

ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SPACE

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Through every human being, unique space, intimate space, opens
up to the world. . .

Rilke

The essence of mind is like space;
Therefore there is nothing that it does not encompass.

THopa

Western psychology, with a few exceptions (James, 1890; Lewin, 1936; Matte Blanco, 1975), has on the whole ignored any relationship between mind and space, no doubt because of the lingering influence of Descartes, who separated the world into the thinking substance of mind as over against the spatially-extended substance of matter. This paper will examine the relationship between mind and space in an experiential-phenomenological framework and show that the notion of psychological space can potentially be of great value in helping us to understand the nature of consciousness and the ways in which we create our world,

TYPES OF SPACE

The most common notions of space in Western culture refer either to *perceptual* or to *conceptual* space. *Perceptual space* is the space "out there" that we can see, and to a lesser extent feel in a tactile way with our bodies. Perceptual space, is characterized by three-dimensionality, juxtapositions, form and distances, and directionality (forward, back, up, down, left, right, under, around, and so on). *Conceptual space* is a postulated abstract continuum, defined primarily by mathematics and physics, that accounts for the locations and relations of physi-

*perceptual
and
conceptual
space*

cal objects. The eye has been the chief organ for developing the sense of space and spatial relations, giving rise to the development of geometrical space, which served as the basis for classical physics. Since mathematics and physics have established the basic conceptual model for the world that modern Western man accepts as real, their definition of space has become dominant. Since perceptual and conceptual space can be objectively defined and measured, they are generally thought to comprise all that space "really is."

*psychological
space*

But the notion of space may be approached in another way, in terms of *psychological space*, space-as-experienced. Psychological space is not readily measurable by any of the sense data or yardsticks that are used to define perceptual or conceptual space. Nevertheless it is *clearly experienceable*. This paper will discuss our experience of space, which Minkowski (1970) referred to as "lived space":

For us, space cannot be reduced to geometric relations, relations which we establish as if, reduced to the simple role of curious spectators or scientists, we were outside space. We *live and act in space*, and our personal lives, as well as the social life of humanity, unfolds in space. Life spreads out in space without having a geometric extension in the proper sense of the word. We have need of expansion, of perspective, in order to live. Space is as indispensable as time to the development of life (p. 400).

*lived
space*

The term "lived space" emphasizes the dynamic, sentient quality of psychological space. It refers to our living, pre-articulate feeling of space, just as "lived time" is the felt sense of becoming, different from any mathematical or diurnal measurements of "objective" time. Three interrelated kinds of lived space will be distinguished: 1) *oriented space* that is experienced *bodily*; 2) *feelingspace*, the spatial quality of the felt environment we create around ourselves; and 3) *openspace*, a totally unconditioned, formless dimension underlying all our activity, which can be understood and realized as the essential quality of awareness itself.

ORIENTED SPACE

Oriented space (Ellenberger, 1958) is the way in which the body orients itself to perceptual space (which is primarily visual, and to a lesser extent, tactile and auditory) in terms of vertical and horizontal axes, the size, shape, location, and distance of objects, or the overall spatial quality of specific physical environments. Oriented space will not receive much

attention here, since it has been studied more than other modes of lived space, both by the phenomenologists, e.g., Merleau-Ponty (1962), and by experimental psychologist Claparede (1943), Witkin (1949), Sandstrom (1951), and Howard & Templeton (1966).

FEELING SPACE

Whereas oriented space involves the body as relating to physical objects and an environment "out there," feeling space is the way in which the psychological atmosphere or environment in which we live at any moment is created and felt. It refers to the feeling-tone of psychological space, the inner affective landscape, and will also be referred to here as *affective space*. As an example of what is meant by feeling space, if you the reader turn and examine how you feel now, the affective quality of your psychological landscape, you can probably sense some overall, perhaps fuzzy, feeling-tone that could be brought further into focus if necessary. You may not be able to put this affective space into words, but you may be able to sense that it is perhaps different from the one that you were in this morning when you woke up, or when you were last upset by some personal problem. The feeling-tone of some of these spaces may be very diffuse and unfocused, but nonetheless possessing a particular felt quality. Others have a more definable quality to them, perhaps more specifically positive or negative. Still others may be highly charged emotional spaces. In any case, each of these affective environments is a kind of space with its own atmosphere and quality.

