everyday life; and they may even suggest certain opportunities to expand and realize the intrinsic healthiness of a holistic time-space incarnation.

Returning, now, to the *aporia* with which we opened our discussion of the nature and potentialities of temporal experience, I would like to propose an interpretation of Suzuki's beautiful observation. Although initially it seems obscure, it turns out, in fact, to be a very simple and accurate phenomenological statement, whose poetic quality surely conveys its unfathomable clarity. Insofar as we are experientially very open, we may indeed, as he says, hear the bell "before" it rings and see the bird's flight "before" it moves into the focal field of our vision. For, to begin with, such openness implies that, although we may be filled with wonder, we will not be startled by an "unexpected" sound or sight. We are always, in openness, prepared for the unexpected. In a sense, since we are not caught up in our representations, everything is *unexpected*; but we also could say, with equal truth, that everything that takes place—everything that timing grants—is *already fully expected*. Such is the radical nature of *non-attachment* with regard to the future. However, this attitude in no way involves a *loss* of our sense of wonder. Quite the contrary, in fact. For our concentration, our mindfulness, enables us to experience the sounding of the bell and the flight of the bird as *events of being* (Heidegger's word is *Ereignis*): there is (*es gibt*) a presencing of being, a "sending" and "coming forth" into the wonderful light of unconcealment. Furthermore, insofar as this present is the present

⁶⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

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of such an *Ereignis*, it is also the openness of our access to *the past*. Hearing the bell *before* it rings and seeing the bird *before* it takes to the air is a hearing and a seeing in, and of, the present which does not *miss* (crave) the past of the bell now heard and the bird now seen. Phenomenologically speaking, the past is *still present* in the sounding of the bell: it resounds in its ringing as the silence from where the ringing was granted. Likewise, the past is *still present* in the visible flight of the bird, for it manifests, like a shadow (which is something and yet also nothing), as the gracious way in which the reserve of the invisible presences. Non-attachment with regard to the past, our freedom from the compulsive need to remember, our freedom to forget, enables us to *enjoy* the present as the present of the past. Thus, when we freely listen, we may indeed hear the bell (as it was) before it (now) rings. Similarly, when we free our gaze and let it wander and dream in the openness of space, we may be granted the joy of seeing the bird (as it was) before it (presently) flies. This is the meaningfulness and satisfaction in "foregoing" the past.

Conclusion

The Greek philosopher Herakleitos of Ephesos (*circa* 500 B.C.) is claimed to have said: "Time is a child playing draughts; the kingly power is a child's."⁷⁰ There seems to be, here, an anticipatory sounding of what now comes to words in the thinking of Tarthang Tulku, who writes:

The unshakable clarity of Great Knowledge comes only *after* we see that the inflexible awareness and claims to reality of a particular realm of experience are actually a play of 'time,' and not an absolute. This requirement and challenging character are natural processes which are intrinsic to the structure of the path (Time) to Great Knowledge.

It is therefore important, both for accuracy *within* our [customary] realm and also in regard to appreciating the infinity of Space and Time, to continually examine the truths and evidence we encounter.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See John Burnet, *Early Greek Thinking* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 139. See also Kathleen Freeman's complete translation of the Fragments in Diels, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 28.

⁷¹ *Time, Space, and Knowledge*, p. 202.

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But the difficulties involved in the process of experiential growth, and a healthy skepticism we can hardly suppress, need not cause us to despair:

Even if we cannot awaken to this universal synthesis [of Great Knowledge] immediately, we can begin to recognize and live in accordance with such an integration on a personal level. This expressive play-as-Being is always inspiring because it is an *infinitely-varied* play. We cannot stagnate while being appreciative of such an unbounded drama. Nor can we continue to preserve an achievement-orientation, because we find fulfillment in what we are ourselves, in what is at hand. We are no longer . . . the embodiment of a lower knowing, but are instead the [very] embodiment of Being. . . . There is a subtle fulfillment [which is] 'present' and constantly going on.⁷²

In Suzuki's experiencing of the timing of what Great Time sends into the openness of unconcealment, there is, then, what Rinpoche calls an "individual enactment of Being." In the *kenshō* experience, there is an involuntary (spontaneous) release from our normal temporal patterning. And because it is accompanied by such sensory vitality and openness, we actually "contribute to Being itself by intensifying and celebrating its primordial value."⁷³

Celebrating the play of Being, we may find both unsurpassable joy and indestructible meaningfulness (*vajra*) in the very *simplest* events: events of unconcealment, like the ringing of a bell and the flight of a bird. . . . If toward the present we are open.

