

Orientation for Week 2 (February 26)

In the phone call for Week 1, we ended up emphasizing the theme of “properties without ownership.” My suggestion was that this can be understood at two levels. The first is that there is no ‘self as owner’ who identifies and then asserts ownership over ‘certain things’. The second, however, is the one on which we focused, and that probably is more closely related to the points that the text is emphasizing here. At this second level, there is no ‘certain thing’ that is the owner of the properties through which we know it, no “unknown interior of an objective reality,” as the text says on p. 38.

This ‘no ownership’ view complements and extends the practice we did during the phone call. In the practice, I asked everyone to look in his or her experience for what is going on in addition to the ‘certain things’ that we clearly identify from moment to moment. In the discussion afterward, it became clear that doing this inquiry helped people notice a more dynamic, open, and pleasant background dimension to experience. But the ‘no ownership’ view adds another dimension. It suggests that this undefined or ‘uncertain’ background remains available, even we are operating in the realm of ‘certain things’. That’s the practice for the coming week: just look in your experience for what it’s like to experience properties without ownership or substance, to find the un-certain in the certain.

The reading for this coming week acknowledges that it can be difficult to see things in this way. We are accustomed to identifying and labeling, to knowing in a certain way that only knows ‘certain things’. It’s still worth trying, but most likely you will often fall back into the way of knowing that you already know, the way that emphasizes ‘certain things’, whose interactions can be worked out in terms of logic and reasons and ownership.

Given all this, the text proposes a “transitional move” (38) away from substance and toward ‘appearance as appearance’. This move has to do with projection: a shift (39) “from the identity of what appears to the non-concretized act of projection.” In this context, the text introduces the term ‘eknosis’, defined as an inward-outward knowing. This is a work coined for this purpose; you won’t find it in a dictionary.

Eknosis remains appearance-centered, but it is also an active projecting. A focus on this active projection is introduced here for its potential value in turning away from the substance-centered certainties of conventional space. It may take some experimenting and reflecting to get a sense of what this means. That’s where we’ll focus in our discussion next week.