

Opening Unknown Time – Spring 2013

Orientation for Week 5

We are seeing a shift in the readings to engage more directly the issue of knowledge in relation to time, with its invitation to discover different ways of knowing. The basic question, of course, is how a different understanding of time can allow new ways of knowing, and how new ways of knowing can deepen our appreciation of time. This circular relationship, which we have seen before, comes up whenever we challenge the usual temporal order, with its subject-object structure, fixed identities, and precisely defined points in linear time.

For some time now, we have been investigating this question through looking for the aliveness of time, understood now as an indeterminate possibility for knowledge. We have also explored aliveness as the 'inwardness' of time, "the immediacy of presence, [in which] a single thought, a single connection, a single unexpected phrase or turn of inquiry may reveal a new knowledge and a different timing." (112) In the phone call, in connection with practice, I emphasized that if we seek to turn time inward, we cannot exclude the one who sets out to turn inward. We cannot turn inward if we first stake out a claim to ownership in the temporal order we rely on every waking moment of our lives.

The possibility for new knowledge through an inward turn is connected to creativity. When we construct the 'bridge' of linear time (128), something solid is fixed in place. Creativity is just the opposite: flowing, indeterminate, undefined, without any fixed origin. Does it take time for a creative idea to emerge? It doesn't seem that way, even though there may need to be a period of preparation or gestation before that burst of creativity comes. Suddenly the new possibility is there. How does time allow for that? We do not know. And this not knowing extends to time itself: when we experience the creative and the alive, we have entered unknown time: time that does not construct an order, but conducts (130) "what remains unformed in the temporal dynamic."

From the indeterminate and unformed, we turn now to the unknown. The bridge in this case is the time that (131) transmits the whole of the temporal order. (Notice that the image of a bridge breaks down here, because to build a bridge, you must put down foundations at both ends in advance—but how can you erect a foundation in an unknown realm?) As we proceed, we find ourselves speaking again of the 'field communiqué' (DTS chapters 2-3). A new term is introduced as well: whatever appears shares the same 'tempo'. The tempo defines the known and also the unknown.

At this point, the question arises: can the unknown become knowable? Can we go beyond the limits of the known? From within the tempo or field communiqué, the answer will be 'no'. But it is also possible to seek out the unknown by going within. This is the same possibility we have been exploring in various ways for some weeks now. How to investigate it is the theme of this reading.

We have been working with variations on a set of practices that explore in different ways the aliveness of time and the possibility of turning to the inward of time. If you want some more specific guidance on how to do this, take a look at DTS Ex. 13A (starting on 298). We took a look at this exercise in the last course. Do you find it helpful now?