APPENDIX

The Human Body in Movement

Heidegger's hermeneutical critique of the history of the human experience of motion, which focuses mainly on Aristotle and the Newtonian revolution, directly bears on our preceding analysis of irreversible linear temporality and the inherent experiential possibility of an alternative way of inhabiting of our spatio-temporal world. More specifically, it seems to me that Heidegger's interpretation of how Aristotle's thinking about

⁷² *Op. cit.*, p. 305.

⁷³ *Op. cit.*, p. 306.

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motion underwent a fateful "reversal" in Newton sheds a good deal of light on Tarthang Tulku's analysis, in *Time, Space and Knowledge*, of how the progressive loss of pristine cognitiveness (Sanskrit: *jñāna*; Tibetan: *ye-shes*) results in the fact that we "find ourselves" thrown, or "sent," into an extremely constricting, extremely pressing space-time "tube." Considered in this light, Heidegger's return to Aristotle's philosophy of nature (which we may presume to reflect the Greek experience of his time) somewhat parallels, and therefore may help us to understand, Rinpoche's attempt to penetrate the delusory nature of our samsaric space-time projections and open up an alternative modality of experience.

In order, briefly, to show the parallels, I will extract from the translated text of Heidegger's 1935-36 lecture, "Basic Questions of Metaphysics" (published in Germany as *Die Frage nach dem Ding*) certain key propositions.⁷⁴ For the sake of brevity, however, I will refrain from making lengthy comments on them here, except to say that Heidegger's discussion assumes decisive relevance *only when we construe the motion of natural bodies to include the experiential (experienced) human body*. (This extension of the notion of a natural body is actually not so strange in the Aristotelian framework, since, for Aristotle, even the motion of what we would call "inanimate things," e.g., stones, is teleological.) I must leave it to the reader, though, to ponder *how* Heidegger's discussion may possibly help us to interpret our experience of time in relation to the extremely difficult Buddhist notion of the *Trikāya*, construed as a notion that makes explicit the primordially intrinsic existential *norms* of human embodiment. Could it be said that the *Trikāya* guides us, on the path of self-realization, "away" from spatio-temporal embodiment as a merely "earthly body" and "toward" our embodiment as a perfect "celestial body"?

- (1) "The motion of bodies, however, is *kath' auta*, according to them, themselves. That is to say, how a body moves, i.e., how it relates

⁷⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1962). This text has been translated by W. B. Barton, Jr. and Vera Deutsch and appears with an analysis by Eugene Gendlin under the title, *What is a Thing?* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1967). Pages 66-108 of this translation have been included in David Farrell Krell's anthology, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). Our page citations will be referred, for the sake of convenience, to the Krell anthology.

to place and to which place it relates—all this has its basis in the body itself. . . . The body moves according to its nature. A moving body, which is itself an *archē kinēseōs*, is a natural body. The purely earthly body moves downward, the purely fiery body—as every blazing flame demonstrates—moves upward. Why? Because the earthly body has its place below, the fiery, above. Each body has its place *according to its kind*, and it strives toward that place. Around the earth is water, around this, the air, and around this, fire—the four elements. When a body moves toward its place this motion accords with its nature, *kata physin*. . . . All motions against nature are *biai*, violent.” (p. 260).