*the
feeling-tone
of space*

It is interesting to notice that many of our descriptions of feelings, moods, and states of mind are primarily spatial in character. We feel high, low, weighed-down, uplifted, attracted, repelled, mixed-up, on top of things, distant, close, shallow, bursting out all over, hemmed-in, broad-minded, pushy, yielding, stagnant, flowing, even "spaced-out." These spatially-oriented descriptions suggest some kind of intimate connection between mind and space (Matte Blanco, 1975). Samuel Alexander (1950) points out this connection in a different way:

*mind
and
space*

My mind is for me, that is for itself, spread out or voluminous in its enjoyment. Within this vague extension of volume the separate and salient mental acts or processes stand out as having position, and 'direction'. My mind is streaked with these more pungent processes, as when a shoot of painful consciousness is felt.... These streaks and shoots of consciousness have the vaguest posi-

tion, but they have it, and such position and direction are most clearly marked in the higher acts of mind, imagination, desire, or thinking, and especially when there is a change in what we call the direction of our thinking Thus just as we enjoy a time filled with mental events, so we enjoy an extension or space filled with mental events (pp, 97-98).

*thinking
and
space*

William James (1890) also noted a spatial dimension in thinking:

My brain appears to me as if all shot across with lines of direction, ... When I try to remember or reflect, the movements in question, instead of being directed towards the periphery, seem to come from the periphery inwards In reasoning, I find that I am apt to have a kind of vaguely localized diagram in my mind, with the various fractional objects of the thought disposed at particular points thereof (p, 300).

More recently, Jaynes (1976) has shown how "spatialization is characteristic of all conscious thought" (p. 60).

*the
quality
and
texture
of space*

Furthermore, our actual relation to the quality and texture of the space we inhabit changes according to how we feel. When we feel joyous, space is light and expansive. When we are sad, space is heavy and oppressive, seeming to press down upon us - it is hard to get moving, the body feels denser, the pull of gravity seems stronger, and space is thicker around us. The feeling-tone of affective space often corresponds closely with the oriented bodily sense of the actual physical space we inhabit. For example, we may feel more expansive on top of a mountain. But this is not always the case. We can feel claustrophobic in the middle of a desert, or quite spacious in a crowded room. We can feel distant from the people crowding around us, or close to a loved one a thousand miles away.

Dimensions of Feeling Space

expansion

A major dimension of feeling space is that of expansion and contraction. When feeling good, we are generally more expansive, moving outward, and able to take on more of the world without hesitation. With the advent of psychedelic drugs, it became common to speak of "expanded states of consciousness." Surely the major feature of such an expanded state is a sense of having greater room in which to move and be - the promise of moving beyond what the poet Eluard called "the solemn geographies of human limits." In such an expanded space, we have a sense of large zones of uncharted territory surrounding us, as well as a sense of excitement about

potential explorations to be made into these unfamiliar areas. Baudelaire used a favorite word, "vast," to describe these spaces of "vast thoughts," "vast perspectives," "vast silences."

At the other end of this dimension, when space contracts, it can feel as though we are being squeezed and crushed against our boundaries, and there is nowhere to expand. Our whole world feels compressed: the past is breathing down our neck, and the future is without promise, going nowhere. We may feel claustrophobia and panic, and want to burst through the walls that confine *us*, the barriers we are up against.

A second major dimension of feeling space is that of surface and depth. Feeling spaces may be very flat, shallow, and two-dimensional, or they may be charged with depth, voluminousness, and vivid texture. Affective space has depth when it is textured with many levels of meaning. For example, we may enter a deep space with another person in which we sense tangible, vivid meanings in the interaction, grading off into more profound levels of meaning, vaguely sensed but *just* out of reach. Whereas expansion is marked by the sense of moving beyond boundaries, depth is characterized by a sense of richness and untapped potentiality. In Rilke's words, this is "space, the invisible space that man can live in nevertheless, and which surrounds him with countless presences" (quoted in Bachelard, 1964, p. 203). Flat spaces, on the other hand, are rather dull, without texture or flavor, while seeming like an endless monotonous plain spread out all around us.

*the surface
and
depth
a/space*

A third way to characterize feeling space is in terms of a dynamic-frozen dimension. Dynamic spaces are sensed as moving, in-flux, going somewhere, while frozen space is solidified, stuck. Though emotionally-charged spaces pass through dynamic ranges as they arise or fall away, they tend to become frozen when they are fully developed, as when I say that I was "stuck in my emotions."

*dynamic
spaces*

It is interesting that in all of these dimensions our usual tendency is to be drawn in the direction of greater space. We feel drawn toward space that has expansiveness, depth, or dynamism perhaps because it allows us more room to be what we are, perhaps because we want to lose ourselves in it, perhaps because it is a premonition or reminder of some deeper nature.

Further Characteristics of Feeling Space

Aside from its different dimensions, the very nature of feeling

*the
space
of
hearing*

space itself bears further study. Whereas the body's sense of oriented space, as well as our notions of perceptual and conceptual space, mostly derive from the visual faculty, feeling space has a different quality to it, more analogous in sensory terms to the space of hearing. William James (quoted in Zuckerkandl, 1956) has noted that "sounds seem to occupy all the room between us and their source." He also characterizes the space of hearing as a "simple total vastness," analogous visually to our sense of the "empty blue sky when we lie on our backs." Whereas in oriented space we relate to space and its objects as something "outside" and separate from the body which is "here," in feeling space we actually feel a closer, more interchangeable relationship between body and world, just as in the moment of being-with-music, we do not actually distinguish where we leave off and the music begins. In some sense we become the music as it flows into and through us, animating our pulse and sensibilities. Feeling space has this fluid quality, a sense of development and shifting relations. It is, as Zuckerkandl says, a "placeless, flowing space." It is space "become alive."

