

## The Five Characteristics of Reality

from A. H. Almaas, Spacecruiser, Chapter 3: "The Adventure of Being", pp. 32-47

As a context for beginning this in-depth exploration of the method of inquiry, I will discuss five facets or characteristics of true nature, the formless ground of everything. I will first present these characteristics from the perspective of the realized state, where reality is inseparable from true nature. Then I will discuss how they manifest in normal experience when they are seen through veils. *Note: "On the level of true reality, the five characteristics are inseparable. The five facets are all intertwined and happening at the same time. We have described them separately in order to reflect on them, but they are all one reality. The Diamond Guidance reflects all the five facets: awareness, oneness, dynamism, openness, and knowingness. However, the most important one, the most central one it reflects, is knowingness. "*

### 1. Awareness

1. The first quality of true nature is that it is inseparable from awareness. Our true nature is inherently aware. This is the fact of luminosity, the fact of light, the fact of consciousness.
2. We know this because when we experience any of the essential manifestations, we recognize that Being is inseparable from some kind of awareness, sensitivity, in-touchness or consciousness.
3. Awareness is not something in addition to true nature; it is an inherent and inseparable characteristic of true nature, the way heat is inherent in and inseparable from fire. This fact is reflected in our normal experience in the recognition that we possess awareness; we are innately able to be conscious and aware.
4. This understanding of awareness is similar to the Buddhist notion of the 'mirror-like wisdom'.
5. Awareness is coextensive with, coemergent with, completely pervades true nature. Awareness in this sense is not aware of presence, it *is* the presence. Presence is a self-aware medium.

6. In contrast, awareness in normal experience is patterned by the dichotomy of subject and object. There is always an awareness that is aware of something, where the awareness is the subject and the something is the object. Furthermore, awareness is commonly held to be a by-product of our brain and the physical senses. We tend to consider it to be a capacity inherent in certain sentient life-forms, directed and controlled by them, and limited in various ways by physical reality. The fact of awareness is, however, still present. The fact of consciousness is preserved; it is basic to experience.

[Nisargadatta: Awareness is itself and does not change with the event. The event may be pleasant or unpleasant, minor or important, awareness is the same. Take note of the peculiar nature of pure awareness, its natural self-identity, without the least trace of self-consciousness, and go to the root of it and you will soon realise that awareness is your true nature and nothing you may be aware of, you can call your own.]

Dyad:

Open to Awareness and tell me what arises.

## 2. **Oneness/Unity** ... (See Divine Light and Love doc)

1. The second characteristic of true reality is that the field of awareness, the field of presence, is pervasive and infinite, and includes everything within it. In fact It is a oneness, an indivisible unity. This is similar to the Buddhist notion of the "*wisdom of equality or evenness.*"
2. The fact that there are patterns within the field does not mean there are discrete objects. So in our experience, the fact that there is sadness and pressure and temperature and softness and hardness does not mean that different objects are there.
3. The field is all one consciousness with different patterns in different places. So the entire soul is unitary as well. When we recognize true nature and lose the sense of boundaries, we recognize that oneness pervades the whole universe. God has one mind.

4. The primary affect in the unitary consciousness is an appreciation of the interconnectedness of everything. The quality of love is implicit and pervasive in the oneness of true nature; it is the inherent goodness and positivity of reality.
5. When we are no longer conscious of the fact that true nature is a unitary field, the feeling of connectedness – or at least the possibility of connection – is all that remains. In our normal consciousness, we experience this as the feelings we have for other people and objects in our world – including the feelings of disconnection, such as longing, sadness, envy and hatred.
6. The fact that we can feel, that we are sensitive to what we interact with, is the way the underlying unity appears in our experience. The capacity to feel is based on the capacity to love; and love unifies – it is an expression of oneness. The basis of the heart is love and love is the expression of the unity of Being.

Dyad:

Open to the all-pervasive unity of reality and tell me what occurs.

### **3. Dynamism/Change/Transformation:**

1. The third characteristic is that True nature is dynamic. Reality is moving and changing all the time. This is obvious when you notice that your perception of your inner experience - or of the whole world - is not a snapshot; it is a movie. It is inherently in a constant state of change and transformation. It is not a static presence. This is related to the Buddhist notion of the *“all accomplishing wisdom.”*
2. Reality is a dynamic presence that is always changing through shifts in the manifest patterns. In fact, the presence of change is implicit in the fact of awareness; without it, there is no awareness. If there is only a

snapshot and the observer is part of the snapshot, the observer will have no awareness of anything.

