



5.10 The most generally agreed taxonomy of human distances in space. 'Intimate', 'personal', 'social', and 'public' distances all have their uses and characteristics. The challenge of spatial design is to facilitate rather than inhibit the behavioural settings appropriate to the social purposes of behaviour in space

1966), and talk of 'intimate', 'personal', 'social' and 'public' distances (Fig. 5.10).

### **Intimate distance**

Inside the distance of half a metre or so, we can touch another person. We may feel body heat and smell body odour, and we may smell breath and perfume. If facing one another, we can see the face in sufficient detail to appreciate emotion accurately unless very skilfully concealed. This then is a distance of trust and intimate activity. It is a distance that we enter normally only with permission. It is socially difficult to ignore someone within this distance, and some form of acknowledgement at the very least is expected. Indeed it may even be hard to ignore some else's presence simply because of the wealth of ways they can be sensed at this distance. Public display of the affection associated with such a distance is disapproved of in some cultures and many situations. Communication at this distance can be by whispering, and thus can remain private from all other people in the same space. Under normal circumstances, however, people are rarely this close for the purposes of extended philosophical debate!

In some settings we find ourselves compulsorily at such close quarters – for example, students sitting in a lecture theatre, or the audience at the cinema or theatre. For a large part of the time in the theatre the lighting level is low and events focus our attention