Implied in what has just been said is a loss of distance between myself and the space I inhabit. "Whereas the eye draws the strict boundary line that divides without from within, world from self, the ear creates a bridge" (Zuckerkandl, 1956, p. 291; the author is indebted to this source for an excellent discussion of the spatiality of music.) This is space "in which I lose myself" (p. 344). Not that the sense of self is completely obliterated here, but the distance between self and world diminishes as we merge into the space around us.

*the
landscape
of
feeling
space*

Another characteristic of feeling space is its centeredness, analogous to the sense of music "streaming in on us from all sides" (p. 291). Feeling space is structured around a central point, a sense of "me-here-ness" around which the whole affective landscape is constructed. In an oppressive space, for instance, we may feel as though we are the focal point of many burdens, some of which are apparent, and others of which may be lurking somewhere over the horizon. Just as we are the center of our visual and auditory fields, we exist at the center of the landscapes of affective space as well.

Feeling space is like a field of energy that we create around ourselves, constantly changing and rearranging itself around us in ever different forms. This may be more apparent in those spaces that are buoyant, light, or dancing, but even in the heavier, constricting or frozen spaces, there seems to be a kind

of brooding energy that is restless and dissatisfied, almost threatening to break through into something else at any moment. In this sense feeling space is always in the process of becoming.

OPEN SPACE

A third kind of lived space goes beyond the purely psychological dimensions mentioned above, to the ontological level of our basic being. Open space (Trungpa, 1973) refers to the groundless, insubstantial, omnipotential awareness that underlies our more conditioned mind-spaces. From a Buddhist perspective, our basic nature is of the essence of open space, which allows for 1) the seemingly inevitable confusion that human beings fall into when they try to avoid or solidify this space, out of fear or ignorance; and 2) the possibility of freedom and liberation, in that no one is ever actually stuck in any of the positions, attitudes, or eventualities that seem to be fixed or imprisoning.

*the
underlying
space
Our
basic
nature*

Our attraction to the deeper, more dynamic or expansive physical and psychological spaces, from the wide open spaces of unexplored lands, the rolling space of the restless seas, and the vast reaches of outer space, to the "expansion" of consciousness itself, could be seen as a longing for this free open space at the very basis of our being.

When men look up into the space of heaven and invoke heaven, or a power that is supposed to reside there, they invoke in reality forces within themselves, which, by being projected outwards, are visualized or felt as heaven or cosmic space. If we contemplate the mysterious depth and blueness of the firmament, we contemplate the depth of our inner being, of our own mysterious all-comprising consciousness in its primordial, unsullied purity: unsullied by thoughts ... undivided by discriminations, desires, and aversions (Govinda, 1959, p. 117).

Thus open space seems to bring out a root ambivalence: on the one hand, we are drawn to it because of the room it allows us to be, while on the other hand, we fear it because it does not provide any kind of *terrafirma* or feedback to confirm individual identity. Everyday relations with physical and affective space illustrate this same ambivalence. When we are with people overmuch, we may long for space of our own, but when we have space all to ourselves, we may long to be with people. Many urban emigrants flee the congestion of populated areas for the open country, only to bring with them all the ac-

*the
ambivalence
of
open space*

coutrements of city life, thereby filling up the space and turning it into a suburb. There is a tendency to want to let go and yield to an infinite space that we cannot fill up with our personal clutter, yet we may feel undermined by its indifference to our projects. Thus our attraction to space is counterbalanced by all kinds of strategies for manipulating this openness in us, such as grasping, withdrawing, filling-in and overcrowding, conquering and controlling.

*the
non-conceptual
basis of
open space*

The Buddhist teachings suggest that the personal realization of the absolutely open dimension of being is a radical transformation that does not allow any viewpoint or perspective to be formulated about it. Since thought and conceptualization arise from and are surrounded by open space, it is not something that can be objectified or explained through concepts. It can only be discovered as the basis of each moment of awareness, "nearer than near." All that this kind of discussion can do is to point to relative ways in which we have little flashes and glimpses of open space in everyday life, as it seeps through the cracks in our self-enclosed worlds and reminds us of its encompassing nature.