3. Change is necessary for awareness. If you are aware of the Absolute, only the Absolute, and nothing but the Absolute, then you have no awareness of anything. That is why the experience of the Absolute is called cessation. But usually when you are aware of the Absolute, you are also aware of the manifestation, the dynamism, or the flow that is obvious in your own experience.
4. The human experience, or the experience of the soul, is in constant flow and change and transformation. When we see this characteristic on the level of true reality, we recognize it to be a creative, dynamic force, always creating the forms that we see. Ibin Arabi, the primary mystic thinker of Sufism, called it “new creation” or “continual creation”. That is how God creates - by transforming reality.
5. In our normal life, we see the dynamism as the changes and movements we go through, the flow of thoughts, of emotions and actions. Then the experience of change is not characterized by creativity and transformation, but more determined by cause and effect. We see this dynamism as more linear, and experience it as change in time.
6. The dynamism of Being is creative, it is what underlies all change and movement in the universe.
7. At the same time, since Being is essentially true nature, free and open, this dynamism possesses an inherent tendency to reveal true nature, with all its purity, beauty and subtlety. This revelation appears as an inherent direction of the dynamism in the human soul. In other words, when the dynamism functions freely and spontaneously, without the cramping and distorting influence of our conventional minds, it tends to transform our experience and perception towards greater clarity, knowledge, openness, truth and freedom. We call this *evolutionary tendency the optimizing force of the dynamism of Being*.
8. We experience the dynamism of Being in the fact that our personal experience is constantly changing. One state follows another, one feeling replaces another, thoughts and images come and go in a never ending stream. But when the optimizing force is operating in us, our experience

begins to deepen and expand, revealing new states, dimensions and capacities. We refer to this changing, evolutionary flow of our experience as *unfoldment*. Our soul is then revealing its inherent potentialities. From this we see that the unfoldment of the soul is a direct expression of the optimizing creative force of Being's dynamism.

Dyad:

Open to the fact of change and transformation and tell me what arises.

#### 4. **Openness/Spaciousness:** ( See "Openness in Inquiry doc)

1. Openness means an infinite number of possibilities - open to anything, open to manifest as anything, unlimited in its potential. This is the indeterminacy and inexhaustibility of True Nature.
2. Reality is always changing because its true nature is completely open. This is the *space* dimension of our Being: When you recognize True Nature you find it to be spacious. In other words, spaciousness is inherent in the presence that is true nature.
3. The whole universe is a deep mysterious nothingness, openness, lightness, and complete absence of any heaviness. And this very mysterious, delicate spaciousness has luminosity inherent in it, a glimmer, a radiance that gives it awareness of itself. This radiance appears in the various colors and forms we see as the many objects of discrimination. But it's a unified radiance - one field of light that is in dynamic flow and constant change. This fourth characteristic is related to the Buddhist notion of the "*wisdom of the reality field*", also called "*Dharmadhatu*": one of the awarenesses of the Buddha.
4. Before the realization of true nature, when you experience Essence as a presence inside you, you experience the spaciousness as an inner quality separate from Essence. Space feels empty of substance - it is lightness and openness - whereas Essence is presence that has a substantial quality. You experience Essence arising in space.
5. In the awareness of objective reality, Essence and space are recognized as the same thing; they are co-emergent. So Essence is a presence that is spacious, that is aware, that is continually transforming and creative.

6. We get the sense of time from the perception of change, so time reflects the dynamism of Being. Similarly, spatial extension reflects its openness. The openness and spaciousness of true nature, which is also the sense of depth, mystery, and infinity inherent in it, appears in our normal experience as the sense of physical space between, around, and within manifestation. Our experience has spatial extension; we cannot have perception without spatial extension, just as we cannot have it without change.
7. Shape and size, distance and extension, all reflect the inherent characteristic of openness. True nature has no boundaries in terms of size, shape, or distance. In fact, true nature is beyond extension.
8. When we fully experience true nature, the concept of space disappears. When that occurs, we recognize that there is no such thing as either distance or no distance. The concept of extension disappears; we then experience it only as openness, as possibility. And because of this possibility, everything manifests, all the colours and shapes.

