

Exercise 9 Generating Space

A. Sitting quietly, observe what is present and what is happening around you, noting how objects and events appear within dimensionalized space. Focus your observation on characteristics of the sort that we usually connect to space. Start with the attribute of distance or separation; then go on to such qualities as ‘between’ or ‘inside’ and such phenomena as edges and borders.

Initially, just become familiar with these elements of space dimensionality. Later, you can explore ways to open and loosen the categories you focus on so that they no longer function as firm distinctions. As such conventional space distinctions come under investigation, space itself becomes more spacious. You may notice that whatever you encounter in space shares in this newly spacious appearing.

B. Expand this way of making experience more spacious into the activity of perception through which objects become available. Each of the five senses—seeing form, hearing sound, smelling odor, tasting flavor, touching solidity—can become more spacious and open. Explore each in turn.

C. You can discover this same dynamic in the activity of thinking. As a method for exploring this dynamic, practice seeing the content of each thought as though it were a character in a stage play, dressed in its distinctive costume. Apply your inquiry to the experience of thinking (including associated feelings, images, and so forth) rather than simply to the content of what is experienced. Later, bring into the exercise the content and significance of each thought.

In doing this practice, you may find that thoughts have a ‘body’ that extends beyond their content; that the awareness of the mind and the openness of the heart are present as a kind of aura surrounding each thought. Practice expanding awareness into these domains. As you open them up, you may touch residual pockets of tension or emotionality that can be released in the course of doing the exercise.

Comment 9B-C

Observing thoughts and sensations in this way generates a spacious quality related to the spaciousness of Exercise 9A. This more subtle focus will help you see how space openness is partitioned through assigning attributes and characteristics and taking them seriously.

As you become aware of these trends, the partitioning activity slows down, and fewer partitions form. Since thoughts and perceptions are less crowded and jumbled together, they can expand, allowing more space. Eventually, whatever appears opens into space, while thoughts dissolve into the mind. Though events continue to arise and to present themselves, nothing is produced through this arising. As you become familiar with this way of appearing, you may notice that you

participate in experience differently. Free from the momentum that proclaims identity, you can open to silence.

Exercise 10 Space Arising

The silent quality evoked in Exercise 9 offers a richness that is available to be explored: a quality or feeling linked to the quality inherent in being alive, or simply the quality of being. Too basic to be characterized, it manifests as a kind of indeterminate continuum.

Ordinarily, if we sense this basis at all, it has a thickness or dullness to it. Now you can go into it differently. Within the continuum of stillness, cultivate a transparent quality, as though you were preparing the silence to receive light. As you continue with this practice, you will develop the ability to dwell within the silence in a way that allows for a light and clear awareness. It is like activating a silent witness, whose steady presence we might consider 'nowness'.

Eventually this presence can become a 'place' that you can identify and enter with ease, even though it still has no specific identity or qualities. We might call it the womb of space. Some people may find it fruitful to spend long hours there, familiarizing themselves with the spacious silence it offers, deepening their contact.

As you come to know this foundational 'place', you can see how ordinary experience arises out of it. A sense of being becomes 'being here'; from this arises 'being here in time'. Presence becomes presence 'of' something, which is then established and felt to exist. Existence becomes 'I am', which is felt to be identical with the original sense of being.

Familiarity with this interplay opens the possibility of contacting awakened consciousness. However, it would be premature to imagine that you have now gone beyond concepts. Although being is in one sense directly present, there is still a very subtle identification with the foundation itself. The ordinary world may have partly dropped away, but there is still a subtle presence, shaped by the activity of language in naming an unknown. Since belonging still operates, there remains a domain closed to awareness.

The way to counteract this tendency is to focus on the activity of mind as the builder of experience, the one who accumulates and points out, who constructs each partition and establishes each identity. Without departing from stillness, investigate how the mind actively constructs in each moment. Notice that no construct is ever completely finished.

When you are aware of the activity of minding that builds each structure, your perceptions do not have to take on the heaviness of their content. You can see how perceptions accumulate and how they are established, how mind makes a fabric of them and how language,

images, characters, and qualities communicate forward, introducing, sponsoring and identifying. You can see the multiplicity that establishes and the system that supports and structures this multiplicity into the presentation of the whole, making available whatever is required. As you let your perception dwell lightly in this active dynamic, the connection to silence can allow for the simultaneous 'operation' of awakened consciousness. You will find you can bring the heart of space into each object, each perception, and each concept.

Comment 10

Activating and expanding the awareness that is the focus of Exercises 9 and 10 allows the ground of mind to manifest as spacious light. Ordinarily we think of awareness as operating on appearance, reading out the qualities and perceptions of what appears. Now we could imagine this dynamic reversed. The ground of undifferentiated appearance radiates outward, reading in the specific qualities that we identify as existing. Thoughts take form out of awakened awareness and the ground of mind.

This perception helps clarify why we are able to use thoughts and the other structures we identify to find our way back to awareness. It is something like letting the images in a mirror guide us to the mirror.

But even this image presupposes too much. It is more accurate to say that awareness is the alert and open clarity within each thought or each physical appearance that makes it possible to read out a specific content or identity. If we return to the image of thoughts as bubbles arising in a stream of water, we can say that water and bubble can be separated only conceptually. The actuality is that the shape and form of one are the shape and form of the other.

As you investigate the arising of experience, you may glimpse a similar interplay in your own consciousness. You may also find hints of it in different philosophies or disciplines. It is the truth of all truths, the secret heart of all awareness and all knowledge.

Once we know how to transmit thoughts and experience as the spacious field of awareness, concepts and perceptions no longer communicate the causal lineage of subject/object and its associated emotionality. There is no claim that 'this is so', no fixed support for the rigid structures that support limitation. Neurosis and narrow, restricted ways of thinking have no foundation that could support their arising. Mind becomes more like open space, and perceptions become more like the ripples in a still and silent pool of water. Sense perceptions, thoughts, and consciousness become more unified: varying manifestations responding to what appears, each linked to the others in a wholeness of between.

When we are sensitive at this level, there is a sense in which we no longer 'know' the distinctions that appearance presents. Distinctions

based on 'is' and 'is not' do not apply, and the old ways of organizing experience, founded on perceptions and the unconscious, on brain waves and the senses, fall away. Instead, there is manifestation that displays meaning: rhythms unfolding in ways that are deeply interesting but not predetermined. What 'counts' is the rhythms of time; what appears is projections in space.

From an ordinary perspective, this way of acting and being may sound chaotic and unmanageable, but as a lived reality, it is balanced and alive. Like dancers or actors improvising a performance, we can deal with what arises without prejudgments and predeterminations; we can learn what we need to know and read out from experience the principles that guide us.

In fact, the situation is just the opposite of what may at first appear. It is our old ways of knowing and being that are random, uncontrollable, and unpredictable. Now it is all different. Drawing on the guidance of knowledge, we can live in order, harmony, and creativity.