For example, a friend I know very well, whom I could describe in numerous ways and whose behavior is fairly predictable, still, in a moment of keen awareness of his existence, perhaps heightened by love or hatred, may suddenly become totally unfathomable in my eyes, beyond any of my categories of discursive understanding. I glimpse the open space which encompasses him, through and behind his distinct qualities. Of course, without knowing these familiar traits, I might not be able to glimpse as readily the way in which he completely transcends them and exists in some way free of all his habits, beliefs, and characteristics. We may often have similar glimpses into our own nature, more or less dramatic, which add up to the same thing: we cannot pin down our basic being. For in essence, it is completely open, even in the midst of seemingly frozen emotional states or dense thought-clusters.

*a glimpse
of
open space*

Another simple example of a glimpse of open space occurs when we suddenly awake from being totally caught up in some fantasy, thought, or emotion, and are able to step outside of it and see it wordlessly for what it is, without the need to analyze it. This may happen in meditation when one lets a thought go and returns one's attention to the breath. Even the densest thoughts are surrounded by the space in which they arise. As long as we are totally immersed in the thoughts, we do not recognize this space surrounding them. However, in medita-

tion we may begin to glimpse this larger space and find that the thoughts themselves dissolve, revealing their insubstantial *nature*. Tarthang Tulku (1974) calls this the process of "cracking thoughts":

As thoughts come, limitations, fixations, and judgments are set up. But if our awareness is in the center of thought, the thought *itself* dissolves. The mind is completely aware, completely balanced ... you can be in the thought and you can stay in it. ... You become the center of the thought. But there is not really any center-the center becomes balance. There's no 'being,' no 'object-subject relationships': none of these categories exist. Yet at the same time, there is functionality, there is complete openness So we kind of crack each thought, like cracking nuts, If we can do this, any thought becomes meditation (pp. 9-10).

*cracking
thoughts*

The space at the core of our being is a non-articulated open dimension that underlies all the articulated objects of consciousness. As the Japanese philosopher Izutsu (1974) points out:

The phenomenal world is constantly and uninterruptedly emerging out of, and sinking instantaneously back into, the ... depths of the Nothing, and ... as each of the phenomena thus makes itself manifest for an instant, the non-articulated discloses itself like a flash. The non-articulated is nowhere to be found except in such ... flashes (p. 172).

Buddhist psychology, in contrast to traditional Western psychology, recognizes the deeper, primordial spaciousness underlying the various conditioned forms of affective space, because of its rootedness in meditation practice. In Buddhist meditation, open space is related to attention to breathing. Breath, which has long been associated with "spirit" or root-being in all cultures, has a literal connection with space, both physically and psychologically. William James (1967), with his usual penetrating insight, also suggests this connection between mind and breath:

I am as confident as I am of anything that, in myself, the stream of thinking ... is only a careless name for what, when scrutinized, reveals itself to consist chiefly of the stream of my breathing ... breath moving outwards, between the glottis and the nostrils, is, I am persuaded, the essence out of which philosophers have constructed the [fictitious] entity known to them as consciousness (p. 183).

*mind
and
breath*

Working with the breath in meditation is described in one Tibetan phrase as "mixing mind and space." Here, it seems, we

have come full circle from Descartes' dualistic sundering of mind and space.

*tenfold
basic
nature
of
mind*

The ways in which the basic nature of mind is like open space have been described in one Zen text ("Records Mirroring the Original Source," cited in Hisamatsu, 1960) as tenfold: 1) It is without obstruction, allowing things to emerge without being filled-in by them. 2) It is omnipresent, present in all phenomena, in form and emptiness. 3) It is impartial, in the sense of letting things be what they are. 4) It is broad and great, meaning that it is not limited by any conceptual forms. 5) It is formless, not able to be captured or expressed by any delimited structures. 6) It is pure, uncontaminated by perspectives and viewpoints. 7) It is stable, neither arising nor passing away, but the ground of all such temporal phenomena. 8) It is "voiding of being," meaning that it cannot be said to "exist" in any objective way. 9) It is "voiding of voidness," meaning that open space is not simply nothing. 10) It is "without obtaining," meaning that it cannot be grasped or held onto in any way.

Another quality of open space is its "centerless" nature, in contrast to the centered characteristics of oriented and attuned space. It is centerless in that it contains no reference point, no subject or object, no hereness as opposed to thereeness. Feeling space has a center because it is self-created: we create our world revolving around ourselves as the pivotal point. Open space, by contrast, just is; it does not come into being through our agency. The Tantric Buddhist use of the *mandala* symbolizes this dynamic field of open space which is based on the realization of a centerless center:

*centerless
space*

In the case of the tantric version of mandala, everything is centered around centerless space, in which there is no watcher or perceiver. Because there is no watcher or perceiver, the fringe becomes extremely vivid. The mandala principle expresses the experience of seeing the relatedness of all phenomena. . . . The patterns of phenomena become clear because there is no partiality in one's perspective. All corners are visible, awareness is all-pervading (Trungpa, 1976, p. 153).