- (2) “Circular motion and motion in a straight line are the simple movements, *haplai*. Of these two, circular motion is first, i.e., is the higher, and thus, of the highest order. . . . In circular motion, the body has its place in the motion itself; for this reason *such motion is perpetual and truly in being*. In rectilinear motion the place lies only in one direction, away from another place, so that *motion [e.g., experienced life] comes to an end [i.e., dies] over there*. . . . The purest motion, in the sense of change of place, is circular motion; it contains, as it were, its place in itself. A body that so moves itself, moves itself completely. This is true of all celestial bodies. *Compared to this, earthly motion is always in a straight line, or mixed, or violent, but always incomplete*.” (See p. 261. Italics and bracketed interpolations are my own.)
- (3) “There is an essential difference between the motion of celestial bodies and earthly bodies. The domains [i.e., *dhātus*] of these motions are different. How a body moves depends upon its species and the place to which it belongs. The *where* determines the *how* of its Being, for Being means presence [*Anwesenheit*].” (p. 261).
- (4) “. . . in modern thought, circular motion is understood only in such a way that a perpetual attracting force from the center is necessary for its formation and preservation. With Aristotle, however, this ‘force,’ *dynamis*, the capacity for its motion, lies in the nature of the body itself. The kind of motion of the body and its relation to its place depend upon the nature of the body. *The velocity of natural motion increases the nearer the body comes to its [intrinsically appropriate] place; that is, increase and decrease of velocity and cessation of motion depend upon the nature of the body. A motion*

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contrary to nature, i.e., violent motion, has its cause in the force that affects it. However, according to its motion, the body, [experienced as] driven forcibly, must withdraw from this power, and since the body itself does not bring with it any basis for this violent motion, its motion must necessarily become slower and finally stop [as in our inevitable death, for example]." (p. 261–262. My italics and interpolations.)

- (5) Departing from the Aristotelian understanding of natural bodies, Newton assumes, as an axiom, the proposition: "Every body left to itself moves uniformly in a straight line." Heidegger then argues: "That means that the distinction between earthly and celestial bodies has become obsolete." (p. 262). In other words, in our samsaric condition of *avidyā*, *we no longer realize any experiential differences among modes of embodiment.*
- (6) "Accordingly, the distinguishing of certain places also disappears. Each body itself is changed: place no longer is where the body belongs according to its inner nature, but is only a position in relation to other positions." (p. 263). Thus, we lose our *Befindlichkeit* as bodily beings who are *rooted* in the timeless traditions of land and homeland.
- (7) "Therefore the concept of nature changes. Nature is no longer the *inner* principle out of which the motion of the body follows; rather, nature is the mode of the variety of the changing relative positions of bodies, the manner in which they are present in space and time." (p. 264).
- (8) Galileo, arguing against Aristotle's sense that *different* bodies move (e.g., upward and downward) at *different* velocities in accordance with their specific nature, *repressed his lived experience* of such differences. In his experiments, the "bodies of different weights did not [in fact] arrive at precisely the same time after having fallen from the tower, but the difference in time was slight." (p. 266). Thus, *against the evidence of his own personal experience*, which his attachment to the goals of an "objective science" concealed from him, Galileo argued that "the motion of every body is uniform and rectilinear." (p. 266). But Galileo's understanding merely *reflects* our "normal" experience, to the degree that our understanding is really unknowingness (*avidyā*; *ma-rig-pa*).
- (9) Thus Galileo prepares for Newton's conceptualization of "what

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should be uniformly determinative of each body as such, i.e., for being bodily. All bodies are alike. No motion is special. Every place [*loka and dhātu*] is like every other, each moment is like any other. . . . All determinations of bodies have one basic blueprint, according to which *the natural process is nothing but the space-time determination of the motion of points of mass*. This fundamental design of nature at the same time *circumscribes its realm as everywhere uniform*." (p. 267). What Heidegger here discerns is the very *same* process of experiential "straying" (*ma-rig-pa*) which Tarthang Tulku describes. Amazingly, they both bring to light the same diagnostic understanding of the process whereby our spatio-temporal existence (human embodiment) is experienced as becoming *progressively* restricted and oppressive, and determined by the finality and the terror of "untimely" death.