

Chapter 21

Buddha: The Wisdom Energy of Space

Space is not an element exactly like the other four: water, earth, fire and air. Rather, it is the unconditioned, open medium within which the other four arise, dwell and pass away. Just as clouds can gather in an empty sky, growing in size, power and majesty and then dissipate back into the clear blue without a trace, so the four styles of psychological energy appear and disappear within this fundamental and all-pervasive experience of psychological space.

The wisdom energy of space is the ultimate source of the other four wisdoms. It is the fundamental principle of wisdom that runs through all the others and activates them. This wisdom of all-encompassing space is also referred to as the wisdom of all-potentiality and ubiquitous intelligence. It is the ground of everything, both wisdom and confusion.

When the energy and power of this psychological space is feared and avoided it becomes denial, stupidity, active ignoring, numbness and confusion—in short, the very opposite of wisdom. *Vidya* in Sanskrit means intelligence and refers to this most basic quality of consciousness: open and free, pregnant with possibilities, while *avidya*, where the syllable 'a' serves as a negation, means ignorance and stupidity. In this Buddhist scheme, wakeful intelligence is the natural state, primordial and eternally present, while confusion is a temporary disturbance, a clouding over of the natural state.¹

Imagine that you are lying on your back staring directly into the depths of the clear blue sky. Absolutely nothing obstructs your view of the seemingly infinite expanse above you. As you lie there, you experience a sense of utter nakedness. Your mind is awake but empty, and very brilliant, like a shining light. Nothing happens. Then suddenly, as if waking from a dream, you realize that you have become distracted and that you are occupied with some petty concern. You look again into the sky to see that clouds have arisen out of the clear blue and you hadn't even noticed their arrival. Once again you project your mind out and up into the sky and experience again that sense of alertness and freedom with a surge of energy outward. It almost feels as if you are flying. This pattern repeats itself over and over, while evening comes and night falls, leaving you staring into the vast darkness punctuated with stars. You are filled with a sense of profound wonder mixed with a tinge of fear, sadness, humility and a sense of being utterly alone. After a time, the vastness of the sky and the openness of your mind become overwhelming, and you drift into a deep, unconscious sleep.

The Buddhist conception of space is not merely void, but luminous and alive, in a sense vibrating, with all-potentiality. Just as white light can produce all of the colours of the rainbow, allowing every possible form and colour of the visible world to manifest to the eye, so the luminous aspect of psychological space gives rise to all manner of

experience. These experiences arise out of the open space and are then reabsorbed back into space which once more quivers with infinite possibilities as yet unmanifest.

This wisdom energy has to do with the process of creativity and the process of invoking insight and intelligence from within. Imagine a child sitting before a large blank sheet of white paper. The emptiness of the paper invites whatever there is within the child to come out and fill the page. That moment before the crayon or paint brush touches the page is the magical moment of all-potentiality: open space.

Far too often we do not let children or ourselves experience the simplicity and power of that empty moment. It can feel like a moment of tremendous anxiety and pressure. For that reason we usually cut it short by avoiding the openness and rushing to get on with the next thing. Or we become unconscious and stupid, dulled to the anxiety and dulled to the potentiality. Artists know the anxiety of the blank canvas, and writers know the anguish of those first few sentences. Choreographers know that once they choose the first key gestures, the tone of the dance will be set, and from there the dance will take off, as if it had a life of its own.²

This moment of openness that often provokes a twinge of fear occurs not only at the threshold of self-expression but is an integral part of our everyday life. We are constantly on the threshold between one thing and another. One activity is finished and the other has not yet begun: a moment of openness. Recognizing these moments and respecting them, without trying to rush through them, we can avail ourselves to the wisdom of all-potentiality. If we settle into these moments and we remain conscious while nothing is happening, we have a chance to make a choice about what is to happen next. In particular, we have a chance to try something new and thus step out of the rut of our conditioned habit patterns.

If teachers were trained to be still in this moment of crossing the threshold between psychological events, and if they were given the tools that would help them learn to accommodate their own anxiety in the moments of transition, how much better prepared they would be to guide their students in the process of self-discovery. Teachers are guides and models for their students. If the guide is nervous and uneasy upon crossing into uncharted territory, then those who follow will also feel fear. However, if a teacher enters into the unknown, the uncharted regions of empty space, with confidence and joy, then those who follow will also bravely go with a smile beyond the limits of what they know.

