

**Opening Unknown Time    Winter 2013**  
**Orientation for Week 6    DTS 109-114**

We devoted most of the phone call for Week 5 to discussing the reading from *Knowledge of Time and Space* and the arena for inquiry that it introduces. The question is this: given that we live in a world that is cut off from the aliveness of time, structured instead to put ‘experience’ at the center, how can we best understand the intensity that experience often delivers, and can we use that intensity as a way back into a temporal dynamic not distorted by the focus on the self and the structures that support the self?

Toward the end of the phone call, we considered the intense energy that fuels (or finds expression in) emotions and the sense of concern, worry, doubt, and so on. In the brief practice, we asked whether it possible to engage whatever emotion is present our experience right now at the level of its aliveness, rather than in terms of its content. If we do, what impact does this have?

Here are some other examples, sketched out very briefly, of other places we could look—within ordinary experience—for the quality of aliveness:

- Feelings and sensations, expanded and allowed to flow
- Mental images
  - the beauty of the images that sometimes flow through the mind
  - the colors of such images
- verbal thoughts and stories
  - the narrative inherent in the story or thought, which pulls you along
  - Consider in this connection how stories in novels or movies sometimes seem capable of engaging us more fully or deeply than the events of our own lives.
- the active dynamic of the stream of events itself (the leaping energy of ‘monkey mind’).
  - (In this connection, the page following this orientation has a lovely quote from William James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890). The passage contrasts the ‘transitive’ parts of the stream of consciousness from the ‘substantive’ parts, a distinction closely related to the point that the heart of time is its aliveness.)
- the power of a sudden insight. Do such insights in themselves suggest that we have spontaneously connected with the dynamic of time and the deeper knowing it allows?
- The aliveness of intention: the dynamic of the resolve to act on what matters most. (Note the link between tension, intensity, and intention. Intention seems rooted in the structure of linear time, but perhaps it can take us to a deeper temporality. How does this work?)
- a deeper knowing, an at-homeness in the dynamic flow of time.

That’s a lot to work with. I’ll be interested to see what you discover.

If we return now to the main reading for Week 5, which we didn’t really have a chance to discuss in the phone call, we find that the discussion there focuses on the witness: how it is cut off from time, and how, as a matter of logic and internal consistency, the claim of the witness to somehow stand outside time or authenticate experience cannot stand up.

In light the possibilities for encountering aliveness just described, we might ask whether this analysis itself offers a pathway into aliveness. After all, the text itself says that logic and analysis are not likely to loosen the hold of the

witness (106), but then it goes on to offer an analysis anyway, suggesting that it might be a helpful step (107). Considered on its own, that justification seems a little weak. Perhaps a better way to think of it is that the analysis in the text invites us to use *questioning* as a gateway into aliveness (the third of the four methods discussed in the orientation to Week 4). A set of objections is put forward, but the aim is not to prove a point. Rather, the inquiry into the claims of the witness can itself activate the aliveness of a deeper knowing.

Notice that this is a very different approach from going to the aliveness of what is so, even though it still seems to have aliveness as its goal. For instance, if I am sad, I can find the aliveness of the sadness, and doing so may transform the emotion of sadness. But the approach in the reading asks: what is the witness for the sadness; what makes us accept its claim to be real? Can that witness be trusted? We can't answer too quickly, because to answer 'no' without really exploring the question will leave the sadness intact, no matter how clever or convincing our reasoning may be. But if we honestly look for the witness and don't find it, can the sadness endure?

This form of questioning continues in the reading for Week 6, which takes us to the end of the chapter and the end of this program. In reading, keep in mind what the text says on 110: "The world that the self claims to authenticate may not be 'true' or 'real', but it is also not false or illusory and does not have to be rejected." What matters here is to investigate the price we pay for accepting the testimony of the witness.

The possibility of finding aliveness within the usual appearances to which the witness testifies, which has been our theme in the past couple of weeks, is related to the discussion that opens Chapter 30 of DTS, called 'Healing Time'. For next week, you may want to read over the first part of that chapter, up through Ex. 13A and its commentary, and to experiment with the exercise.

Finally, a couple of practical points. First, the practice session for this program will happen on April 7. I may post some suggestions for how to practice, but if you look back over the orientations (including this one), you will find plenty to work with.

Second, I have to change the starting date for the Spring course to April 21. That is what the website now says, but it was previously listed as April 14. Please plan accordingly.

### **William James, Principles of Psychology**

Now it is very difficult, introspectively, to see the transitive parts for what they really are. If they are but flights to a conclusion, stopping them to look at them before the conclusion is reached is really annihilating them. Whilst if we wait till the conclusion *be* reached, it so exceeds them [p. 244] in vigor and stability that it quite eclipses and swallows them up in its glare. Let anyone try to cut a thought across in the middle and get a look at its section, and he will see how difficult the introspective observation of the transitive tracts is. The rush of the thought is so headlong that it almost always brings us up at the conclusion before we can arrest it. Or if our purpose is nimble enough and we do arrest it, it ceases forthwith to be itself. As a snow-flake crystal caught in the warm hand is no longer a crystal but a drop, so, instead of catching the feeling of relation moving to its term, we find we have caught some substantive thing . . . The attempt at introspective analysis in these cases is in fact like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the

darkness looks. . . . The results of this introspective difficulty are baleful. If to hold fast and observe the transitive parts of thought's stream be so hard, then the great blunder to which all schools are liable must be the failure to register them, and the undue emphasizing of the more substantive parts of the stream.