

# The Allowing-Will

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*From the editors: We have included this excerpt, Chapter 4, from Jeff Maitland's book Spacious Body: Explorations in Somatic Ontology as a companion piece to the articles on Biodynamics. This chapter, "The Allowing-Will," speaks to the spacious holistic presence from which a practitioner can engage or allow the biodynamic process. To quote Maitland, "Allowing is a surrendering of the body-self and its conflicts into a spaciousness greater than itself from which empowered willing and action can manifest." (North Atlantic Books, 1995, p. 117)*

## THE ALLOWING-WILL

A glimpse into the heart of creation, an experience of the lotus land of purity and the body of the Buddha, an opening into the radiantly presencing spaciousness of *this*, will inevitably send you careening into the impoverished notions of body, self, and world that our culture blindly projects as truth. The examples, descriptions, and theory I am offering are meant to show that the body is not a mere thing among other things of the world and that a human being is, at a fundamental level, oriented space and time. The form of an event determines the nature of the event – not only *how* it happens but *what* can happen. Your body is the form you happen as.

In a very real way, the human world manifests the same patterns of distortion and conflict that individuals confront in their personal lives. To a great extent, individual psychospacial and psychotemporal conflicts are held in place by a prereflectively agreed-upon world. The world as most of us live it nourishes, supports, and reflects back a prereflective understanding of "the way life is." For the most part, these prereflective fixations of congruence constitute the conventional definitions of reality. Similar to the way in which our desires, hopes, and fears mold and manipulate the ongoing events of a dream where everything is a reflection of itself, our life unfolds in the everydayness of the human world. For most of us, the world we live in is the person we are.

As I pointed out in the first chapter, philosophy is the love of spaciousness, or what is the same thing, the spaciousness

of love. The true philosopher attempts to articulate the truth of what is by finding and speaking from this non-preferential love and spaciousness. Without the love of spaciousness, there can neither be the allowing openness to existence required by the doing of philosophy nor the transformation of the one who asks the question. Most disciplines of Western reflective thought, including academic philosophy, attempt to reflect on and objectify reality from within a conflicted and fixated psychospacial and psychotemporal orientation – almost always guaranteeing the creation of unhealthy and distorted theories of life.

The heedless acceptance of the view that the body is a soft machine is an excellent example of such a distortion. Most of modern science pursues the investigation of reality in accordance with the mechanistic, Cartesian/Newtonian framework. Investigating processes of life as if they were machines, while very limited, is relatively harmless. In fact, it has produced many technological and medical advances. But when scientists move from the position of using mechanistic models to understand living systems to the unwarranted claim that the body is nothing but a soft machine, not only have they have made a logical error, they also have ceased being scientists, and become thoughtless metaphysicians of dis-ease.

The human self is not other than the body. It is neither within nor separate and independent of the oriented space and time of the body. You do not own or have a body. The body is not an object in measurable space that you inhabit – your body is the *condition* for owning and inhabiting objects. You are your body. Unfortunately, the simple

statement "You are your body" is far from simple. It is hardly ever grasped properly from within our world's conflicted psychospacial and psychotemporal orientations.

In reflection, the psychospacially and psychotemporally conflicted self separates and objectifies reality in accordance with its own conflicts, which are often nourished by the conflicts of its world. Since these conflicts penetrate to the very core of our bodieselves, it is difficult to experience our bodies as anything but an alien presence, an object that somehow imprisons us and interferes with our deepest needs for freedom. Experimentally, then, the view that the body is a soft machine is appealing and makes some sense to our conflicted selves.

When we suffer, if we look deeply enough, we can experience our own unique psychospacial, psychotemporal conflicts. Truly seeing into ourselves will provide the impetus for change. Without this experiential seeing into ourselves it is next to useless to study theories and books or develop new strategies for improving our lives. Most self-improvement programs merely provide you with a new set of ideas and strategies about how to willfully manipulate your life from within the confines of the conflicted self with its uncreative, machine-like response patterns.

By itself, it is useless to become analytical and reflective about ourselves. Learning to talk intelligently about our problems is not transformation. Discussing and reading books on theories of transformation is not transformation. Nor is the solution to be found in the absurd attempt to turn against the intellect. Every so-called "anti-intellectual" I have ever met was in fact an intellectual taking an intellectual stand against the intellect. When our body-selves stand in conflict, we are conflicted at both the reflective and prereflective levels. Transformation will not happen by adopting yet another theory, strategy, or refinement of existing skills at the level of the will. Transformation will not happen by abandoning our intellectual faculties. Transformation is a free and creative act which demands a transformation and reorientation at every level of our being, from body to intellect to spirit. The answer to life's question is the transformation of the one who asks the question from the depths of his or her own self-confrontation.

I continue to emphasize the fundamental importance of the body to transformation

because it is extremely rare to see its complete and proper understanding. Many more psychotherapists than ever before take account of and work with the body. No matter how good and useful their work with people is, however, their theoretical statements are often very confused. I have heard people try to take account of the role of the body in transformation by saying that they are dealing with the kinesthetic body, the dreambody, or some other kind of body which is claimed to be the true locus of the self. But they are not, they say, dealing with the real body. By "real body" they most often mean the body as it is objectified in reflection by science – the body as measured. But if the *real* body is the body of reflective science, the soft machine, then the dreambody or the kinesthetic body must be something subjective, and, hence, not real. Trapped within this way of thinking, it seems to follow that whatever is not objective is necessarily subjective. If the real body is the measurable body of science, then any other kind of body must be subjective, imaginary, merely mental, and not real. And if it is not real, how do you work with it in therapy?

The problem arises from accepting the body as studied by science as the real body. It is useful to ask what "real" mean in this context – real as opposed to what? The body as a soft machine is a reflective abstraction, a certain way of separating from the body as experienced and objectifying it for a specific kind of study. The body as we prereflectively live it is not a thing, object, or bloodless abstraction: it is who we are. Scientism has unfortunately narrowed our concept of the objective world by reducing it to the measurable. But the body is not just a thing that takes up measurable space, even though from a very limited perspective it can be considered that. The lived body is the space we are, the space we live; it is the lived-space from which we orient toward our world.