This subtlety of mandala symbolism was not *completely* understood in Jung's (1959) psychological interpretation of it in terms of a fixed reference point, "a center of personality, a kind of central part within the psyche, to which everything is related" (p, 357). Although Jung did observe a centering function of the mandala, his overriding concern with self-centering made him reduce the mandala's wider meaning to a narrowing of the spatial field: "It is meant to aid concentration by nar-

rowing down the psychic field of vision and restricting it to the center" (p. 356). Although he recognized that the mandala represents a shift in the psychic center, he overlooked another dimension of mandala symbolism—the panoramic openness of the mandala field, in which "space does not have a fringe or center. Each corner of space is center as well as fringe" (Trungpa, 1976, p. 145).

Jung's incomplete understanding of the mandala is instructive, for it illustrates the problem that Western psychology encounters when it attempts to study the wider awareness elucidated by Eastern psychology. It seems that Jung had difficulty with the notion of consciousness without a center, and he saw the mandala as expressing a shift in the psychic center from ego to self. He tended to misinterpret the Buddhist notion of non-substantiality, or open and centerless space, through his presupposition that the bedrock of mind is *the* unconscious, a separate mental system containing innate unconscious forms and contents. The problems with this notion have been critically examined elsewhere (WeIwood, 1974, 1977). For Jung (1958), the Buddhist term *voidness* (i.e., open space) could only be referring to the unconscious mind, as he demonstrates in the following interpretive passage:

The One Mind being verily of the Voidness and without any foundation, one's mind is, likewise, as vacuous as the sky'. The One Mind and the individual mind are equally void and vacuous. Only the collective and personal unconscious can be meant by this statement, for the conscious mind is in no circumstances 'vacuous' (p.505).

The Buddhist statement that the basic nature of mind is like open space is an attempt to point to the ever-present non-articulated dimension from which all articulations arise. This non-articulate open space is not a realm of unconscious contents, but is rather the creative source of our being, beyond all form and content. This is what DeMartino (1961) means when he says:

For Dr. lung, the unconscious is still a kind of 'being' ... for Zen, however, the main point is that the entire structure of being, including its unconscious aspect, must be radically broken through (p.131).

From the Buddhist perspective, open space can be realized through the practice of sitting meditation, which provides the *space* in which to experience fully both one's mind forms and the larger openness that shines through them.

*consciousness
without a
center*

*non-articulate
open space*

*the centered
forms of
feeling
space*

What is the relation between the centered forms of feeling space and centerless open space? According to Buddhist psychology, panic arises in relation to open space out of fear and ignorance of its nature. Instead of recognizing this open dimension as the fertile, omnipotential ground of our being, it may be seen as threatening, because it provides no support, feedback, or confirmation for our individuality, which we feel the need to affirm. So we project self-created psychological worlds, of which we are the center. These are the forms of affective space, which, varying in depth, vitality, and texture, all seem to be conditioned by a need to be at the center of things. Since open space underlies us even when we are avoiding it, attuned spaces can never be totally frozen or solid, but tend to shift and change shape, like slicks of oil on the fluid background of water. For example, the space of relative silence and stillness naturally gives rise to movement, providing impetus for further developments. As the Zen teacher Kobun Chino (1976) so nicely puts it:

We experience relative stillness in many ways... In Death Valley you feel that stillness, but in a few moments you begin to suffer. You cannot be still like that. Because of your existence, stillness begins to move.

You spoke that word so easily - "stillness." There is no such thing. It's a very important point. Stillness moves. What stillness means is "never slip back." We say "stillness," but there is more to come.

Similarly, spaces of clutter, confusion, and chaos often call out for stillness and sanity. Thus feeling spaces have little stability, and are constantly in flux. Becoming aware of this changeability allows the possibility of a glimpse of openness beneath the shifting forms. "Little awakenings" may occur, when self-created worlds are seen to be floating in space, rather than rooted in solid ground. We seem to be continually moving back and forth between flashes of open space and the conditioned forms of feeling space.

*the
spaciousness
of complete
openness*

One powerful way to see the difference between feeling space and open space is to be in the presence of an enlightened being, one who seems to radiate spaciousness. His complete openness can make one more sharply aware of a succession of affective spaces experienced while in his presence. He may be seen as threatening, seducing, or indifferent depending on the felt space one is in. Every attempt to encompass him turns out to be projection. *However*, his greater spaciousness seems to accom-

moderate all one's projections serving as an invitation to open up further. Not only can one discover no barriers, limitations, or boundaries in his space, but also one senses that his spaciousness does not exclude one's own space; in fact, it is one and the same space. This unconditional openness seems to be different from the level of relative openness of "self-actualizing" or "fully-functioning," so often taken as the goal of psychotherapy and personality-based psychologies. "Self-actualizing" or "fully-functioning" by definition still retains a sense of limits, boundaries, and relative absorption in one's own world. It seems that the fully-functioning individual, one who lives from his inner experiencing, has achieved a certain fluidity of affective space so that he does not get stuck in his projections, and can move easily from one feeling space to another. He may have mastered his feeling spaces, whereas the enlightened person could be considered a master of open space.