Yet this is not as easy as it may sound. To experience openness fully can be terrifying. Our consciousness as we usually experience it is held in place, as it were, by various reference points which we depend on for a sense of security and identity. Like a hot air balloon being held down by stakes driven into the ground, we have our own personal habits and ways of doing things: the way we eat, the foods

we like, the way we comb our hair or brush our teeth, the way we talk, our tone of voice, choice of words, our use of irony or wit, the way we talk to ourselves, the way we think, the way we choose to feel or express our emotions. All of these and more, infinite in number, make up for us the pattern of our personal experience.

These personal habit patterns interface with the patterns of others within various concentric circles of familiarity; there is our own family and our circle of friends, neighbours, colleagues and the community of people within the specific region where we live. There is the culture we share with them, including the specific language we speak and the endless unwritten and written rules of conduct and communication.³ We have a personal history and we are embedded within the history of our social, religious, philosophical, economic, and ethnic group. We are part of a nation and a world of nations where the ideals of nationalism and nationhood lead nations to try and obliterate other nations. We are human and share in all of the qualities and patterns of experience associated with being human. As humans, we are also mammals and share certain patterns of experience associated with being a mammal. Finally, we inhabit this earth, and beyond the experience of a handful of astronauts who have ventured outside the earth's atmosphere, we know life only as it is conditioned by living on this earth with this particular sky above, with its night and day, sun and moon, fixed stars and wandering planets.

All of this comes into play in every moment of our lives. Every step we take is rooted in this rich context and influenced by the innumerable vectors of these conditions. Every time we find ourselves in a moment in between things, after something is finished and before the next thing has taken shape, we are at a moment of choice. We can jump into the new situation with the same old habits. Thus, by carrying our tendencies from the past blindly into the future, we maintain a restricted view of our context and cut off the vastness of the potential inherent in each moment. The other option we have is to slow down for a moment and disengage from the complexity of being trapped in a context. We can see the inherent space in our psychological process and know that we are not doomed to repeat the past. We are able to perceive ourselves and our context clearly and without bias, and thus we are free to make a wiser choice about how to proceed.

In the moment-to-moment psychological process of our day-to-day lives, most of us ignore the all-encompassing vastness of our context and are not aware that we are part of something much larger than ourselves and our own immediate situation. Furthermore, we are, most of us, afraid of seeing this bigger picture, because to do so means letting go of a tendency to see ourselves as the central reference point. We are afraid to step outside of what we know as familiar. Our sense of psychological security is dependent on keeping the hot air balloon of our consciousness tied to the ground with all those stakes that define for us who we think we are and what we think we are

about. We are semiconscious, entranced and absorbed in our own version of reality. I myself know that I can be at times so totally engaged in my own plans, my own approach, my own view and my own ways of doing things in a particular moment that I do not step back or step outside myself to include even one other person, let alone a vaster vision.

If we live for a time in a radically different culture than our own, we are able to disengage somewhat from those ways of being which we take for granted. When we return to our own culture, we see it as if with new eyes because we are not so caught up in it, and we are more free to choose how we wish to re-engage ourselves. This freedom that results from disengaging oneself from at least a part of the conditioned habit patterns of one's own particular existence is one aspect of the wisdom energy of space. However, the fundamental experience of the wisdom of space has to do with having that same kind of perspective without needing to step outside of one's ongoing context, because the psychological space is always there if we can but recognize it.⁴

Awareness itself has enough space to include the experience of being fully engaged in the process of the moment, while at the same time seeing through it as if it were transparent. This is what is known in Mahayana Buddhism as the experience of emptiness. Emptiness to Westerners conjures up a vast wasteland or a vacuum, a meaningless void. Such an image has nothing to do with the experience Buddhists call shunyata. As we have discussed before, emptiness means empty of clinging, empty of concept, and empty of projection. It means having the awareness to see through one's interpretation of reality. Seeing through it, one can extract oneself and one's version of things out of experience so that perception is direct and accurate. Thereby, one is free to move in ways that are not bound by the conditions of the past. Space is this aspect of the mind that is free of all conditioning – open, clear, and non-attached. This is the ultimate nature of mind.

