

Spring 2011 The Feel of Sensing Orientation for Week 4

In the Week 3 phone call, I started by inviting you to do the assigned reading less as philosophy and more as poetry. True, there is value in a conceptual reading, because we mostly live our lives within limits imposed by our everyday conceptual understanding of the world, and working out a new conceptual approach can challenge those limits. Still, the concepts that Knowledge of Time and Space introduces call for some pretty intense thinking through, and for some people, this will mean getting tied up in conceptual knots—not a comfortable place to be or a fruitful way to proceed.

The alternative, as we've been exploring, is to approach experience using the model of the field within which experience unfolds. The readings make clear that a field is made up of (or encompasses) qualities and their reciprocal awareness, rhythms, intensities, specific relations to time and space, and different dimensions within which experience unfolds. So this is a way to look. We tried that during the phone call, and I encourage you to experiment with it during the week.

Another way to turn toward a 'field' way of seeing is to de-emphasize the focus on objects. I am suggesting you do a specific exercise toward that end, taken from p. 188 of KTS ("Partitions and Occupancy). Here is a shortened and simplified version of it:

Pick out an object, either one that is present before you or one that you imagine. Focusing on the edge of the object, consider that this is also the edge of 'empty' space. reflect on the difference between space and what it contains, which should be most noticeable at the edge you have identified. Are there properties and qualities of 'space as container' that you are able to contact and that help account for its ability to serve as a container? . . .

[This] exercise helps show that each object is a marriage of space and existence. This insight can be pursued by asking which of the properties that we attribute to the object 'belong' to the object and which 'belong' to the space that (at various levels) contains the object.

The commentary relates the practice to the notion of a 'field' that we have been working with. It also touches on a distinction in Western philosophy that Bruce asked about in the first class—that between so-called primary and secondary qualities.

After you have some experience with this practice, you might want to try deepening it in light of this sentence from KTS p. 377: "Space . . . 'shelters' objects and events, allowing their origination, sustaining their characteristics, making them available for interaction, and assuring their continued existence."

The reading assigned for this week focuses on knowledge. In part, the reading invites us to turn inward, toward the 'subjective' side of knowledge, but it also keeps returning to the relation between knowledge and perception, which brings us back to sense experience. Notice that the exercise on space asks us to look in both directions as well.