

Orientation for Week 6

This is our last reading for this program. It takes us half way through the opening section of DTS, the section on Space. I'm expecting to continue with the rest of this section in the winter.

The title of this chapter is "Inviting Space Knowledge." That is very consistent with the emphasis in our discussions so far, which have focused on the way in which space can transmit knowledge. The point is clear: we need to implement a way of knowing or seeing that does not leave space out of account. As Rinpoche writes (29):

"The way is clear: We must exchange our 'form eyes' for 'space eyes.'

Despite the work we have done so far, it may still seem strange to think that space transmits or even embodies knowledge. Perhaps it will help to consider that this view is roughly parallel to the way modern physics thinks of matter as originating in quantum fluctuations in the empty vacuum of space. Just as space can be understood as the source of matter, so it can be understood as the originating matrix for the world we inhabit. It can be misleading to rely too much on analogies to physics, since the physical sciences have little interest in knowledge (though this may be changing). Still, the parallel may help overcome the initial sense that space and knowledge just inhabit two different fields of inquiry, with no way to bring them together.

In the section on "Space as the Central Mystery," Chapter 4 restates in a different form some of the points we have been investigating. In doing so, it starts from the conventional understanding of space as 'nothing at all'. If this discussion had come in chapter 1, it might seem unconvincing, but in light of the inquiry we have been doing, we should be able to see that space is not what we ordinarily think it is, and that new ways of understanding its creative power are not only possible, but even likely.

The term "indeterminate appearance," found on p. 33 of the reading, echoes the reference in last week's reading to the "indeterminate aliveness" of the field communiqué. This suggests that you should be reading the discussion in Chapter 4 in light of the discussion of the communiqué in the previous two chapters.

Interestingly, the term 'field communiqué' is about to disappear from the text; it will not reappear until Chapter 7. But don't let our style of working with the text (proceeding in very small 'chunks') hide the fact that the whole discussion that centers on the communiqué is deeply important for understanding what is being said here, and for the invitation to exchange 'form eyes' for 'space eyes'. 'Form eyes' do not 'see' space, but 'space eyes', seen in light of the field communiqué, seem to be able to see form—form transformed. Seeing with space eyes may illuminate the relationship between form, space, and knowledge, showing us how a change in that relationship can fundamentally change how we live our lives and interact with our world.