Whatever is seen with the eyes is vividly unreal in emptiness, yet there is still form... What ever is heard with the ears is the echo of emptiness, yet real... Good and bad, happy and sad, all thoughts vanish into emptiness like the imprint of a bird in the sky... Whatever arises is merely the play of the mind...⁵

It is possible to perceive oneself in one's context with pristine clarity from the perspective of its infinite vastness down to the precision of the tiniest detail without becoming trapped in it. Becoming trapped has to do with believing what you perceive. Or to put it more accurately, clinging to what you have perceived in the past by using the tools we call concepts.

The mental categories, images and generalizations that we as adult human beings refer to as concepts are indeed

useful tools, for they allow us to manipulate bits and pieces of our version of reality at lightning speeds. Nonetheless, most of us live our lives mistaking the map for the territory. More importantly, we not only mistake the map for the territory, we invest our emotional well-being, our sense of security, identity and our very sense of existence on this flimsy version of reality that is our map.

This wisdom energy of space is a multidimensional awareness that includes these tools we call concepts but is not emotionally dependent on them. Imagine that you are lost in the mountains and are desperately clinging to your worn and tattered map. This map has been a good friend, a useful tool that has gotten you through many a winding valley and seemingly impassable pass. Yet for this new territory it is no longer useful. Its distortions are causing you too much confusion. Reluctantly, you let the map go and proceed on pure intuition. When you reach your destination, you realize that there was some direct relationship between your body and the terrain, and you felt led by a kind of unknown knowing.⁶

The wisdom energy of space allows us to hold various different levels of awareness, including contradictory concepts, conflicting philosophies and views, opinions and critiques, personal feelings, and higher ideals, all within the same utterly impartial container, without ever being seduced into following any one of them. The experience of space can allow for the coldness of water, the heat of fire, the solidity of earth and the speedy lightness of wind. The wisdom of space can accommodate the intensity of emotional experience without fearfully suppressing it or blindly acting it out. It becomes as if all of these emotional energies were a child's games being acted out in one small corner of an endlessly vast universe. Water churns, fire burns, earth sits and wind stirs. If there is enough space, each of these can flourish and naturally fall into the appropriate place, creating the mandala of wisdom.

What are the particular idiosyncratic qualities of a person who relates predominantly to this style of wisdom? This is hard to say, because this style will more or less always be coloured by one or more of the other four styles described above. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some generalizations as to how this style might manifest. A person tending more toward the wisdom energy of space might show more interest in a philosophical, metaphysical, and religious direction. Their appearance and personality might be one that doesn't provoke much of a response in others, either positive or negative. In fact, they may be the one in a group that others have a hard time remembering due to a lack of any particular colourful trait that makes them stand out from the crowd. They can be the students who go unnoticed in the classroom. Their speech might be deceptively simple. They state the obvious, but somehow it rings true. At second inspection, what they say is pregnant with meaning and profound in its many implications. Conversely, they can come up with ideas that seem to have absolutely no relationship to the matter at hand, yet prove to be creative leaps of genius. This kind of person may be

the quiet type who doesn't say much but when she does speak people listen. This is because what she says has the ring of wisdom that only comes from being able to step outside of the situation.

They can seem lost in deep thought, with a far-away look in their eyes, or they may stare with a deadpan gaze, dumbly oblivious to what is going on around them. In fact, they may be the type that find it easy to enter into all kinds of 'altered states of consciousness,' some harmless, some useful, and others harmful or stupefying. Similarly, one aspect of addiction to mind-altering drugs is this tendency to seek out blissful states of mind that selectively edit out any painful aspect of one's reality. The perverted aspect of this wisdom is characterized in the tendency we all have to escape from the pressure, stress and anxieties of life into a dull and cozy stupor.

Each of the other four wisdom styles we have investigated correspond to one of the six realms. The wisdom energy of space, however, is associated with two realms. These two realms characterize two different aspects of space as confusion. The two realms are traditionally known in Buddhist doctrine as the 'realm of the gods' and the 'animal realm.'