*unconditional
and
relative
openness*

SPACING IN AND SPACING OUT

It seems that children, especially before the consolidation of their sense of personal identity, live closer to open space than adults in many ways. They change quite rapidly, incorporate all kinds of contradictions, and do not need a consistent *persona* to refer everything back to. They have frequent "lapses" into what appears to be "empty-mindedness," which might be called "spacing in." The child's spacing in is different from distracted "spacing out" (which will be discussed more fully below) in that the child is still naturally close to an open ground, which gradually becomes more and more obstructed as he gets older. Van de Wetering (1975) describes this childhood sense:

*the
empty-mindedness
of a child*

As a child I had known that the excitement, fears, and worries the grown-ups ... went in for, had no real foundation. I knew it in flashes, but the others would always manage to convince me that I was wrong and once again I would feel guilty or fearful or both (p.92).

Rilke (1977) describes this childhood sense more poetically:

We were growing; sometimes we hurried
to grow up too soon, half for the sake of those
who had nothing more than being grown-up.
Yet when we were alone, we still amused
ourselves with the everlasting, and stood there
in that *gap* between world and toy,
in a place which, from the very start,
had been established for a pure event.

(P. 31, my italics)

*the
socialization
process*

Parents and teachers tend to be threatened by the child's space-ins, which seem to undermine the adult's solidity and authority. The child may be punished or taught to devalue these little openings in his world, which are seen as regressive, working against "growing up," and therefore to be denied and avoided. Ernest Becker (1973) argues that, even aside from socialization, the child inherently lacks the strength to face fully the groundlessness of his existence:

The child could not out of himself muster the stamina and the authority necessary to live in full expansiveness with limitless horizons of perception and experience (p, 62).

So one of the first things a child has to do is to learn to "abandon ecstasy," to do without awe, to leave fear and trembling behind. Only then can he act with a certain oblivious self-confidence.... He avoids despair by building defenses, and these defenses allow him to feel a basic sense of self-worth, of meaningfulness, of power. They allow him to feel that he *controls* his life and his death, that he really does live and act as a willful and free individual, that he has a unique and self-fashioned identity, that he is *somebody* (p. 55).

*becoming
threatened
by space*

In any case, through some combination of socialization and the child's inherent fears, he develops a problematic relationship to open space, fearing it, denying it, or feeling guilty about it. In becoming threatened by space, the child learns to space *out*.

One might further speculate that most of our character traits and habits represent flights from open space, which, inasmuch as it undermines our projected worlds, is naturally associated with death. In Becker's words:

(Man] literally drives himself into a blind obliviousness with social games, psychological tricks, personal preoccupations so far removed from the reality of his situation that they are forms of madness-agreed madness, shared madness, disguised and dignified madness, but madness all the same. "Character traits ... are secret psychoses" (p. 27).

In schizophrenia and other forms of psychopathology, this fear may become full-blown panic, that may convert open space into an emotional space whose center takes the form of a vortex, threatening to suck one down. Wilson Van Dusen (1958) discovered that blank spaces and holes in experience play a major role in all forms of psychopathology:

More and more it came to appear that these blank holes lay at the center of psychopathology. The blank holes came to be the key both to pathology and to psychotherapeutic change....

In the obsessive compulsive they represent the loss of order and control. In the depressive they are the black hole of time standing still. In the character disorders they are the encroachment of meaninglessness or terror. In every case they represent the unknown, the unnamed threat, the source of anxiety and disintegration. They are nothingness, non-being, threat.

It is extremely important to know what people do when faced with encroaching blankness. Many talk to fill up space. Many must act to fill the empty space with themselves. In all cases it must be filled up or sealed off. I have yet to see a case of psychopathology where the blankness was comfortably tolerated (p. 254).

Thus the schizophrenic defends against spacing in by spacing out. Natural spacing in, clear flashes of the nonarticulate open space underlying things, should be differentiated from spacing out, which seems to be connected with a loss of center in feeling space, so that one is invaded by space, or lost and drifting in space. Spacing in, or creative empty-mindedness, is non-articulate, but active and insightful: attention is diffuse yet clear, touching on the highlights of a whole field of activity without singling out anyone object as focal. Spacing out, in contrast, is inarticulate, passive, and opaque: attention is simply blurred and scattered. Spacing out is often related to changes undergone in moving from one feeling space to another. In the shift we may temporarily lose our center, becoming lost in space until the center comes back into focus in a new space, a new landscape. Spacing out may be a way of resisting the change, or perhaps a momentary immobilization while the scene shifts. It involves a distraction or fragmentation of attention, which may or may not be accompanied by fantasies and daydream. William James (1890) describes one version of this state:

