

Session 7, Week 2
KTS 19-30, Ex. SDTS 214-15

Transition and Orientation

It was great to have people engage so vigorously in the practice during the phone call. If the heart of the vision is inquiry, then we were at the heart of the heart.

Since we didn't get to discuss the reading for Week One during the call, I'll make a few points here. Many of the key issues actually did come during the phone call, just not in an organized way.

The reading for last week started with an exploration of how past, present, and future fit together. You might wonder whether this is a self-created problem (compare the second paragraph on p. 9), but in fact we are very committed in our view of the world to marking out these three divisions of time, so the problem arises naturally. Our discussion in the phone call brought out some of the difficulties in drawing hard and fast lines, but that doesn't mean the fundamental distinction doesn't make sense at an ordinary level.

The relation of time and self comes up right at the outset of last week's reading (4: "Could the substance of time be drawn from the active existence of the self, the owner of experience?") This might seem a strange suggestion, since we normally assume that time is prior to the self. Yet it's a natural outcome of the inquiry we did during the phone call, which suggested that the 'pastness' of a memory is related to the non-presence of the self. But this would mean that the self is the indispensable factor in making reality real! It's a remarkable claim, but in a sense, we seem committed to it.

It's not completely clear that this link between the present presence of the self and the dynamic of time really works. For instance, if I'm lost in a daydream, I am fully present in the field of that daydream. Is this kind of 'presence' sufficient to engage the dynamic of time? Perhaps the difference is that the 'I' in a dream or daydream is not the real 'I'. But that is a test we can only apply in retrospect, so it's not clear how helpful it is.

We may feel at this point that we're getting too lost in possibilities and hypotheses, too cut off from the reality of our ordinary experience. Why try to problematize what seems so intuitively obvious? One answer is that we experience the march of time as oppressive, a factor in our ongoing tension and anxiety. See the third paragraph in p. 11 for a short description of what is at stake.

Chapter 2 of KTS starts off with a completely different approach to time. The discussion is about intimacy and inspiration, about a creative surge in which everything seems possible. Here we dive for a moment into new ways of engaging time, but almost immediately the chapter takes us back out into the ordinary, trying to make a link between our standard experience and these more aesthetic and creative alternatives. The link proves difficult to make. Perhaps that is because we 'take a position' (as Klaus reminded us in the phone call). See 11: We occupy a non-located present (just as the 'I' is a non-located 'I'), and thus cut ourselves off from the flow of time. This is a point we have explored already: compare the discussion at DTS 99-100.

The real problem seems to be that we trade flow and continuity for mechanisms that mimic but do not really engage time's dynamic (14-15). Experience itself is such a mechanism, and so too is the self and the "lifeless ticking away of linear temporality" (19). The simple structures of 'from' and 'to' prove central to setting up this whole structure.

The readings for the coming week explore the consequences of this mechanistic and linear approach, linking them directly to "the specific psychology that we normally understand as the very core of the self" (20). Now we are ready to look once more at the structure of the 'logos', which we investigated in the last session, and the

self's role as 'bystander'. The reading returns also to the role of experience, calling into question this truly fundamental structure.

For a walkabout this week, be aware of other people—both those you interact with and those you simply pass by on the street. Do they share your time, or are they in their own time? When you stop interacting with someone, or they stop paying attention to you, does your sense of the time you inhabit change?