Prereflection is the prior condition of reflection. We reflect on what was prereflective, sometimes poorly and sometimes well. The view that the body is nothing but a soft machine is a piece of poor reflection that arises from conflict and dis-ease. Clearly then, what is not measurable and not objectifiable by science is not necessarily subjective. The lived-body, the lived-space that we are, is neither an objective nor subjective thing. It is the prior condition of the subjective and the objective.

I began this book with some of my first experiences of transformation and the unconflicted lived-space of the body. In Chapter Two, I continued this descriptive process by highlighting various levels of transformation in some of my clients. My aim has been first to display rather than to define how transformation is always a matter of the transformation of the lived-body. I have tried, especially in Chapter Three, to begin developing a language and theory that is appropriate to experience at any level of transformation.

However, I have not described yet how transformation actually takes place. How does it happen, for example, that one person emerges transformed from a personal crisis and another does not, even though both are on the same path to wholeness? How are we healed of disease? How do we become psychologically and emotionally well? How do we become enlightened? Although varying in detail and occurring at different levels in our being, the answer to all these questions is essentially the same.

Asking these questions and others like them amounts to asking about the nature and experience of creativity – one of the greatest mysteries of human life. It is as much about creating art and new scientific breakthroughs as it is about breaking and transforming the mechanical repetition of our own patterns of misery. It concerns how the self and will are created from a spaciousness which is not will and not self, and how, once created, self and will can die again and again into the will-less origin. Creating a self is like pulling yourself up by your bootstraps when there is no one to do the pulling and nothing to pull. It is like creating something from no-thing. It is like moving back and forth between the reflective and the prereflective. It cannot be defined and no matter how hard you try to analyze it reflectively, you can never fully grasp the creative leap from no-self to self and back again. Trying to calculate this leap reflectively presents the very same difficulty inherent in trying to grasp any creative leap. Where do creative ideas, works of art, and solutions come from? But while it cannot be easily described, it can be experienced, and experienced with such depth that your whole life and bodily being are transformed in the process. Getting to the heart of this great matter requires understanding that true creativity, freedom, and transformation, while involving the self and will, never arise from them. "Understanding" in this

sense means being able to prereflectively experience this matter without the interference of the conflicted body-self, being able to articulate it conceptually, and being able to manifest or live it beyond the moment.

In my first few years as a Zen student, I remember so clearly being enthralled and dumbfounded by the process of zazen, or sitting meditation. My first teacher loved to say in fractured English, while holding his right palm above his left, that zazen was, "thinking not to think...thinking not to think. But! Thinking not to think is still thinking." Then he would abruptly reverse his hands so that the left was above the right as he spat out the words, "And then, suddenly! Not thinking." He often ended his demonstration with the words, "Zen is not thinking and not not-thinking."

If you have ever done any serious meditation, you know his illustration and statements are accurate. Meditation will not result from an act of will, and yet, if you do not use your will to engage in meditation, you will not find the experience of meditation. Doing zazen is a bit like putting your whole life on the stove, turning up the fire and watching the dross you had unconsciously presumed to be yourself bubble away in the misery of self-confrontation. In the beginning years of zazen, you are many times brought face-to-face with dimensions of your personality that you did not know were there and did not want to know were there. Often you experience emotionally and physically painful meditations that represent in an unmistakably primal way your own resistance to transformation. And then, without warning, all the misery simply ceases and you find yourself in a completely open space of no-conflict. Previously troublesome thoughts come and go like wispy clouds in a limitless sky – no pain, no conflict, no self. Now there is just this space of no conflict. Everything is without effort and without will. How did it happen?

I remember asking my second teacher to explain this process. I said, "I can understand how, if I want to move a tea cup from one place to another, I simply reach out and move it. But what I can't understand is how I go from a state of conflict to no conflict in my meditation. What is the process by which this happens, how is it done?" To this day, I do not know if he was genuinely puzzled by my question or simply wanted to throw me back onto myself. He looked at me with great kindness and cocked his head

slightly to the right with a kind of puzzled attentiveness. I waited for my answer and he said, "More zazen!"

Somewhat disappointed I thought, "Well, after all what did I expect? This is Zen practice, not an academic seminar in philosophy." Without fully realizing it, I found myself once more entangled in a philosophical question that would take many years to unravel.

As I descended into this process, I noticed that many experiences, while not as deep or clear, shared a kind of structural similarity to this experience of zazen. The experience of running down a mountain with which I began this book, is just one such experience. In these kinds of experiences, you find yourself confronted, at first, with some great difficulty that taxes your resources to the limit. But if you stick with it, at some point in time, you will probably experience the joyful exhilaration of accomplishing your goal effortlessly.

I read everything I could about this elusive experience. I read theories of creativity, first hand accounts of the experience of creativity, theories of the unconscious, and all the mystical writings I could find. Here and there I found insight. I continued my search and after I had come to some experiential clarity and philosophical understanding of the process, I met my third teacher. One of the first things I remember him saying was, "If you study Zen long enough, you must become fascinated with how the human self and will can arise from something selfless and will-less." Since neither of my previous Zen teachers were able to bring philosophical clarity to this process, I was excited over at last having found a philosophical Zen teacher.

## CREATIVE PERFORMANCE

The examples abound and almost everyone has had some experience of the doing-of-not-doing, or *wu wei* as the Taoists called it. Was there ever a time in your life when you learned to play a musical instrument and stayed with it long enough to become accomplished? Perhaps you remember the kinds of difficulties you encountered at first. In playing the guitar, for example, every note or new chord you learn seems to end up a buzzing and muffled cacophony produced by aching fingertips. Over time, however, your technique gets better and clearer until you attain a certain habitualization of technique that frees you from having

to stop and think about what you are doing. Nevertheless, during this phase of learning you are in a sense still alienated from your instrument and your body. The guitar and your hands are experienced as something separate by means of which you are trying to realize your intentions. At this stage in your learning, the music you produce and your experience of yourself appears mechanical, studied, and completely lacking in spontaneity. In time, however, you may notice moments or long periods of time in which the music seems to flow effortlessly through you. Guitar, body, and self are completely unified in a space of no thinking from which music pours forth. Inspiration, expression, and the work of art are not experienced as three separate events, but are realized as one spontaneous, spacious action. In a freedom that knows no hindrance, it is as if the music is being played through you. Paradoxically, it could not happen without you and yet there is no "you" playing. In my academic writings I called this experience of inspired activity "creative performance."