Most people fall several times a day into a fit of something like this: The eyes are fixed on vacancy, the sounds of the world melt into confused unity, the attention is dispersed so that the whole body is felt, as it were, at once, and the foreground of consciousness is filled, if by anything, by a sort of solemn sense of surrender to the empty passing of time. In the dim background of our mind we know meanwhile what we ought to be doing: getting up, dressing ourselves, answering the person who has spoken to us, trying to make the next step in our reasoning. But somehow we cannot *start*; the *pensee de derriere la tete* fails to pierce the shell of lethargy that wraps our state about. Every moment we expect the shell to break.... But it does continue ... and we float with it

*the
psychopathology
of
blank space*

*defenses
and
spacing in
or
spacing out*

until-also without reason that we can discover-an energy is given, something-we know not what-enables us to gather ourselves together, we wink our eyes, we shake our heads, the background-ideas become effective, and the wheels of life go round again (p. 404).

SPACE AND FORM

*emptiness
and
form*

As a temporary phase, spacing out is a common everyday occurrence. But as a way of life, it reflects a neglect and avoidance of the necessary role of form in relation to space. It seems that space can only function creatively in relation to form. As the *Heart Sutra* says, "emptiness is no other than form.... " In other words, a space that *is* other than form, that neglects or attempts to avoid the formal aspect of things, may become a chronic spacing out, a surrender to drifting at the expense of being grounded in life. The enlightened person exemplifies this inseparable interconnectedness of form and emptiness. His complete spaciousness is matched by a close attention to detail, so that things are accomplished properly and precisely.

*creative
problem
solving*

Another example of the interdependence of space and form occurs in creative problem-solving. Creative solutions most often seem to come to scientists, artists, mathematicians, and the like, in moments when they are not directly concentrating on the problem, but relaxing and allowing the problem some space to work itself out (Ghiselin, 1952; Selye, 1964). But the solution can only arise if there has already been a good amount of discursive thinking or working with the problem-this is the formal element. The formal part of a problem does not seem to bear fruit without the letting-go of the spacious part, and vice versa.

THE VARIETIES OF SPACE

Finally, it is possible to see the various types of space distinguished in this paper as different versions of one and the same space. The open space that becomes compressed into feeling space, space as felt by a centered subject, becomes further narrowed into the more linear modes of oriented space, the space of place, juxtaposition, distance, and separation. From the reverse perspective, visual space, usually the major element in oriented space, may become transformed into non-linear, dynamic feeling space. For example, when we experience the energetic space of pictorial art, visual space becomes alive as it

vibrant presence that sweeps us into it. Styles of Chinese landscape painting, whose spareness of brushstroke makes the empty space vividly felt as a living presence, represent this phenomenon in a pure form. At an even deeper level, visual space may become illuminated by openness itself, becoming transformed into a direct apprehension of open space beyond normal seeing. In the words of Hui-Neng, "Realizing that there is not a single thing to be seen is called Right Seeing" (quoted in Hisamatsu, 1960,p. 78).

*visual
space*

The notions of space in modern physics have gone far beyond the old ideas of geometrical space that Descartes knew. In modern physics, the distinction between form or matter, and space or energetic field, have completely broken down (Capra, 1975). With a space that curves, expands and contracts, and is inseparable from time-while giving birth to particles from, and re-absorbing them back into its vacuum state-the differences between physical, psychological, and mystical space start to fade. These different spaces begin to appear as possibly resulting from differences of *perspective*, rather than being radically different *kinds* of space. Could it be, as Alexander (1950, p. 98) suggests, that psychological and physical space belong to one and the same space, which is on the one hand, objectified, and on the other, realized experientially? Perhaps it is not going too far to suggest that our underlying intuitive sense of open space, in the psychological sense, is what allows us to conceive the notion of space at all in the physical and mathematical senses. This would be a new twist on Kant's basic idea that space is a "form of sensibility," created *a priori* by the mind. Perhaps the *a priori* basis of the notion of space is not so much Kant's pure reason, but rather the immediate, intuitive sense of open space intrinsic to the process of awareness at every moment.

*space
and
modern
physics*

CONCLUSIONS

Matte Blanco (1975) notes that "our knowledge of the physical world entered a fertile era of development the moment men decided to take seriously the spatial category" (p, 403), and suggests that possibly the notion of psychological space could have a similar effect on psychology. "If all this were so, we would have to recognize that the refusal of Occidental thinking to relate space with the study of psychical phenomena would have been a great drawback" (p. 404).