Attempting to escape from the vibrant intensity and feelings of groundless insubstantiality experienced as part of the bright light of *Vairocana* and his female partner, who represent together the wisdom energy of the purified element of space, one may gravitate to the softer light and formulate an experience in the realm of the gods. Turning away from the brilliance of non-duality, there is a sense of bliss or pleasure which is experienced while a subtle duality is reasserted and a vague but expansive sense of identity comes together. With this identity comes a need to secure and prolong this state of mind, especially since there is pleasure involved. This becomes the habit pattern for the god realm, a self-absorbed state of mind, preoccupied with maintaining a continuous experience of pleasure.

All of us fall into this category at one time or another. Freud's notion of the pleasure principle maintained that this was the *modus-operandi* of being human. Most of us find that it is very difficult to maintain such a realm of pleasure and thereby find ourselves struggling in other ways and cycling through all six realms of existence in our own idiosyncratic ways. There are people, however, who have a special talent for maintaining themselves in a more or less pleasurable state of existence without feeling penetrated by the irritations and annoyances, emotional highs and lows that life's little inconveniences and problems cause for most of us. For some, this may be a virtue because they do it with awareness. However, for others there is a kind of blindness. This style of blindness is also quite common to us all, a systematic shutting out of anything that might cause irritation, pain or sorrow, or somehow pop the bubble of our pleasure dome. In psychological terms, we might refer to this blindness as a primary defense mechanism or as denial.

People who gravitate toward this realm are also those who have a tendency to intoxication. When they cannot create the denial that they need to shut out what they don't like about their life, or the anxiety they feel, they reach for an easy chemical solution. There are also other ways in which people can heighten their denial. Through certain kinds of spiritual ideals, concentration and types of meditation, people can succeed in stepping outside of their life and thereby also avoid distraction that would interrupt their pleasure. All of these systems for preserving pleasure have their drawbacks, and eventually cause a kind of crash or fall from unreality.

Another way of conceptualizing the pleasure of the god realm and the power of denial is to examine the discrepancy between rich and poor in our world. If we look at the tremendous discrepancy between the life enjoyed by the rich and elite in the world as compared to that of the poorest of poor in countries blighted with natural catastrophes, sickness, famine and war, we see denial operating on a global scale where the very structure of our world economy has been devised through a history of colonialism, mercantilism and various other mechanisms, feeding the wealthy at the expense of the poor. Some of those who live privileged lives strive more or less to make themselves aware of the vast suffering of others and work to help, while others, perhaps the majority, continue to amass wealth and power, oblivious to the suffering of others.

Both the god realm and the animal realm are characterized by a fear of change and fear of whatever exists outside one's narrow experience of the world. There is a fear that prevents the conscious exploration or spontaneous experience of the vastness of awareness or the depths both within and without. This manifests, in particular, as a fear of the intensity of the elemental emotions. The intensity of desire, passion, lust, greed, pride, anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, hope and fear are seen as very disturbing. In the realm of the gods, these elemental emotions threaten one's experience of pleasure. From the animal realm perspective, they seem to threaten survival and therefore serve to stimulate instinctive reactions such as sexual arousal, flight, fight, etc. Intellectually, one might regard these emotions as primitive, uncivilized and an unnecessary complication. In this way, one creates a justification for denying their presence in one's life, thereby effectively cutting off the wisdom energy.

The animal realm represents a severe limiting of the mind's ability to step outside of itself. This results in a narrow frame of reference in which habitual patterns of body, speech and mind are repeated over and over in a very predictable way, without any variation or expansion into new and different modes of being.⁷

The pattern of mind in the animal realm is like a kind of game where we intelligently pretend to be ignorant. For example, children will suddenly put on an act of

incompetence and stupidity, perhaps when they feel they are growing up too fast or when mother asks them to take on some responsibility around the house by doing chores. In a similar way, we all play deaf and dumb, now and then, when we want to avoid experiences we find unpleasant, too strenuous or boring.

Since the style of luminosity that frightens self-conscious ego mind is the wisdom energy of all-encompassing space and all-potentiality, we tend to ward it off by narrowing down our field of awareness. One sure way to do this is to fix our sights on a concrete goal. Nose to the ground, we forge ahead holding one thing in mind, like a pig that simply eats everything in its path.

