

Week 6 KTS 72-76, TSK Ex. 25, 26 (and TSK 24)

Transition and Orientation

In the last phone call, I tried to clarify the relation between first-level time and knowledge and the second-level temporal momentum. The basic point is this: the second-level momentum presents or ‘specifies’ the first-level structures of the prevailing temporal order, including the past-present-future-structure of linear time and the structure of a bystander-self knowing an objective reality.

In a part of last week’s reading that we did not get to discuss during the phone call, this point is explored by looking at the insubstantiality of substance. To *insist* on substance leads to key misinterpretations (66). What we think of as substantial is in fact more like a shadow or echo: first, because what we think of as present ‘now’ has already receded into the past, and second, because the nature of what appears substantial is the outcome of interpretive constructs (67). To these two difficulties we could add a third: whatever appears as substantial takes form as part of a temporal order given by the more ‘fundamental’ temporal dynamic. The whole discussion here may remind you of the famous image in Plato’s Republic of the prisoners in a cave, who believe the shadows cast on the wall in front of them to be the only reality.

We have already explored a powerful way to cut through the commitment to substance, based on a threefold approach: let go of the self’s intentions, appreciate all that manifests without judgments, and be ready to inquire in a wholly open way into the whole of what appears, not leaving out our status as observers, knowers, owners, and reactors.

Another major theme explored in last week’s reading is the rhythms of time (68-69). We notice such rhythms first in the rhythms of change; in particular, change that matters to us or impinges on us in some way. Thus, the changes undergone by a mountain range across geologic ages do not seem to us to engage any rhythm at all.

However, temporal rhythms do not depend solely on how events unfold. They also have to do with the way time specifies objects. Just as we ignore (or cannot immediately engage) the rhythms that level a mountain range over aeons, so we ignore (or have no reason to engage) the rhythm that specifies the different peas on a plate (to use the example in the book). Here again, it is the ability to *appreciate* fully what time specifies that gives access to temporal rhythm. Engaging the dynamic of second-level time “teaches us to look for knowledge in transition.” (71) We might think of the rhythm through which we might deliberately explore, in various aspects, the appearance of the peas on a plate.

This kind of appreciation matters a great deal in the aesthetic dimension. Artistic creations can invite us to engage rhythms that we ordinarily pay no heed. For instance, consider the way the Romantics celebrated ruins, both for the sense of melancholy and time passing that they evoked, and for the sense that nature was reclaiming what humanity had turned to its own purposes. Reflecting on this a bit, I came across this quote from an eighteenth century Romantic about a building that had fallen into decay: “a very enchanting piece of ruin. Nature has now made it her own. Time has worn off all traces of the rule: it has blunted the sharp edges of the chisel; and broken the regularity of opposing parts.”

Taken to a fundamental level, inquiry and openness to the rhythms of time allow for engaging the *whole* of the temporal order that we find ourselves inhabiting and making sense of. In the whole, the temporal dynamic remains available in a way that is obscured when we focus on any one part. By engaging the whole, we no longer leave out “rhythms not linked to our own.” (69)

All this leads to the walkabout practice for the week. Ask yourself what you take for granted, or what you cannot even imagine questioning. The sameness of the peas on the plate is an example; the ‘normal’ way you

react to events is another. Don't try to change anything—just identify such instances.

The reading for this week starts by 'defining' the dynamic of second-level time as "rhythm without specification." Taken out of context, this might be misleading. As we have seen, the second-level dynamic manifests *in* and *as* specification. The point here is that the dynamic itself cannot be specified; rather, it is what does the specifying.

To access this temporal dynamic, we need to go beyond the first-level distinction between subject and object. This point, which we looked at in Week 4, is linked here the focus on substance, which in turn is tied to the 'gravity' of what appears. (Those of you in the Teacher Training Program could compare this discussion to DTS Ex. 3, which also raises the issue of gravity, and write about what you discover.) The reading explores ways to challenge both substance and gravity, which we can explore in the phone call. It also returns to the idea of "information," which was also brought up in last week's reading. We'll see if we can investigate that as well.