

Transition and Orientation – Week 4

Since the recording failed, here is a summary of the phone call, drawn from the notes I took in preparation for the phone call but further edited: it corresponds at least roughly to how the phone call went.

First the dates for the retreat have changed: June 7-12, not 8-13. Also, we need to hear from you if you are planning to attend the retreat, or seriously thinking about. By next week, if possible.

WIR 63 says, “Appearance makes space manifest without ever becoming anything other than space.” Then how do we account for the difference between ‘empty’ space and appearance-space? You could think of it this way: it’s like making snow into a snowman. It’s still snow.

But what makes it a snowman? Just our designation, our naming it as such. Without that naming, it’s still just snow. Or maybe it’s the act of making, of building the snowman. But this doesn’t really add anything, because we also make things precisely in designating them, in assigning meaning. Compare KTS 196: the conventional distinctions are certainly not wrong, but not stopping points for inquiry. We need to respectfully “decline the invitation” to go along with the established.

The reading starts (190) by giving a sense of what a field is all about. The example is of the ‘feel’ of a field. You walk into a room where people have had a fight, and you sense the tension. This tension—the mood, or atmosphere—is an example of the field (perhaps a ‘local representative’, as the sky is a local representative of space (TSK, ch. 1). Every field goes beyond its content, and in the space of that beyond, feeling and a knowing appropriate to the field arise.

The feel of the field has its own ‘reality’: it is not the same reality as the reality of the contents of the field (a reality whose nature is given by the field!) But it is also not to be dismissed as subjective. There is a kind of knowing that pervades the field, a knowing that does not know content or objects. In contrast, the knowing of the subject, the bystander, is quite different. For the bystander, there is no field, there is no intimacy; there is only distance and separation.

One way to challenge the knowing of the bystander in favor of a field-knowing is to emphasize the intimacy of space as field. In a field, everything shares with everything else. KTS, quoted in WIR says that whatever arises embodies the field. So let’s practice with this: let content (objects, thoughts, concerns, etc. expand into the whole of their field.) [We did this practice for a few minutes.

How does a field arise? KTS 191 says that the process is self-establishing. That is, it is the contents of the field that make the field, but it is just as true that it is the ‘quality’ of the field that allows its contents. This interplay starts out in a very open way: a ‘tentative’ order, an ‘incipient’ structure, ‘provisional’ tendencies. It is largely inchoate and unformed. But with

feedback, the field consolidates. We settle into designating the contents of the field, losing touch with the field, the *space* itself. The field fills up, and space itself is squeezed out into nothing at all, or else just distance and separation. “Whatever arises embodies or expresses the field as a whole,” but we lose sight of this. The ‘dynamic’ is lost, the ‘mechanics’ covered over. In one (lower level) way, the resulting proliferation and complexity give a program for exploration and research. See 192-193: “The infinitely complex sequence . . .”

To go beyond this complex range of givens, we need a way of inquiry that is light; that is not bound to the gravity that the field generates. One helpful point is that the identities we assign are based on our concerns and predispositions (195). This helps give a sense of what the field is: a range of interdependencies. (See the first paragraph on 196.) Seeing the dynamics that give rise to identities helps free us from the commitment to identities.

To investigate these dynamics and mechanics in the right way, we want to be careful not to make claims about what does and does not exist. That is why the text introduces “the ‘field of the possible’ as “the negation of its impossibility.” Negation now comes to play an important role. This is because we need a new way of speaking, one that does not establish. So we rely on negation. The ‘not-not’ is by no means equivalent to a simple assertion (as it would be in mathematics. As the text says (198), the ‘not-not’ is meant to express the power of *allowing* at work. See 199: “in encompassing negation, the field allows appearance to appear.”

WIr says that the way to engage this rather challenging material is to read lightly. This is not just so you don’t get discouraged if you don’t understand. It’s because you are not trying to establish, whereas usually we read for just this purpose: we establish point A so that we can move on to point B. You might think in contrast of reading poetry. It is the reading that matters not what is established by what is said.

So, that’s a summary of the phone call (with a few new aspects thrown in. Now let’s move into the Orientation. We are back in TSK for this week, and so the notion of space as field is not introduced as all. But as we will see, there is a connection.

The reading starts by challenging the model that gives the mind as source or generator of experience. Why? Because the field is more fundamental than objects or designated entities, and mind as actor, doer, or source is such an entity. In general, whatever is assigned an identity recedes into darkness: it becomes a hidden object. Objects can be analyzed and sorted, but in terms of the field, objects close off knowledge.

The reading invites us to open up partitions and presuppositions. Taking this approach, we come to the statement on TSK 64: “Mind, like space, has no foundation.” This is a ‘field’ insight, even though the language is not field language. (instead, the language used is that of focal settings, but there is a close connection: both a field-understanding and a focal-setting understanding go to a level more basic than whatever shows up in the field or comes into focus.

Does it help to read ‘field insights’ back into this discussion? I think so, but you should ask

for yourself. The question is whether the field perspective helps clarify the discussion that is going on here. That is what we will explore next week. By way of comparison, consider the image of the blueprint for construction used at KTS 202. The blueprint guides construction, but it is not part of what is built.

Introducing the field perspective into the TSK reading could be considered an example of “working with . . . outputs of the ‘mind-setting’ in ways that are uncharacteristic for that setting.” TSK 64. This sentence, which we worked with in an earlier session, is very helpful in explaining the TSK method. It underlies the emphasis I have been placing on working with variations on the presupposed as a way of activating the TSK vision.

Both with respect to field perspectives and for the focal-setting approach discussed here, we are aiming to move away from a substance-centered understanding. KTS 202 says that this becomes possible through awareness of the field totality—we might say, the field as field.

This perspective leads us back to the ‘not’. When something in experience feels stuck, this is a clue that we are accepting the substantiality of what is so. If we become aware of this stuckness as ‘not the field totality’, we have the chance to access the allowing of the field. Put differently (see KTS 203), whatever manifests as substantial amounts to a field discontinuity, and thus cuts off the clarity and accommodation that field awareness make possible. Recall here Michael’s comments during the phone call: the field is like the mist rolling in off a lake, yet (my comment) in that mist a deeper knowing operates. As KTS 204 says, this is not just a reformulation. It can be directly experienced.

Variation In light of what was just said, practice with moments of negativity, dis-ease, or low energy: How solid is the commitment to substantiality of what is so?

Walkabout When you wake up, or as soon as it occurs to you, ask about the feel of the field. Once you have made contact with this ‘feel’, keep track of it as the day progresses. Can you sense it shifting? Trace its rhythms?

Assignment (for those of you doing these): Read DTS 16-22, which introduces the ‘field communiqué’. Write about this: what does this discussion add to your understanding?

Exercise TSK 14, with reference to KTS Ex. 40.