The fundamental problem with this approach is that there is no sense of humour. So narrow is the tunnel vision that there is no space to step outside oneself to gain a sense of irony or humour. This is symbolized by animals, which, though they can feel joy and pain, generally cannot laugh, smile or particularly enjoy the subtleties of a sense of humour. For myself, I know that my tenacious clinging to the goal-oriented drama of a graduate education has had at times a powerful effect, narrowing my awareness and squelching my sense of humour. While on the self-imposed treadmill, it is often difficult to step outside oneself to see oneself objectively, with a smile.

Similarly to the way animals operate on instinct, we can depend completely upon habits as a way to cope with the complexity of life. A certain amount of habit is vitally necessary as William James (1983) has pointed out; however, a certain stupidity and dullness can set in when we become deeply entrenched in a routinized pattern of mind. We can become very set in our ways, avoiding any change that might upset our habitual routine. Someone living this kind of very predictable life can be lulled into a certain kind of sleep-walking.

It is important to note, however, that structure, predictability and repetition of particular patterns in life can also be very liberating. It is all a matter of how one makes use of the boredom that results from a highly routinized life. Boredom is an experience of space. If boredom provokes one into becoming curious about things that you have never taken the time to notice before, thus expanding your mind beyond its normal limitation, then routine is liberating. However, if one simply fixates on the repetition, ignoring the space created in the irritation of boredom, one misses the opportunity to look beyond the routine. Then one becomes intimidated by the world beyond, and fearful of any change. This dullness of mind can increase in an ever-tightening spiral, closing in upon itself further and further.

Along with the fear of change and the fear of whatever exists outside one's narrow experience of the world, there is a mirror fear, the fear to experience and explore the depths within oneself, especially one's emotions.

There are many gross and subtle ways of maintaining the

self-imposed blinkers that characterize this realm. Any repetitive pattern that creates a closed loop can successfully shut out greater awareness. Through various repetitive thought patterns, patterns of speech, habitual emotional cycles, and patterns of bodily movement and self-stimulation, a person can create absorption states that perpetuate and block out awareness. In the extreme animal realm mentality, one is not able to see oneself mirrored by others at all; one shuts out the messages that come back from one's environment to create a self-contained, self-justifying trap.

Childhood autism is such a withdrawal from contact with others into a self-absorbed state of mind. It is often maintained by a cultivated mindlessness. By repeating specific bodily movements, verbalizations and specific thought patterns, a child or adult can spin a sensory cocoon or smokescreen which effectively blocks out normal sensory awareness. Podvoll (1990) refers to this kind of autistic habit as 'mindless practices' and conceives of them as the opposite of the mindfulness practices of Buddhist meditation. He cites Bruno Bettelheim, who observed these tendencies in autistic children and conceived of them in a similar way:

The autistic child, through his own efforts, achieves a state of non-attentiveness to stimuli which has all the appearances of a state of dysfunction of the system serving arousal...This he does, for example, by his monotonous, continuous self-stimulation which arises, in part, from his motor behavior. In a sense, any stimulus from the outside is then lost, either by being blotted out, or in the concentration on inner sensations alone.⁸

As the developmental process is obstructed by this confusion, the person regresses to the earliest stages of child development involved with solipsistic self-stimulation. Using these mindless practices effectively cuts the person off from contact with the outside world. After a time, they become so efficient at cultivating this cut-off that it becomes internalized. Consider the detailed observations of the Nobel laureate ethologist Niko Tinbergen and his wife Elizabeth:

The child often fails to respond to stimuli that normally would make him approach but which his anxiety prevents him from actually acting on. Closing the eyes (gaze aversion) or (equally common) putting the hands over the ears is a mechanical means of achieving this cut-off, but these children also protect themselves by central nervous cut-off, by simply refusing to see or hear (without showing overt withdrawal) and perhaps even by actually not seeing or hearing.⁹

I have worked with children who, while in gradual recovery, apply themselves to outwardly focused tasks briefly, only to revert time and time again back to their repetitive self-stimulating, mindless practices as means of coping with

their frustration and anxiety. Seeing this routine demonstrated on a gross and obvious level helped me to see how I myself, and almost everyone I know, tend to do the same thing at various levels of subtlety.