Obviously, creative performance happens in a heightened and extraordinary space of prereflection. Too much reflection would certainly be the death of this experience. Unlike many of our everyday experiences of prereflection, creative performance happens within a relatively unconflicted, unfixed space. In some inexplicable way, you break free of the limitations of conflicted lived-space during creative performance. But the question remains: "How does this happen?" More precisely stated, the question is: "What is the way or the process by which this leap from a conflicted orientation to the unconflicted, unobstructed prereflection of creative performance is accomplished?"

Let's look at this experience more closely. Consider any new project, challenge, or activity you might take up. If it is truly a new project for you, you will be presented with problems and obstacles with which you will likely have difficulty dealing." In the sense in which I am using this term an "obstacle is anything you cannot handle with your established methods, theories, or habits. An obstacle, therefore, is anything that demands some kind of creative response. To you and me, an ordinary door is not an obstacle in this sense. But to a two-year-old whose parents are out of sight on the other side, the same door can loom as an immense, frustrating, and threatening

barrier.

Great or small, an obstacle always places us in a crisis situation. The word "crisis" means literally "a turning point." If we know how to deal with this situation as we have dealt with similar past situations, then we are not at a turning point. Nothing new is required of us. But a true crisis stops us dead in our tracks. Can you remember being bewildered and miserable in a crisis situation and asking yourself, "How am I supposed to deal with this?"

Maybe your lover died or left you for someone else. Maybe a trusted friend has betrayed your trust in some way. Maybe all of what used to give you pleasure and provide meaning in your life has become dull and empty. Maybe you are experiencing writer's block. Maybe you ache all over because you just finished exercising for the first time in ten years. Or maybe you are doing zazen and your body is on fire with the pain of self-confrontation. Whatever the depth of the crisis, confronting an obstacle always brings some kind of displeasure. This displeasure can be mild or agonizing, it can include depression and anxiety, and it can be experienced at any or all levels of our being – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

Look more deeply and you will discover that each displeasure brings with it a kind of tension that initially has no specific bodily location. If you do not try to flee or manipulate yourself by means of your favorite patterns of avoidance, you will realize that this tension is the beginning of your own mobilization of power for overcoming the obstacle. This tension is actually a kind of energy that you instinctively summon forth when confronting an obstacle. More fundamentally, it is actually a form of intentionality, an excitement over the imbalance of your present situation.

Our world, unfortunately, is in great confusion about the nature of this displeasure-tension-energy. A major life-crisis involves the self with such depth and completeness that the appropriate response can only be one that not only changes the situation but transforms the one who suffers. Anything short of this radical transformation is simply willful self-deception. A major crisis is not properly experienced if you see it as a mere random accident coming at you from the outside to block your way. A crisis is precisely this painful situation because you are the one embedded in it, and you are in

this situation in the way you are because this situation is this way and no other.

Because we suffer and because our culture supports the idea that all suffering is bad, we usually cannot stay with our misery long enough to embrace and understand it. Usually we try to rationalize, deny it, or manipulate our feelings about it: "This isn't fair; I did nothing to deserve this," or "It's nothing, I can handle it by myself." Perhaps rather than reflecting on how our life and choices brought us to this crisis, we set about blaming others. More than likely we retreat over and over into our favorite addictions, the kinds of things we all do in the face of difficulties that demand self-confrontation and transformation: we go looking for friends who will listen and agree to our every attempt at self-justification; we seek out entertainment, sex, drugs, and alcohol or false therapy; we embrace a pseudo religious life style and pray to God to take our suffering away; and so on.

As we willfully attempt to ignore, dominate, or manipulate ourselves and our situation, the tension-energy becomes localized perhaps as a tension headache, backache, or upset stomach. It localizes wherever we have learned how to hold back our own excitement or defend ourselves against ourselves and the world. In other words, we deal with this present conflict according to our already established patterns of denial and avoidance. Unfortunately, more often than not, these harmful patterns are the ones that our world seems to support. Obviously a crisis is not overcome through willful manipulation, which attempts to bury the crisis in our already existing patterns of self-conflict, thereby creating more conflict in an already conflicted psychospacial, psychotemporal orientation.

If you do not try to willfully manipulate your situation, an entirely different sort of experience unfolds. Consider again the example of learning to play the guitar. As you learn not to interfere with your playing, as you cease trying to force the music, you begin to find more and more the space of creative performance. In place of willful effort, is effortlessness. The sense of separateness between your self, body, and the guitar and the music dissolves into a soft, spacious, joyful unity of intention and musical instrument where the music flows without self or hindrance. The tension of displeasure that had been so much a part of your previous experiences of performing has been almost magically transformed and

transfigured into a relaxed but powerful energy that enlivens and flows throughout your body.

## ALLOWING

What is fascinating about the leap into creative performance is that it occurs without the will. In fact, trying to will this experience is the best guarantee that it will not happen. Yet without the will, without effort, you would never be able to sustain the discipline of learning to play a musical instrument, or to do anything for that matter. And without the will you would never be able to express or execute your inspiration. But the actual movement into the prereflective space of no-conflict is not an act of will at all, but is an act of *allowing*.

Freedom or creative performance cannot happen without the will, but it does not arise from the will. This point is important to underscore. For over 2,000 years, Western thought has assumed that true freedom is a matter of being able to make decisions and choices by means of the will. In fact, most philosophical investigations into human freedom are referred to as "the problem of free will." Even the existentialists and the existential phenomenologists, with the exception of the later work of Heidegger, still view consciousness and freedom as ultimately grounded in the will. Because freedom cannot arise from the will alone, these assumptions simply occlude the nature of freedom. Freedom is more than merely the ability to choose one course of action over another.

Freedom arises in allowing, in an unconflicted prereflective participatory understanding of the nature of your situation. Because it is prereflective and because it is a form of understanding, allowing is not some sort of passivity or resignation to an impossible situation. In allowing, you neither deny nor separate yourself from yourself and your situatedness. Rather, you sustain your connection to your situation, you understand and accept your part in what has happened, and the tension of displeasure is transformed into the energy of empowerment.

