

Spring 2010 - TSK Online Program – The Self in Question: part 3

Week 5 - Guide

The reading for this week starts in the middle of chapter 35, so you might be curious about what is said in the first part of the chapter. If you read those few extra pages, you'll see that they encourage inquiry into things such as "social, cultural, historical, and mental patterns" that shape the world we know. My reason for leaving this part of the chapter out is that there is a strong tendency to investigate these aspects of experience in an 'ordinary knowing' way; that is, to look for explanations, offer theories, etc. It doesn't have to be that way, and in fact I think that this kind of inquiry will eventually form an important part of TSK inquiry. But for now, it seemed better to avoid the potential for confusion as to what "free and open inquiry" is all about.

The reading that starts on page 291 suggests that "free and open inquiry" will foster clarity, and suggests how this can work. So that would be a good place to look. When you 'call into question' conventional positions and structures, do you find a specific clarity? What form does it take?

In conducting this kind of inquiry, there are two ways to proceed. One is to set aside some time (even if it's just a minute) to stop your usual commitment to 'the way things are' and ask 'how it works', as we discussed in the phone call. It's probably a good idea to try this at certain times. Moments when you are really involved in something (for instance, a conversation) might be especially fruitful.

However, there is a risk in proceeding in this way, because what you end up doing is making a switch: you stop your ordinary mode and enter a different mode. This in itself is a form of positioning, so you are working against yourself. You can overcome this obstacle, but it's important to be aware of it.

The alternative approach is simply to bring the commitment into free and open inquiry into the situation you find yourself in. Of course, it has to occur to you to do that. But if you reflect on the reading and on what you are exploring in TSK, this may happen naturally, without your having to make a specific effort. The distinction between this approach and the other is not absolute, but it you may find that one way or the other is more natural for you.

Because we're making the shift to this other mode of inquiry, your own experience with inquiry is going to become especially important. I am expecting that much of the next phone conversation (as well as exchanges on the web) is going to be given over to reports on this kind of exploration.

Finally, try working with Ex. 35, at the end of the chapter. This practice offers a very direct way of looking at the difference between positions (closed and determined) and positioning (open to inquiry through inhabiting.)