

Orientation for Week 4

About Assignments

A couple of people have requested that everyone post answers to assignments in the discussion area on the website, so that the group can communicate more as a whole.

My reason for not doing this was my sense that some people might want their answers to be private, and I still think this is a concern. So let's make it optional. If you feel okay about sharing them, please do go ahead and post them on the website, identifying them in an appropriate way.

Assignment for Week 4

TSK 139 says that we may try to break out of our sense of being trapped in 'lower time' by practicing meditation or other spiritual disciplines. You might have other ways of doing this as well: ways (as we discussed in the phone call) that help you contact the aliveness of time.

WIR 41 adds: "If you have background in a meditative or spiritual tradition, you may want to reflect on this claim. . . . Would a different understanding of time change the way you approach such teachings?"

Look into this question. Where does it lead you?

Orientation

The reading for this week suggests various paradoxes: it tells us that we are still working with transitional views and ordinary presuppositions, but these have not ever been in force; it tells us as well that there is no more 'open' view to put into effect, and also no 'lower time' that can be opposed to Great Time.

Don't worry too much about making sense of this; up to a point, you might think of these statements as pointers toward a way of understanding time that will be elaborated later on. Since the discussion here is rather detailed and complex, probably the best approach is to rely on the sequence of exercises that help us investigate the past-present-future structure of conventional time: TSK 18-22. Since you have an extra week, perhaps you can make time to explore each of these exercises, even though they are not all assigned for the program. This sequence is one that I often work with on retreat, since it can be very help to go into each exercise more intensively.

The reading tells us that time does not flow (136, but see 142: this is how its aliveness may initially show up). This seems to go against the point that we investigated in the phone call, in which we looked for evidence of the flow of time, or at least the aliveness of time. But really, the point being made is the same. The whole idea that time flows depends on accepting something like the past-present-future structure of time, and this is something we will later want to question.

The aliveness of the present moment, which we also discussed in the phone call, is discussed in the reading with considerable care. As the text says (136), since we start from a past-present-future lived time structure. we must "work with particular moments, opening them up to Great Time."

Now, we still haven't learned much about how to do this. The text tries to prepare us by giving us a rather detailed conceptual analysis of the three 'stages' of time. Our assignment for this week stops in the middle of stage 2, and for this reason alone, you shouldn't really expect to be able to absorb everything that's said here. But if you read slowly and carefully, important points are being made. The text itself explains what it's doing: encouraging us (141) to "deeply things through." So here thinking is itself an exercise in opening to Great Time. This whole chapter is probably the most dense and difficult in the TSK book, so don't be discouraged. By the way, notice that whereas the TSK book speaks of three levels of space, it speaks of three stages in the appreciation of Great Time. What do you think is the significance of this different formulation?