To be empowered means you have the power to transform yourself and your situation. It means you have the power and right to act and that your action will be appropriate to your situation. Empowerment is also, therefore, responsibility. As Fritz Perls pointed out, "responsibility"

literally means, "the ability to respond." And I would add to Perls' observation that responsibility is the power to respond to your situation in a fitting way. Responsibility is not merely "doing your duty" according to some external code of ethics or obligations. Any willful attempt to manipulate your situation or conform to external authority always lacks integration, empowerment, authentic response, and, hence, freedom. From within a conflicted and untransformed orientation we all too often willfully make our choices and decisions. But unless our choices and actions proceed from allowing, we are not yet free in the fullest sense.

Whether you are dealing with a major crisis in your life, practicing Zen meditation, or learning to play a new and difficult piece of music, the movement from displeasure and tension to the joyful abandonment of creative performance begins in the moment of allowing. If you wish to experience the allowing of inspiration and meditation, you cannot strategize your way to this elusive experience. You cannot try not to try, you cannot will not to will, you cannot think not to think. Creative performance will simply not happen if you try to will your way to it. The will is necessary for disciplining yourself and for staying with the sometimes agonizing tension and suffering of a major crisis. But in the end, when the tension reaches its peak, you must surrender body-self and will in the act of allowing in order for creative performance to occur. Anything short of true allowing is simply a retreat from transformation. Only when our actions arise from the spaciousness of allowing do they become appropriate and free in the fullest sense.

## THE UNWILLING-WILL

Since Western thought is so thoroughly committed to understanding consciousness and freedom as essentially grounded in the will, we too easily confuse allowing with passivity and giving up. Allowing is, in fact, just the opposite of giving up. Allowing is a matter of surrendering a conflicted, non-participatory self into the prereflective allowing spaciousness of no-self which is the ultimate groundless-ground and condition of reflection and the subjective and objective world.

Surrender is by no means submission or resignation. Rather, allowing or surrender is a participatory acceptance and understanding of the whole of our situation: that

it happened just this way and no other, and that we played an important part in the manifestation of this crisis. In resignation we cover up how our conflicted self brought us to a crisis. Instead of embracing the totality of what has happened, we consider ourselves an innocent bystander or victim. We stand outside our crisis and objectify it as a problem thrust accidentally or unfairly upon us. When every attempt to willfully change the problem as we misrepresent it to ourselves fails, we throw up our hands in angry confusion and resign ourselves to an impossible situation. In resignation, we would rather withdraw into willful passivity and, in extreme cases, densify our body-self, than transform the one who suffers.

An adult who continuously collapses into density and withdraws into willful passivity was probably forced into this pattern of defense as a child. It may have been the best psychospacial orientation available to the child. But the resigned adult unfortunately remains stuck in an angry, confused bog of density and willful passivity. Instead of being transformed into the energy of empowered action, the tension of displeasure is pushed down into the density and collapse of the body.

Although resignation is a form of willful passivity, not all willful passivity is resignation. Generally, willful passivity is a holding-back on action in the place of trying to resolve whatever difficulty has emerged. It is a defensive attempt to willfully withdraw, ignore, or deny a situation. It can also be a way of trying to wait out a crisis in the hopes that it will eventually go away. Clearly, willful passivity is not the willing openness to transformation found in allowing.

The other side of willful passivity is willful activity. Unlike the person who willfully withdraws from a crisis, another person might willfully or even violently propel himself into dominating and manipulating himself and others. If willful activity is his preferred pattern of avoidance, often such a person's body will be rigid, military-erect, and uptight. He and his narcissistically-oriented peers will see themselves as aggressive, success oriented, high-energy people who are able to "get the job done." But the trained eye sees rigidity and denial of his true self by means of a fantasized ideal self, suppressed anxiety, anger, and the inability to love. Because the energy of empowerment has been blocked and too tightly contained by rigidity, such people are often

uptight, tension-ridden workaholics.

There is yet another form of passivity which is not entirely willful in character that might be confused with allowing. It could be called the passivity of letting go of will and form. Marcie most clearly represented this psychospacial orientation. As I pointed out, her fear, her not wanting to be present, was a collapse into a soft form that willed formlessness. You do not have to be a fear-anxiety type like Marcie to understand this form of passivity. Most of us have experienced daydreaming, wanting to go to sleep, or perhaps even fainting when confronted with an obstacle we are unwilling to face. Obviously, going to sleep is not an act of will – trying to will sleep is the surest method I know for producing insomnia. Fainting, daydreaming, and going to sleep are all ways of not willing. But while they are not acts of will, neither are they transforming acts of allowing. Each of these acts of not willing are designed to both lose and break the movement and arousal of the tension-energy of displeasure. Choosing formlessness is an attempt to dissipate rather than contain the tension-energy. Unfortunately, this maneuver unwittingly prevents the transformation of tension-energy into the energy of empowerment.

There is a certain willfulness about a person who constantly avoids difficulties by sleeping or daydreaming, but the passivity involved at the moments of going to sleep or daydreaming is not itself an act of will. Nor is this passivity a form of allowing. Allowing is an unconflicted letting be, an openness to what is, an intense but relaxed wakefulness, an integrated participatory understanding of and remaining with our situation. It is a willingness for transformation. These considerations imply that allowing is fulfilled and completed only in empowered, responsible willing and action. Clearly, the passivity of sleeping, daydreaming, or fainting when confronted with an obstacle is a collapse in the face of transformation. It is a retreat or swoon into letting go, not the letting be of allowing which is the condition of true freedom and creative performance.

Perhaps the most common way to misunderstand the leap into creative performance is to try to frame the process in terms of the traditional categories of activity and passivity. By assuming at the outset that all human action and freedom are grounded in the will and that action is to be understood according to the active/passive distinction,

it seems to follow that allowing must be a form of passivity. As we have just seen, however, passivity and activity are both forms of willing. Clearly, the passive/active distinction is utterly inappropriate for understanding the nature of allowing.

When we orient toward our world in conflict and fixation, our passive or active orientations are often rooted in an *ersatz* maneuver of what I shall call the *unwilling-will*. Willful activity, willful passivity, and the passivity of letting go are all forms of the unwilling-will. The unwilling-will is essentially not yet a free will because it is not grounded in allowing and because it is unwilling to be transformed. The unwilling-will is a self-deceived act of will; it is a recoil from the demand for self-transformation, a demand that the world with all its obstacles constantly makes of us.