Dyad:

Notice the *space* dimension of our being, its indeterminacy and inexhaustibility, and tell me what arises:

## 5. **Knowingness:**

1. The fifth characteristic of true nature is that it is not only awareness, oneness, dynamism, and openness, but also knowingness. This is similar to the Buddhist notion of the “*wisdom of discrimination*”, or the *discriminating awareness* of the Buddha. It is inherent to essential presence that it is not only awareness of presence but simultaneously the discrimination of the particular quality of presence, such as Compassion or peace.

2. This knowing is inherent to presence, inherent to the awareness of presence. It is not that presence arises and a separate awareness knows it as compassion. In fact, sometimes a quality arises that you are not familiar with, but the presence itself tells you what it is. Many people, for instance, do not know there is such a thing as the presence of Value. But if they pay attention when it arises, they recognize, "Oh yeah, this feels like value. I feel worthy, I have worth." So presence has in it - intrinsic to it- knowingness.
3. At the beginning of the inner journey, we usually experience Essence in one of three ways: as a presence that arises inside us, or that appears outside us, or that comes into us from the outside. These forms of experience, though real, are due to limitations in our perception, and can become veils if taken to be final. These experiences can be seen as an intermediate stage between normal experience and the objective experience of reality. When we experience true nature objectively, without veils, we recognize that it is neither inside nor outside. It's everywhere - outside, inside, and in between. The field of awareness has no boundaries. This presence is an infinite field of awareness , which means that true nature is not the true nature of the human soul only, but the true nature of everything. True nature is nothing but presence, which is at the same time awareness, oneness, and knowingness.
4. The moment you recognize that true nature is not bounded by your skin, that it is pervasive not only in the body but in everything else, you recognize that intrinsic *knowingness is not the experience of one part of reality recognizing another part.*
5. The intrinsic knowingness is the fact that the inherent mirror-like awareness, which is everywhere and everything, has a discriminating quality. It can discriminate the variations *that exist within itself.*

6. Objective reality is like an energy field with patterns and colors and forms, and *this field has its own inherent capacity to know what these elements are*. It can distinguish the red from the blue, the blue from the green, the rough from the soft, the soft from the hard. It can distinguish the fluid from the solid and the solid from the gaseous. This capacity is what we are calling *discriminating awareness*.
7. Discrimination means not only differentiation of patterns, shapes and forms, but also the inherent knowingness of what these forms are. Seen from this perspective, the whole universe is nothing but the discrimination inherent in true nature.
8. The ability to discriminate is inherent in our consciousness; that is why you can distinguish the pressure in your knee from the tension in your back. That is why you can differentiate the warmth in your heart from the heat in your pelvis, the emptiness in your belly from the thoughts in your mind. You can also differentiate the sounds you make from the ones you hear. But what are these things? They are knowledge, knowingness.
9. The thoughts you are experiencing are nothing but the knowingness of the thoughts. The pressure that you experience in your knee is a recognition of what that awareness is. It is an awareness of an impression and the recognition that it is a tension or a pressure. That is knowledge, basic knowingness.
10. You can say, "But there is actually a knee with pressure in it." Isn't that just a story you learned? If you forget all your knowledge from the past about human physiology and just pay attention to that area, what you find is a knowingness. This knowingness, what we call *basic knowledge*, is there all the time, and exists prior to commentary.
11. You can say, "Well, there is me and I'm feeling this warmth in my heart." But in fact, saying, "There is me, who is knowing the warmth in my heart," is nothing but the knowingness that there is something there that is aware of warmth and something there we

call the heart. Even the commentary is part of the knowingness; its existence is knowingness of the commentary itself.

12. So the whole field of experience is pervaded by knowingness, constituted of knowingness. If you look at a mountain, you say, "I'm seeing the mountain." Are you seeing the mountain or is there an awareness of a knowingness of seeing the mountain? All you can be aware of is your knowing that there is a mountain. The knowingness is the object and subject of awareness, for the experience itself is non-dual. You are in touch with knowingness in a nondual way. To say that there is a mountain is entirely another step. I am not saying that there is no mountain, but to assert that there is a mountain is a whole other step in addition to the fact of *knowingness*, which *is immediate and direct*.

13. You are aware of me talking to you; this is your knowingness. Apart from that knowingness, I cannot exist, as far as you are concerned. That does not mean that I do not exist; that is not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that as far as your experience is concerned, I do not exist apart from your knowingness.

