

## Orientation for Week 5

In Sunday's phone call, I emphasized the link between time and knowledge. Our usual knowledge reveals the self as active in a world of objects and events, of fixed meanings and frustrated wishes. Living in this world, we are 'enthralled', which is to say that we are the captives of our limited ways of understanding and our inability to connect directly with the dynamic of time and the openness of space.

Although I mentioned this briefly in the phone call, let me say a bit more about our tendency to rely on technology to control this tightly structured world in which we find ourselves. Technology responds to the world as we believe it to be. Accepting its claims as the way things are, it tries to satisfy the needs of the self by manipulating objects in space and time.

Science is in many ways the ultimate expression of this technological approach. On the one hand (I am following here the discussion on TSK 140) science develops better theoretical insights into the limits on our conventional understanding of time and space, leading it to adopt "nonstandard logics." On the other hand, however, science does not even begin to question the reality we inhabit in an existential or phenomenological sense. It sees through conventional structures, but leaves them in place in every way that matters. The discussion of "technological knowledge" in *Love of Knowledge* can help clarify these points.

Meditation can become a technology in this sense: accepting the way things are while trying to access some other realm in which 'things' go differently. If that is how we meditate, our meditative experience will not go far toward giving access to a new vision of reality. As an alternative, TSK proposes that we learn to "think 'things' through," a suggestion whose meaning I discussed in the phone call (See also 142). We can do this through brief 'knowings' (143) that open deeper dimensions of our experience. When we do this, 'things' become inspiring symbols of such a possibility (144).

The discussion of "attending to what is immediately present" in our experience (144) helps clarify the point being made here and how it differs from the approach in meditative traditions. While meditation instructions often ask us to be aware of present experience, practice carried out in this way remains fixed on the structures of lower-level knowledge, such as 'things' and a 'present moment' that is different from the past and the future. Such limitations continue to uphold conventional ways of being and knowing.

Please take the alternative discussed on 144 as the walk-about practice for the week. That is, see if you can be aware of what is immediately present without automatically locating that present in a "before-after causal nexus." As a way into this practice, consider the suggestion in the text that in such encounters, both the knowing subject and the known object can be seen as presentations rather than solid entities. The text suggests that doing this may allow "previously hidden dynamics to show themselves in and as the situation," pointing less to what manifests and more to the activity of manifesting. Those of you writing assignments may wish to write on your experience in carrying out this practice, or else on the assigned practice for the week.

For the coming week, we turn toward knowledge, the third element in the TSK vision. Reflect carefully on the discussion in the middle of page 44 of *When It Rains*. While we recognize different possible ways of understanding space and time, we seem to accept that there is only one kind of knowledge. As the text suggests, this may be because while science has learned to question the 'ultimate' nature of time and space, it takes it for granted—and absolutely relies on—the assumption that there is only one kind of knowledge deserving of the name. As an interesting example, consider the efforts that have gone into searching for extra-terrestrial intelligence: it is an unquestioned assumption that such intelligence would have developed a knowledge fundamentally grounded in the ways of knowing that science itself adopts. Isn't there something very limited in this approach?

Of course, you probably wouldn't be taking this program if you accepted that only scientific knowledge counts as knowledge. However, it is one thing to allow for different ways of knowing, or even to try to put them into effect, and another to uproot conventional knowledge at a deep level. That is what the TSK vision is trying to do.

As *When It Rains* suggests (45), the reading from DTS (assigned in the Unit, but not in this program) mostly examines the structures of conventional knowledge, while the reading from SDTS investigates the possibility of alternatives. The assigned practice (TSK Ex. 17) offers such an alternative.

The reading from SDTS starts by echoing the reading for last week: "Long ago . . . we chose a way of knowing that put time and space at a distance. . . . [Yet] the moment we look, a different kind of knowledge is available." There is a sense in the reading that time and space are our friends, inviting us to new ways of being and knowing. The walk-about practice may help give this suggestion an experiential dimension.

The question asked in the reading is this: How do we set knowledge free? And the answer given is clear: through cultivating inquiry. Look at the alternatives for inquiry mentioned in the text: "imagination, visualization, speculation, common sense—whatever helps to sharpen our questions and awaken our intelligence." (xxii). These forms of inquiry are familiar to us, but we don't often use them to call into question the basics of our existence. Can you explore ways to do that during the week ahead?