As we have already seen, self and will arise together as a unique psychospacial orientation. In most cases, the body-self is fixated and imprisoned in a conflicted and complicated pattern of lived-space. Because of our conflicted psychospacial orientations most of us meet, live, and make demands of our world by means of our unwilling-wills. Without a number of profound experiences of allowing in which our body-self and its conflicts are surrendered and dissolved in a spaciousness greater than itself, these fixations and their attendant addictions and patterns of avoidance remain cemented in place.

Because the spatializations of the unwilling-will structure the very core of the defended body-self, prereflection for most of us is also dominated by these conflicts. To take an extreme example, the automatic reactions of a paranoid person often occur prereflectively. Although prereflection is often dominated by the conflicts of the unwilling-will, it need not be. It could be rooted in the freedom of allowing. The difference between the prereflection of allowing and the prereflection of the unwilling-will is the difference between true freedom and dis-ease.

There are many levels of allowing. At the deepest level, allowing is not a form of consciousness. It is the unobstructed, radiantly presencing spaciousness which both knows itself as all of *this* and can separate from itself to create a human self and will without losing itself. At another level, allowing can be the experience of the unified, completed, true self. This experience was manifested in Elaine's discovery of her

core. Allowing is at the heart of any truly creative endeavor, from creating a work of art to handling a major life-crisis. What has come to be called "peak experience" and "peak performance" are often shallow but important manifestations of allowing in everyday activities. Fundamentally, allowing is a surrendering of the body-self and its conflicts into a spaciousness greater than itself from which empowered willing and action can manifest. Whatever the activity – zazen, playing the guitar, running a race, overcoming a crisis – allowing is the way by which we move from a conflicted, unfree orientation into the freedom of creative performance.

Unfortunately, the nature and importance of allowing is hardly ever noticed or understood in our world. For the most part, the conflicted spatializations of the unwilling will dominate the human world at every level from our institutions to personal relationships. Apart from disease and poverty, nowhere is the suffering of our time more obvious than in the sphere of relationships, especially between men and women. There is no better place to look for the freedom of allowing than in the midst of our everyday conflicts.

## TOUCHING AND BEING TOUCHED

Instead of completely embracing the limitations of life, we usually recoil from them. But think about what happens if you truly and unselfconsciously embrace another person. When you reach out to embrace another, whether it is your friend, your child, or your lover, you are reaching out to touch that person. Touching is an act of will, a movement out and away from yourself designed to accomplish a certain end.

But notice, the person being embraced is not in the first instance simply reaching out to touch back. She is, rather, letting herself be embraced or be touched. Being touched is not an act of will; it is an act of allowing. By allowing herself to be embraced by you, she accepts and opens her body-space for your touch. Notice, however, if she is afraid, embarrassed, generally uptight, or simply does not trust you, she will not truly allow herself to be touched. Even though you may get into some kind of physical contact with her body (she may be unwilling to just push you away,) she will not allow your touch. Things contact other things – just because your body is in contact with hers is no guarantee that she is being touched. But human

beings can also touch. Allowing is neither an active nor passive act of will. That she can refuse to be touched shows that allowing is an action we can freely choose, an action that is not an act of will.

Allowing or being touched is a choice, but not an act of will. If she allows herself to be touched, then at that very moment she is also touching you. In allowing yourself to be touched by her, you open your body-space to her and you are both touching and being touched by each other. In your embrace, touching and being touched, willing and allowing, arise together in the prereflective reciprocity of selfless bodily openness for each other.

If, however, when you reach out to embrace her, you attempt to manipulate her to your own ends, you are not truly touching her. Manipulation interferes with her being. If you interfere with her in this way, you cannot let her be. If you cannot allow her being, you cannot allow her touch. If you cannot allow her being and her touch, you cannot truly touch her. You can only contact her manipulatively and your embrace is false. Your false attempt to touch her is essentially an unfree act of your unwilling will which interferes with her freedom to be. But in a true embrace, the reciprocity of willing and allowing, touching and being touched, mutually implicate each other in the spaciousness of true human relationship. A true embrace provides a powerful example of how to live in the human world.

## THE CREATIVE APPROPRIATION OF LIMITATION

The literal meaning of the word "existence" is suggestive: "standing forth". Whatever exists stands forth. Whatever stands forth, exists as a form. What exists and stands forth as a form has boundaries. The boundaries of a form constitute, in part, its limits. Take away the boundaries or limits of a form, and it ceases to be. Prior to but not separate from the unlimited varieties of subjective and objective forms, prior to but not separate to the whole play of existence and non-existence, is the groundless-ground of the totality of what is: radiantly presencing spaciousness. Spaciousness is never separate from the forms of the world. It is neither identical to nor other than the world of form.

A human being emerges as a peculiar form among all the other forms. Our standing

forth is also a standing up. In standing up and walking away from its parent, a young child discovers, explores, and exercises body-self and will in powerful and exuberant new ways. In the excitement of this newly born self-mastery and will, the child creates, in response to her world, conflicted and unconflicted patterns and forms of being that can last a lifetime. The mastery of standing and walking is a significant event that usually signals the birth of a free-standing, separate, but incomplete individual body-self and will. Years later, after the conflicted orientations have become fixed in unfulfilling patterns of living, the adult yearns for release from his tension, aches and pains, and emotional misery.

But there is no release at the level of will and ego-self. There is no technology of transformation; in fact the notion of a transformational technique is an oxymoron. Like the popular joke that "Army intelligence" is an oxymoron, it is self contradictory and self defeating. You can will yourself to run, but you cannot will yourself to experience "runner's high." You can will yourself to paint a painting or play a piece of music, but you cannot will yourself to be inspired. You cannot will creativity and transformation. There are ways to change your context in order to encourage creativity, but there are no techniques or step-by-step recipes for creativity. You cannot will allowing; you must simply allow. If you do allow, then there is no "you" to do it. From the spaciousness of allowing, you can then act and will appropriately.