14. Reality inherently possesses not only awareness, but discrimination, a faculty that discerns what is encompassed in this awareness.

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True reality is presence that has self pervasive awareness that possesses at the same time a discriminating knowingness. This fact, which is important for inquiry, can be recognized in your own personal experience. Your normal experience is of being a person with awareness and a capacity to discriminate. But this discrimination is not a result of the mind's labels; the labeling comes later. The inherent discrimination happens as a part of the awareness. You might discriminate the pattern of a tree outside your window and call it a tree, but your ability to discern the pattern of the tree is already there before you call it a tree. It

is the same with the capacity to discriminate your inner impressions, such as various emotions, sensations, and thoughts. For example, your inherent recognition of sadness – the soft, warm dissolution of holding in the chest – exists prior to your mind's labeling the experience “sadness.”

When the sense of inherent discrimination is obscured to us, it manifests in our normal experience as thinking and labeling, what we ordinarily call knowledge. However, this is a reflection, one step removed from the true knowingness. In other words, the normal knowingness that has to do with thinking, memory, reasoning, and labeling is how true knowingness appears in our ordinary egoic experience. It is ordinary knowledge, in contrast to basic knowledge.

## **Knowingness in the Human Soul**

Whereas the #1 Awareness, the #2 Oneness, and the #4 Openness are constant and unchanging facets of reality, and the #3 Dynamism is the experience of change, it is through the #5 Knowingness that we experience what is and what changes. Knowingness is the dimension that recognizes all the various manifestations of our life. And the details of knowingness are always different from moment to moment. That is why it is said “God never repeats himself”. The status of the universe is always different, always new. This is not an esoteric idea. If you think of yourself, you will recognize that no second in your experience is truly like any other. It's always changing, always different.

Now, this discriminating awareness or knowingness is the source of all experience - the various impressions, forms, and colors. Whether they are ordinary physical experiences or unusual spiritual experiences, they are all the same to the inherent knowingness - they are all-knowingness, at different levels and intensities of brilliance. The ego experience is just dull knowingness, while essential experience is a bright knowingness, a luminous presence.

## Diamond Guidance

1. The inherent discriminating knowingness of true nature encompasses the content of all that exists, all that can possibly exist, and all that has ever existed.
2. While it transcends the experience of the human soul, it nevertheless appears within our individual consciousness in a specific essential form. More precisely, this knowingness, which is itself the knowledge of everything, manifests in the soul as the specific capacity of discrimination. In other words, the Divine mind can manifest in the soul in miniature form - a microcosm of that macrocosm. We call this microcosm the Diamond Guidance.
3. The label "Diamond Guidance" reflects the way this essential manifestation of true nature functions, as it reveals the inherent discrimination in experience.
4. When this essential presence manifests in the soul she can discriminate with the clarity, precision and the penetration of a diamond what is actually present in her field of awareness. The Diamond Guidance can guide the soul all the way from recognizing an emotional truth in the moment to the discernment of the inherent discrimination in reality.
5. That is why I said before ***that a spaceship that originates from the star system we are traveling to is the most reliable vehicle we can use to go there.***
6. So the Diamond Guidance is the specific manifestation of the Divine Mind arising in our soul as a personal capacity. It is what gives our soul the ability to know exactly what is going on and to understand our experience.
7. Understanding our experience is knowing what it is directly, feeling it, and having insight into that feeling, all as part of the immediate experience.

8. Because it is a reflection, an emanation, or a particularization of the Divine Mind, the Diamond Guidance has the capacity to *reveal* our experience, to penetrate its obscurations all the way to clarity and truth.
9. I call the Diamond Guidance a vehicle of real knowledge because its specific capacity is to make it possible for the soul to know herself. And if you know yourself, then you know your source, because this source is your ultimate identity,
  
10. The totality of the soul is a microcosm of all of reality, the unity of Being. The Diamond Guidance is a microcosm of the characteristic of the knowingness of God, the macrocosm of reality.
11. But remember, on the level of true reality , the five characteristics are inseparable. The five facets are all intertwined and happening at the same time. We have described them separately in order to reflect on them, but they are all one reality.
12. The Diamond Guidance reflects all the five facets: awareness, oneness, dynamism, openness, and knowingness. However, the most important one, the most central one it reflects, is knowingness. ....

Dyad:

Open to your inherent capacity to know, to discriminate what is in awareness, and tell me what arises.