Anyone observing a classroom full of noisy and nervous primary students in the midst of being introduced to new letters in the alphabet, new words, numbers, or any such abstract adult invention can plainly see similar signs of self-stimulation in response to the pressure and frustration. Many adults also, when under the stress of attempting to go beyond themselves in learning or performing, will impulsively resort to a subtle fidget such as chin- or beard-stroking, or a repeated stroke of the forehead. I don't mean to suggest that such gestures of self-stimulation are necessarily regressive or indicative of mild autism. On the contrary, if used wisely, such brief lapses in the etiquette of stillness may serve as a means to trigger a withdrawal from a particular sub-system of mind, a particular state of consciousness, in order to momentarily shift to another. By doing so, one is able to draw upon diverse mind states that may be more immediately applicable forms of intelligence, while consistent attention to external stimuli may lock one into repetitions of useless mind loops. Repetition of any mental pattern can serve to block out unwanted stimuli while the wisdom of the space element seems to have something to do with allowing for gaps even in the most intense concentration.

Retreating to an inwardly focused concentration and shifting mind states can work against the learning process, or it can greatly enhance it, depending on many variables such as one's motivation, emotional sense of safety and well-being, timing, rhythm, and patterns of transition. Much of the learning process seems to me to have to do with developing skill in how and when to shift your mind into different states and, at higher levels, how to integrate those different states with a constant flow of communication, until they begin to operate as one harmonious whole.

Understanding the autistic tendency intellectually, and knowing for oneself intuitively what it feels like to retreat into a semi-autistic state, even if just for an instant, can be a very valuable tool for a teacher. Learning, especially for children, seems to involve an alternating rhythm between attending to perception and somehow integrating that perception into their own unfolding intelligence. Every person has a different rhythm and different method for switching from an outwardly directed perception to an inward perception. Through meditation, teachers can heighten their sensitivity to the most minute movements of their own mind, which in turn helps them to become aware of the idiosyncratic learning process of each student.

Various forms of psychosis (Podvoll, 1989) can also be understood and effectively treated when seen as extremely constricted states of mind that have become addictive. Sometimes when a person experiences a trauma or, especially, repeated trauma, they discover a way to distance themselves from their experience by escaping into

a world of their own creation. This world of escape, woven like a dream, serves as an effective curtain to block out the traumatic experience, and in certain cases, most other aspects of experience. The person becomes a virtuoso at weaving dream and reality into the fabric of experience and is capable of escaping into their fully developed alternative world whenever there is the slightest perceived threat. The mind of the psychotic person becomes so deeply engaged in the weaving of the dream and living within that dream that he finds it increasingly difficult to pay attention to the tasks of everyday life, such as eating, bathing, sleeping, and communicating with others.

This tendency to escape into a dream world is not exclusive to psychotic patients, but is used by all of us to one degree or another. Some of us are more skilled at weaving a dream world than others. Some are also better at making the transition between their personal dream world and the common world we share within a particular culture. They do not let their dream world interfere or distract them from life's tasks. Most of us, however, are not so adept. A person may not necessarily be psychotic to experience a jarring sense of confusion and disorientation when caught between the two worlds.

Daydreaming is often cited as a cause of school failure. Yet how much do we know about how to help someone who becomes disoriented and confused when they attempt to make that transition from their dream world back into the world of school? If teachers were trained to recognize the signs of switching in and out of various dream states, particularly by becoming sensitive to their own patterns of mind, they would be more capable of reaching a child who might otherwise be out of reach. In my experience of working with people severely disturbed by mental illness, I note that my awareness of subtle clues can mean the difference between a meaningful therapy session and one of meaningless talk that does nothing to cut through self-absorption, neither my own or that of the patient.

The wisdom energy of space seems to have to do with developing a familiarity with the bright light of mind itself, so that one does not shy away from its brilliant intensity. Along with the intensity there is a vastness, a limitlessness of mind, that can also seem overwhelming. Developing courage in the face of this vastness opens us to all kinds of possibilities, while fear of the intense vastness of mind causes restriction into closed loops. Meditation seems to be a way to sit directly in our personal experience of fear and to gradually develop an attitude of fearlessness, allowing us to explore the brilliant intensity of mind. Also, by learning to work with the various states of mind in oneself, knowing how and when they shift, one becomes familiar with the shifting states in the mental space of others.