If you realize allowing in the midst of a profound crisis or after years of Zen meditation, in time, more and more of your everyday life will be spent in creative performance, in the *allowing-will*. If there are only a few moments of allowing in our lives, we will live more and more in the unfreedom and dis-ease of the unwilling-will. Instead of experiencing the boundaries of our body-selves as the place at which we begin being, we will experience the boundaries of our body-selves as the place at which we stop being. Plato's and Descartes' experience of the body will become ours.

As I have already pointed out, whatever exists is bounded and limited; limitation is the condition of existence and form. To be a human being is, at one level, to be limited. To live in the human world and the world of form is to live in the midst of limitation. When we are comfortable, we normally take no notice of limitation. But when the

obstacles and crises of life appear, we fall into our misery and remain transfixed in limitation. Often we willfully seek out the latest techniques or strategies that promise a quick fix.

The appearance of an obstacle or crisis in our life is a particular manifestation of limitation. In the form of a true obstacle, limitation confronts us with the demand for transformation, a demand which may be great or small depending on the depth of the crisis. But great or small, the demand and its attendant displeasure and tension remain in effect. If we flee from limitation, we act unfreely, we act according to the dictates of the conflicted, unwilling-will. From conflict we produce more conflict. The tension, untransformed, remains buried in conflict, producing the bodily, emotional and mental misery so apparent everywhere in our world. Seeking relief, we retreat into our favorite addictions as a way of numbing our tension and dis-ease. Such a maneuver is ultimately ineffective, and each new obstacle that arises throws us back into another series of self-defeating distractions.

To be a human body-self, living in the human world and yet somehow to be free of limitation is an impossible dream. Limitation limits our life only when we recoil from transformation. The unwilling-will recoils from transformation through willful activity, willful passivity, or swooning into formlessness. Ultimately, limitation cannot be manipulated or escaped. But it can be embraced with a surrender so complete that you are simultaneously embraced and transformed. By allowing what is to be, you choose to understand your situation and not to interfere with the process of creative transformation.

Allowing is the way by which we dissolve our conflicted psychospacial, psychotemporal orientations. It is the way to begin distinguishing core from surface, true self from ego self. In allowing, your core is surrendered free of the conflicts of the human self. If allowing opens deeply enough, it can fall into the unified true self or ultimately into the spaciousness of no-self. The Zen tradition describes the depths of allowing in the expression "Body and mind drop away!" This expression gives testimony to the experience of prereflexively and spaciouly aligning and coming to presence as *this*, unencumbered by the conflicts and fixations of our untransformed body-self. But at whatever depth allowing happens,

no attempt is made to discharge, deny, or contain the tension of displeasure inappropriately. Rather, allowing transforms the tension into an ecstatic, integrated, and empowered energy that enlivens the whole body and infuses every gesture. This newly available energy is invested responsibly and creatively by the will in whatever activity is deemed appropriate.

With the death of the conflicted body-self and its patterns of strain and tension, limitation is simultaneously transformed into possibility. If we deal with an obstacle by means of the unwilling-will, whether we are aware of it or not, limitation will limit us as our conflicted orientations set us up to create more conflicted solutions to our problems. When you embrace limitation completely through allowing, you take the most important first step toward creative transformation. Limitations that were once limiting begin to suggest new ways of living as new possibilities arise. We begin to understand that our life is always lived suspended between limitation and possibility.

In my academic writings I defined freedom as the creative appropriation of limitation. As we have seen, to be is to be limited. But no one's life is completely limited. Limitation by limiting makes possibility possible. Possibilities abound if we exercise our freedom appropriately. If our actions are grounded in allowing, we remain attentive to the limitations that always inform our situatedness and act appropriately and freely. As long as we are alive we are always suspended between possibility and limitation. There is no such thing as impossible limitation. And contrary to the deluded fantasies often found in conflicted New Age thinking, there is no such thing as unlimited possibility. No matter what our delusions and fantasies, we cannot do or have whatever we want. Our life is always limited to some extent.

True freedom arises, then, as the allowing-will. The allowing-will is the integrated grounding of the will in allowing. The allowing-will comes to presence in human life as the creative appropriation of limitation. "Appropriation" in this case means that your actions are appropriate to your situation. It also means that you own and allow your situation and the transformation it demands as your own. When you allow the limitations that inform your situation in this way, limitation provides for the actualization of possibility.

Think of what is involved in the creation of a great work of art, for example. The master of an art form surrenders herself to hardship and discipline in order to creatively perform her work. This surrender requires above all an acceptance of her own limitations, the limitations of his chosen medium and the importance of tradition. However, if she conforms blindly and completely to the standards of her tradition and models all her work on already established ways of working, she will abandon her creative freedom. On the other hand, if she completely rejects all tradition and discipline, she also will abandon her freedom in the aesthetics of escapism. Aesthetic form is like every other kind of form. It can exist only to the extent that it is limited. Art cannot happen by blindly adhering to tradition and its limitations and it cannot happen in its complete rejection. The great artist creates from the allowing-will. She creates from a sense of what is still possible or no longer possible within his tradition coupled with a recognition of her present limitations. She creates suspended between limitation and possibility. In art as in life, unlimited possibility and impossible limitation do not occur.

Imagine an artist at work. Suppose he finds his work going badly. Perhaps he has reached a creative impasse because the emerging work of art asks to be completed in ways that are foreign to his present methods, skills, habits of work, or even theories about the nature of art. Perhaps, due to the suffocating pressures of imagined failure, he attempts to force his work to completion by making it conform to his present preconceptions and habits. The finished work of art becomes, then, a product of the artist's unwilling-will. The work may be flawlessly executed, but it will lack inspiration, depth, and feeling. Or perhaps in anger, he decides to abandon his work prematurely. In either case, by willfully imposing inappropriate demands on the emerging work of art, the artist has not allowed the work to touch or speak to him. But if he were to wait in the silent openness of allowing, putting aside his suffocating frustrations and the relentless cacophony of internal voices tempting him to force the work according to his established patterns, he might very well uncover the path to an inspired work of art. In this and similar kinds of situations, only when we have reached the apparent end of our resources and let things be in allowing do we discover freedom, the power to creatively appropriate limitation.

