

**Why 'Nothing' Matters
Orientation for Week 4**

I want to spend more time than usual this week in going over some of the material we discussed in the phone call.

First, I pointed out at the start of the phone call that we are looking at the interrelation of three aspects of experience: substance, space, and awareness (knowing). Our usual understanding links substance and space, and leaves out awareness, which is why space turns into 'nothing at all'. However, Dynamics brings awareness back into the picture, pointing out that what appears "springs into being" due to our specific concerns and interests.

(If reality "springs into being" as a result of our interests and concerns, does this mean that the world is subjective, and that our belief that there is an objective reality that existed before we were born is false? That would be a very unlikely view to hold, and I suggested during the phone call that it is based on a false dichotomy between the subjective and objective. I mentioned that I had found useful in this regard a brief discussion by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, and that this discussion was fairly accessible to the casual reader. Here is the citation: *Being and Time* sec. 44(c), pp. 269ff. in the Macquarrie and Robinson translation, and pp. 226ff. in the original German. To make any sense of this discussion, you need to know that Heidegger here uses the term "Dasein" to refer to 'human being'; in using this term he is emphasizing that human beings (Dasein) are the kinds of beings to which being appears. This notion (that being is what appears to us), is actually pretty closely related to the idea of the field communiqué.)

This focus on concerns and interests carries over into the discussion of the field and the field communiqué, which was the main focus for our discussion. The discussion explores the idea that what appears to us as real and substantial does so on the basis of a field within which it arises, and that field is itself the artifact of a 'communiqué' that communicates both the nature of what appears within the field and the availability of the field. In other words, appearance depends on knowing that communicates its availability. The field is not simply a subjective map that we impose on an underlying reality (a question Mark raised); that is one possible interpretation—one possible communiqué—but no more than that.

In developing this idea, I referred to the example of a chair: it has an identity within a field, but that field could be the field of the physicist (chair as inanimate thing), the field of the guest in your home, the field of a furniture move, or the field of a potential buyer (to name only a few possibilities). I found helpful the example that came up as we spoke of a chair that is part of a yard sale: the layout of items on the lawn for a yard sale determines the nature of the chair as an item for sale; if someone asks whether the chair on which I as the seller am sitting is also for sale, and I say no, I have excluded it from the field (David's question whether the field of what is available for sale in the yard sale implicitly includes the non-availability of what is not for sale—including the chair I am sitting on—is an interesting one that is much discussed in the philosophy of language).

The practice that we turned to briefly at the end is simply to be aware of what captures your attention as being given (communicated) as part of a field communiqué, an awareness that will naturally lead you to focus on the field. A second aspect of the practice is to notice how fields are constantly shifting, a point the text points toward in passing through referring to "the present present." We discussed that in the phone call, and I won't go into it again here. People had some interesting observations to make, and I encourage you to explore this way of experiencing during the week, and to share what you notice online.

Now, about this coming week's reading, which is the first half of chapter 3 (pp. 19-23). First, notice that what is communicated by the field is said to be qualities rather than identified entities; assigning those qualities to entities is a second step. We tend to be imprecise about this, but looking at this distinction raises an interesting question: what about qualities that we do not assign to identified entities? Does our focus on what has substance lead us to ignore or overlook these qualities?

The reading names three 'aspects' that are all communicated in the communiqué: qualities (leading to entities), logic, and the self (the one who knows). It's useful to consider how these three interact. A couple of other interesting ideas here is the sense that the communiqué is communicated forward through "carriers" and "agents," and the suggestion that this way of seeing points toward new possibilities for ways to be, possibilities linked to the creativity of artists and poets. We will look at how this may work in the next phone call.

The heart of today's reading may be the distinction between naming on the one hand and direct experiencing on the other. It's an appealing distinction, but the reading suggests that it is too limited for our purposes. Look carefully at this discussion, which we will focus on next week.

Finally, I started the phone call with more information about our "practice day." The idea is to set aside as much time as you can on Saturday, December 17, for practice, reading, and reflection, and then on Saturday evening to share some of what you noticed or discovered on the website. On Sunday, December 18 we will meet at the usual time and just reflect on what people shared and whatever questions may come up as a result, as well as reviewing the program as a whole.