In grade six, I finally had a teacher that seemed to understand me. Until that time, I had felt oppressed by the way the teachers pushed their agenda on me. Because the teachers and I were not synchronized, it seemed to me that they didn't care about me. They seemed forceful and

disrespectful, and I felt like giving up. The openness of my experience on the rocks was shattered and my appreciation for the subtle rhythms of experience was dulled and distracted. Then, in grade six, a gentle young woman read poems and stories to us and respected what each of us had to say. Her classroom had an open, spacious feeling, so that I knew I was safe to be myself and explore my thoughts in my own way. She guided us to write poems and put on plays. She encouraged us to think for ourselves and she gave us the space in which to discover self-respect.

Now that we have discussed the five Elemental energies both as wisdoms and as self created realms of confusion let us look at how a contemplative and experiential training in these principles might help teachers to become more sensitive to the needs of their students.

CHAPTER 21 NOTES

1—*Vidya in Tibetan is rigpa and its negation, avidya, is ma rigpa. 'The nature of everything is open, empty and naked like the sky./ Luminous emptiness, without center or circumference: the pure, naked Rigpa dawns' (from The Tibetan Book of the Dead, quoted in Sogyal, 1992, p. 259). Padmasambhava says: 'The self-originated Clear light, which from the beginning was never born,/ Is the child of Rigpa, which is itself without any parents--how amazing!' (Sogyal, 1992, pp. 259-260).*

2—*Though every art form works with space or at least the metaphor of space, dance seems to be uniquely involved in playing directly with this most open and flexible of expressive mediums. The Canadian choreographer and co-founder of the Toronto Dance Theater, Patricia Beatty (1985), writes about the spontaneous birth of form out of open space in the creative process of making dances. Shafranski (1985) gives us experiments in modern dance that could enliven and challenge any class of dancers or non-dancers. Morgenroth (1987) writes about improvisations, and Minton (1984) looks at body and mind in modern dance. Using dance in the classroom is a great way to access non-verbal modes of awareness and to heighten an appreciation for the power inherent in our psychological relationship to space.*

3—*Hall (1959), who spent many years in foreign service, observed the many layers of unspoken communication patterns in various cultures and writes about the kinds of miscommunication and confusion that can result between people of different cultures.*

4—*The various layers of our conditioned context that I have sketched here are said to be the result of accumulated past karma in the culture and philosophy of India and much of Asia. Yogananda (1946) as a young man yearning to be a renunciate felt the burden of his context, his family's expectations of him, and in particular an astrological prognostication that he would marry three times, twice to be a widower. In a moment of clear insight he burned the scroll*

containing the astrological prediction in a paper bag with these words on it: 'Seeds of past karma cannot germinate if they are roasted in the fires of divine wisdom.' He reiterates this point, quoting the words of his teacher: 'The deeper our self-realization, the more we influence the whole universe by our subtle spiritual vibrations, and the less we ourselves are affected by the phenomenal flux' (p. 173, altered to remove gender bias).

5—*This is extracted from the offering section of the Sadhana of Mahamudra (prayer of the great symbol) written by Chogyam Trungpa in 1968. It is not available as a publication for general circulation.*

6—Lao Tzu says:

*One who excels in traveling leaves no wheel tracks;
One who excels in speech makes no slips;
One who excels in reckoning uses no counting rods;
One who excels in shutting uses no bolts yet what he has shut cannot be opened*

*One who excels in tying uses no cords yet what he has tied cannot be undone.
(Lao Tzu, Lau, trans. 1963)*

7—*Keirse and Bates (1978) have organized the sensing and judging types from Jung's typology (four of the sixteen) into a group they identify as 'The Epimethean Temperament' after Epimetheus, a lesser-known Greek god, son of Zeus, brother of Prometheus and loyal husband to Pandora (loyal despite all the adversity this marriage caused). The qualities that Keirse and Bates assign to this temperament are a strong sense of duty, hard-working, responsible, compliant with social norms, pessimistic, conservative and dependable, making them a pillar of strength and the backbone of society. Some of these qualities relate with the personality traits associated with the element of space, the animal realm, and the traditional phlegmatic temperament (Harwood, 1958; Littauer, 1983).*

8—*Bettelheim, The Empty Fortress in Podvoll, The Seduction of Madness, p. 177.*

9 *Tinbergen and Tinbergen (1983), quoted in Podvoll (1990), p. 94.*