Aesthetic form, like every other form, can exist only because it is limited. At one level of analysis, inspiration or allowing is the power to let what is happening show itself as it is. Inspiration does not willfully and inappropriately impose preconceived ideas and preexisting patterns of working on the emerging work of art. In the allowing of artistic creativity, limitation provides the structure through which freedom can be realized. Limitation is appropriated and the limits of aesthetic form become the space of possibility in which art and freedom happen. Limitation and aesthetic form are neither manipulated to produce preconceived results nor are they rejected in the aesthetics of escapism. Limitation and form are creatively appropriated through the allowing-will and the possibility of human freedom is realized in an artistic medium.

The experience of creativity, in any endeavor, is what I have called creative performance. Creative performance is not limited to the arts. It can occur in any activity from washing the dishes to dealing with a major life-crisis. But art is the only human endeavor that has as its primary goal the creation of a form whose essential purpose is to display the realization of freedom. The work of art is the manifestation of the freedom of the allowing-will in aesthetic form. The work of art is not a mere thing among the other things of the world; it is a *work*, a performance which displays through the limitations of form the experience of true freedom. Great art displays what all art aspires to: the realization and manifestation of human freedom.

Artistic intentionality is not the only example of the creative appropriation of limitation. Nietzsche, a philosopher whose life and body were far more limited than most, clearly experienced the creative appropriation of limitation. He said that what did not kill him made him stronger, that freedom was measured by what it cost one to stay aloft, and that through his sickness he attained health. He also said that the path to heaven was through the voluptuousness of one's own hell. In his own characteristic way, Nietzsche is saying that the limitations, displeasure, and suffering encountered in any crisis or creative endeavor are necessary ingredients of any transformation.

Unfortunately, Nietzsche never quite stated the relation between suffering and transformation properly. He tended to think that pain must always be involved in all transformation and any truly creative

endeavor. The relation between suffering and creative freedom is not as simple as he makes it seem, however. Not all creativity and transformation must be accompanied by suffering. The relationship can be grasped more appropriately with the following aphorism: you must first experience the suffering of transformation in order to transform without suffering.

When we live from within the confines of the unwilling-will, we suffer. The unwilling-will is in conflict and fixation. As such, it can only deal with its conflicts by producing more conflict. If we continually live from within the confines of our unwilling-will, we will pattern our lives and bodies around denial and avoidance. As a result, someday we may find ourselves catapulted into a major life-crisis. At such turning points, we find ourselves transfixed on and suffering in the limitations of our situation not knowing where to turn or what to do next. Often in these moments our suffering intensifies. The only sane and creative way out of the misery of our situation is to go further into it: to embrace it, to allow it, to understand the depth of who and what we are, and how, through our own ignorance, we brought ourselves to this impasse. Allowing what is to be, at this point, demands an honest and penetrating attempt at self-understanding. Self-understanding necessarily brings with it more suffering. Eventually we come to see that all our favorite strategies for producing change and meaning in our lives are nothing but ways of avoiding the truth of our situation. We come to see these strategies of the unwilling-will for what they are: dead-ends that represent our recoil from life and its ceaseless demand for transformation. If we learn the lesson of allowing thoroughly enough, we learn how to let creativity and transformation unfold in us without interfering with it. As a result, we eventually come to a point where transformation is not always preceded by suffering, as Nietzsche mistakenly believed.

Regardless of how Nietzsche understood the role of suffering in transformation, however, he did not permit himself to be unduly limited by limitation and he did not fantasize about possibilities he could never attain given his unique limits. Other examples of the creative appropriation are easy to find. Bruce Lee is reported to have had a short leg. Instead of assuming he could never master kung fu, he creatively appropriated the limits imposed by his short leg by learning to kick in new and

devastating ways, ways that were difficult to defend against. Toward the end of his life, Matisse was unable to paint. In response to his limitations, he changed mediums. Form his sickbed, he cut and pasted colored papers together and produced some of his most creative and beautiful works.

The diagram on the following page displays the paths of freedom and unfreedom.

The arrow that veers off to the left represents the unwilling-will's recoil from transformation. The path of the allowing-will moves from the left side to the right side of the obstacle, and then circles back around to the left again before it moves to the right. As we shall see, this circling round is meant to display a rather consistent pattern to all transformation.

There are actually a number of phases to appropriately dealing with a crisis. At first, allowing manifests as acceptance. Eventually, acceptance turns into insight. You begin to understand and feel at many levels what has happened, and sometimes you understand why. With insight and wisdom comes the knowledge of how to deal appropriately with your situation. The tension of displeasure is transformed into ecstatic energy, and finally you act appropriately, in an empowered, integrated, and responsible way. However, in the middle of this whole process, before you actually take empowered action, you very often find yourself in a phase that feels like a regression into old patterns more characteristic of the unwilling-will. If you have taken the process of allowing deeply enough and if you have done it many times, you realize that what appears to be a regression is really a fundamental readjusting and restructuring of your body-self in accordance with the new demands about to be made by your transformed life. In the diagram, this apparent regression is what the circling back into the left side of the obstacle represents.

You find this apparent regression at work at many levels in many different kinds of activities. Yoga is a good example. You work hard for a while trying to achieve an *asana* or pose. When you finally realize the *asana*, your struggle is transformed into a relaxed but vital and sometimes ecstatic energy of selfless yoga. Yet the next day you quickly discover you are unable to fall easily into the open and vital space of this same *asana*; it feels as if you have regressed. But after a week or so you find it again and this time it is yours. You will not lose it again. Your

body simply had to go through a period of relinquishing old patterns to this new openness. Many athletes and creative artists also experience this same sense of regression before completely integrating a new level of performance.

After my sojourn in the lotus land of purity, I experienced a series of apparent regressions that lasted two miserable years. At the time, I did not realize what was happening. Today, having been through the purifying fires of allowing many times, I now know that some of the major conflicts of my body-self were being painfully resolved. After a lot of intense struggle, allowing brought me to the lotus land of purity. But in order for the wisdom of this opening to become integrated into my life, to become more than an intense but fleeting experience of bliss, many aspects of my conflicted body-self had to be blown out of the way.

More often than not, especially in the early experiences of transformation, allowing takes you first into a purging of your con-

flicted psychospacial, psychotemporal orientations and then into an ecstatic, blissful spaciousness. Next you seem to regress as allowing creates a deeper, more extensive purging and dissolving of your conflicts. Finally, the wisdom of allowing begins to come to fruition in appropriate living and action. It becomes more and more integrated into your life and you begin living more and more from the allowing-will.

