

Transition and Orientation for Week 5

I've changed the name of this 'Orientation' to 'Transition and Orientation', because for the past few weeks I've been using the Orientation to go over material related to the previous reading. I may just keep this title.

As I mentioned in the phone call, I want to start this Transition/Orientation by suggesting an exercise. You can think of it as a variation or as a more formal exercise; it can be done both ways. Here is a description:

LOK Ex. 14 asks us to look for moments between moments. In an earlier orientation, I suggested that one way to do this practice is to 'freeze' the focus of attention. In other words, pick an object—perhaps the breath—and determine to stay focused on it. (We are specifically working here with the breath as object, not the 'intimate', undescribed breath we discussed in the phone call.) The idea I had in mind was that by keeping this focus on moments of breathing, you can see other moments-between-moments when the mind jumps off in other directions: a memory, a stray thought, a perception, etc.

The present exercise turns this practice on its head, turning to look at what happens to the original object of perception when we let ourselves notice the moments between moments. To do the exercise, take as your object an emotion or mood or that is operating right now. For instance, perhaps you are feeling anxious, or angry, or calm. Just notice whatever your emotional state or mood is right now, and make that the object. Choosing to do this when you are experiencing a negative feeling is probably best.

In line with what I said above, as you keep this focus, you will experience gaps, or moments between the moments on which you are focusing. The content of those 'moments between' will vary; what matters is that they have nothing to do with the emotion or mood on which you are focusing. As you experience these moments between moments, look to see what happens to the original emotion or mood. You may find that it begins to lose its solidity, like a sheet of ice as it starts to melt.

I introduce this exercise because it can help us understand how it might be possible to move out of the rigidity—the frozenness—of descriptive knowledge. The situation of experiencing a mood or emotion is an aspect of how we *describe* for what is happening. But that description only applies to a sequence string of moments that we single out. It does not describe the moments between those moments. By letting those other moments come into awareness, we can free ourselves from what is described and come closer to the dynamic freedom of time as it is presented in the TSK vision.

Let's take this a little further. The emotions and moods we feel, and their continuity over time, are one of the strongest way in which the self confirms its own existence over time. 'I' am the one who has a particular feeling. So when you let in discontinuities, you are

breaking through descriptive knowledge on the one hand, and the claims of the self to be a fixed, solid entity on the other.

Notice how this kind of practice is different from the practice of mindfulness as it's usually presented today. It's far more active, structuring experience in certain ways. In adding this more active-minding dimension, we invite in a deeper appreciation for the structures that shape our reality. We allow for a vision that more readily supports transformation.

All of this relates very strongly to our insistence on the self as the one that provides continuity. If the described continuity of experience is more apparent than real, can we say the same of the self? Michael asked in the phone call whether the self could be made of water or vapor as well as ice, and I said that by its nature, the self is icy. But this could be put differently: a self that is no longer assigned the job of providing continuity, a self that narrates *without insisting* that the narrative is the truth of the situation, might be wholly in keeping with the TSK Vision.

So that's another variation to work with during the week. We have suggested that the self is a construct—a typical, but especially central—example of a construct. Try seeing what happens if you treat the self as a construct, a story told looking backward at experience, in order to make sense of experience. Again, this does not mean the story is false, just that its claims are not real. For those of you writing papers, please write on your experience with this variation.

Incidentally, WIR 57 suggests another, related variation: looking for the feel of a witness, both as you read and in daily life. What is the difference between the two variations? How are they related?

The reading for this week is longer than usual, because it covers two chapters in LOK (chs. 16-17). We might say that these chapters takes the 'descriptive knowledge' insight and generalize it into the observation that we make sense of the world through constructs and models. To get a sense of the significance of this point, take a look at the three 'taken for granted' models described at 130, paragraph 2.

Models support other models, creating a structure too complicated to take in as a whole. LOK Ex. 16 offers a way to investigate this point experientially. Of course, this is exactly why variations are so important: vary one structure sustained by a particular model and you are loosening the hold of the entire complex.

The assignment for this week does not mention the relevant chapter from *When It Rains*, but you should take a look at it. It's Unit 9, pp. 55-58.