

TSK Online Fall 2008
Week 3 Supplement to Orientation

How does space-inquiry (space exploration) relate to the layers of non-content that we have been looking at?

I don't think I made this very clear either in the orientation or in the phone call. So I will try again.

Space has to do with presence. When we are present to something (or something is present for us), we share its space. For instance, if I am away from home on a trip, I may daydream about returning. But when I actually do return—when I walk through the door of my house—I am 'there' in a very specific and unmistakable way. I am *present* in that space.

About 10 years ago my father returned home after a long stay in the hospital. For several weeks he rested at home. Finally, I took him out shopping at a supermarket, one of the things he really enjoyed doing in his later years. He was tentative when we first started, but after a few minutes walking through the produce section of the store he turned to me with a big smile and said, "I'm back!" I think what he meant was that he was present. He was inhabiting space. Everyone who has ever recovered from being sick—even just a cold—probably has a sense of this.

Now, this sense of really 'being there' is what an inquiry into non-content evokes. For instance, you may have had the experience of having a conversation with someone, and you understand perfectly well the *content* of what she says. But at a certain point something shifts, and you are present to her in a different way. You understand not only what she is saying, but who she is in that moment, or the meaning of what she is saying *for her*.

That *shift* has to do with tuning in to the non-content layers of experience. And it also has to do with space. In that moment in the conversation, you are present to her, which means you and she share the same space.

I think this must come up in therapy quite often. A friend of mine once published a paper which included this description of a dream she discussed with her therapist:

I was in my sunny apartment watering my plants, and when I got to my precious Boston fern, I found to my dismay that someone had cut off all of its fronds. All that was left was a sad-looking little mound of brown fuzzy stems in the dirt. I told my therapist how horrified and grief-stricken I had felt. Without missing a beat, he said, "Yes... and you know... spring is coming...and it will all start to grow again." I remember my reaction to this day. I felt a powerful, visceral feeling of something "going right IN," not just into my mind but into me, opening up my entire body. I believe this happened to me not only because my therapist spoke to me from within the dream metaphor but, even more importantly, because he joined me in my dream . . .

For me, this is a good example of being present in the space of another. And my point is that it happens because of a connection on the non-content level.

Now, I don't want at all to limit this to therapy, or to interpersonal connections. We can be present to our own experience at a deeper, non-content level (as with the example of my father). And when we are, we are inhabiting our space differently. The image in Chapter 1 of DTS of expanding the space that an object (a molecule) occupies may seem abstract, but for me it points toward this quality of inhabiting space. It does so by pointing out that space is more basic than content. When our inquiry takes us to that more basic place, we are beginning to do space exploration.