*psychological
space*

Although the notion of psychological space has been avoided and neglected by Western psychology for the most part, it has a

*psychological
landscapes*

potentially important descriptive and heuristic value for understanding the nature of consciousness and the way we create our world. The old models of mind as a psychic substance, mental system, or container with discrete contents are long out-of-date. The notion of affective space as describing changing psychological landscapes that we create around us, each of which is characterized by its own texture and quality of thoughts/feelings/perceptions, is a more dynamic and experientially-oriented approach to consciousness. In this perspective, for example, projection is not the externalizing of an internal "unconscious content," but is rather the very way in which we color the atmosphere of the landscape that we create around us and which makes us see things in its light. If we project threatening qualities onto someone, this is because of the landscape of fear in which we live. Emotions come to be seen not as troublesome psychic forces or problems separate from our whole being, but as the direct manifestations of particular styles of self-created worlds. For example, hot anger, cold anger, or seething anger create different affective spaces. An important therapeutic question becomes: What kind of space does this person inhabit, that he characteristically feels this icy anger? The anger cannot be dealt with apart from the whole affective landscape one creates around oneself, which needs to be brought out into the open. Bringing it out *into the open* means taking a more panoramic view of the world one is usually locked into, seeing through it, if only for a moment, to something larger. "Awareness *per se-by* and of itself-can be curative" (Perls, 1969, p. 16) by ventilating one's stuffy self-enclosed spaces with a little breath of open space.

*a more
panoramic
view*

*unconscious
conflicts*

In this perspective, what is unconscious in a problematic sense is not a set of internally repressed psychic contents, but rather the space we create for ourselves that is so thoroughly our milieu that we normally cannot even see it. Unconscious conflicts that we create and re-create from moment to moment are very much in the world around us rather than simply buried inside us. The therapeutic question of how to open up the space of someone who has become incarcerated in his projected world requires helping that person see the space for what it is, how he falls into it, and what it means to him,

The spatial approach to consciousness allows us to understand the relation between personal and transpersonal, everyday life and mystical truth, feeling space and open space, as a continuum, rather than as either two separate dimensions or as one reducible to the other. Moreover, if we understand psychopathology as related to the avoidance of open space, then

we will not provide the patient with further ways of filling up space, as a form of therapy. Rather our focus will be to help the patient open up his affective spaces if they are frozen and constricted, and transform his emptiness and blankness back into a creative openness, by acknowledging and making friends with this part of his being. Interestingly, a Buddhist therapy is currently being developed along these lines, called Maitri, to help people realize their strategies of avoiding open space and creating various forms of solidified space (Casper, 1974).

*the
therapeutic
acceptance
of
openspace*

The notion of psychological space could provide important directions for studying human interaction and communication. The ability to relate sensitively to another person's feeling spaces seems to be an important factor in the quality of the relationship that one establishes. And it seems essential to recognize and encourage a non-personal open space in close relationships, as Rilke (1975) emphasized in his writings on love:

*a non-personal
openspace*

But once the realization is accepted that even between the *closest* human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them which makes it possible for each to see the other whole and against a wide sky (p, 28),

At the same time, open space provides the basis for the most intimate human communication.

One of the most immediate and vivid experiences of open space as the essence of consciousness and communication is looking directly into another person's eyes. What do we see there? Could we ever say what it is? Where do "the unique importunity of the look of another, the guardianship which one exercises over one's own look, and the urgent need to deal with the look of another derive from?" (Percy, 1975, p. 285). Why is eye-to-eye contact such a guarded, revealing, often embarrassing and potentially "cosmic" experience? Just as the eyes allow us to take in physical space and help us conceive geometrical space, so too they are a person's primary expression of open space. When we look in another's eyes, certainly we do not just see pupils and irises, but rather glimpse a world that is not speakable, just as we feel that the other looks into a part of our being that cannot be encompassed by any words or concepts. In this case the eyes function somewhat like mandalas, as centers that open onto a wider space. As Rilke (1977) expressed it:

*looking into
another person's
eyes*

The space in your faces, even while
I loved it, changed into outer space
where you no longer were ... (p. 29).

If we look at the other in any way except eye-to-eye, we can easily set up a subject-to-object relationship in which the other is put into some perspective and kept separate. But when we look directly into another's eyes, we cannot objectify the other, judge him for that moment with our categories, or pin him down in any way. The communication through space in eye-to-eye contact overflows and bypasses the subject-object structure. This is what makes it difficult to speak intimately to someone on the telephone, for it is an oblique communication without the spatial connection through the eyes. Perhaps it is the connection we make with open space that constitutes our coming to understand anything at all. Is this why "seeing" is a synonym for understanding?

*mind
asa
network*

Thus open space allows us to take in or *introject* the world, while at the same time, the flight from the vastness and insecurity of open space into the conditioned forms of feeling space creates the *projection* of self-generated, self-centered worlds. If, as Alexander (1950) says, "all space is process," then the notion of psychological space helps us begin to study mind as a network of dynamic interrelationships with the world, neither contained inside the body, nor ending with the limits of the individual's skin.

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