The phases of transformation are: acceptance, purging, wisdom, knowledge, the transformation of tension into energy, the deeper purging of apparent regression, and the integrated, appropriate action of the allowing-will. In experience, these phases often blend into each other and take a different order. If the transformation is very deep, it usually takes years to complete and you will go around and around the circle many times, cycling back through different levels of the various phases before you come out on the other side.

There are techniques and methods for

willing, but there are none for the creativity of allowing. Allowing is the only way transformation happens. It is truly the method that is no-method. Without allowing, the impetus toward transformation degenerates into just another recoil of the unwilling-will. When we live and make choices by means of our unwilling-will, we would much rather sign up for another weekend workshop of transformational technologies than suffer the release of our layers of misery and denial in the purging fires of allowing.

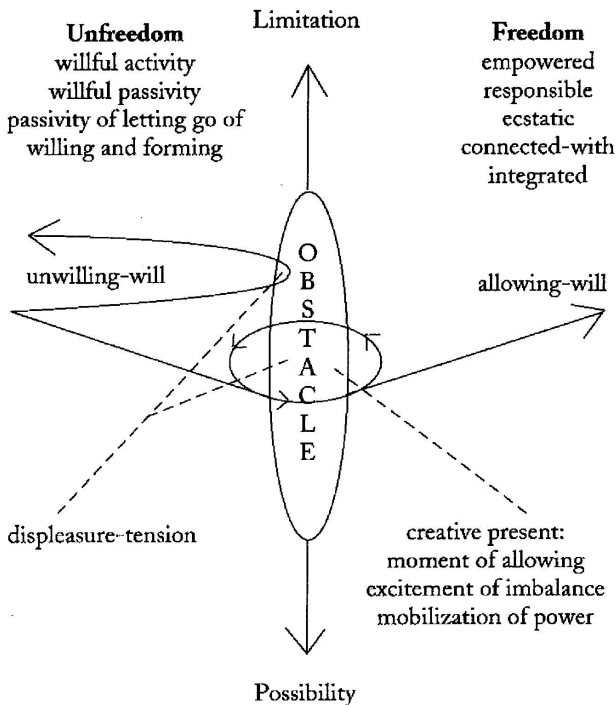
## DESIRE

Essentially, allowing is the only way to break up conflicted intentionality. It is the only way to dissolve and become free of the conflicts of oriented space. Desire, for example, is a form of intentionality. It is a form of interest, a way of orienting and investing body and energy in the world. Like our emotions it is also a form of mind. The mind is not a non-material ghost or thing that inhabits a soft machine. Mind is a certain power for investing attention in and taking hold of the world bodily. Mind is not a static thing, it is a way of spatializing and orienting attention toward the things of the world. Mind is not something we have, it is something we do. Mind is really a bodying-forth and a concerned *minding* of the world.

Desire is a way of minding the things of the world and bodily investing interest and energy in them. Each kind of desire brings with it its own kind of object of satisfaction. Artistic desire is interested in and satisfied by the beauties of art and nature. Perverted desire creates and desires perverted objects.

For example, the anti-body, anti-sexual traditions of our world have unwittingly created the fascination, demand, and need for pornography. The desire for pornography is created by an anti-sexual, anti-body upbringing. As Wilhelm Reich clearly understood, often those most against pornography are those most responsible for it. Often those who seek pornography and those who seek to suppress it, both come from the same sort of anti-sexual environment. Until the conflicted space of perverted desire is dissolved in allowing, the oxymoronic idiocy of a "Playboy philosophy" and the devastation of sexual abuse will never go away.

Our world projects and supports, partly



by means of the media and popular music, the most diverse and bizarre forms of conflicted desire. From hard pornography to soap operas and sitcoms we witness the most foolish and abusive interactions and take them for normal. Conflicted desire and intentionality is obvious everywhere we look. However, in allowing, when you break up any form of conflicted desire you automatically break up the attractiveness and addictive qualities of those objects and fantasies that seem to satisfy that conflicted desire. What was once interesting, fascinating, exciting and attractive to conflicted desire becomes foolish, boring, or simply uninteresting to unconflicted desire. By means of the power of allowing, for example, sexuality can finally be liberated and become a truly unfettered and powerful force that can transform lovers instead of imprisoning them. Only allowing gives rise to unconflicted willing and desire, to another way of living. Through allowing we simply outgrow our conflicts and limitations. The allowing-will is, therefore, the achievement and realization of transformation, creativity, freedom, and integrated action.

## TRANSFORMATION

Another way to describe the nature of transformation is to say that it begins with the experience of distinguishing the core from the surface. Distinguishing the core from the surface is the same as distinguishing the true self from the ego-self, or allowing from willing. Once core and surface or allowing and willing have been differentiated in experience, it then becomes possible to ground willing *in* allowing. Allowing and willing can become integrated as the allowing-will. In the end, there is no freedom of the will unless it emerges from the freedom of allowing.

Allowing has many levels. It is at the very center of any creative endeavor. It is, moreover, the spaciousness of love through which any form of healing must occur. Although our culture does not understand its importance, allowing is the surrendering of the core free of the conflicts of the human body-self. If this surrender goes deep enough, you will discover the true self at the very root of your personality. If it goes deeper yet, all of what you experience as you will dissolve into radiantly presenting spaciousness. At the end of this process the whole illusion of inner and outer finally disappears.

Because it is next to impossible to realize *that* which has always been spaciously awake and free when we are looking through the eyes of our conflicted body-selves, this last characterization of allowing is the most difficult to understand. Prior to but not separate from the looking, hearing, and feeling of our unique and individual body-self is a seeing, listening, and non-preferential love that knows no place or hindrance, but which embraces and is embraced by our bodies and the whole world of form. In the end, allowing transcends without leaving behind the very structure of oriented space. It transcends intentionality, that fundamental structure of our being in the world, of our body-mind. Intentionality simply evaporates, without anxiety, into an ecstatic scintillating openness which is never apart from the world of form and yet never identical to it.

See, for example, "Creativity", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XXXIV / 4 (Summer, 1976) pp. 397-409 and "Creative Performance: The Art of Life," *Research in Phenomenology*, (Vol. X, 1980) pp. 278-303.