

### Transition and Orientation

*In the phone call I mentioned the possibility that our usual understanding of ‘substance’, which makes it into something fixed and solid, may rest on a misunderstanding of the Greek, citing an essay I had just been reading that discusses the right way to translate ‘ousia’, the Greek word that then became the Latin ‘substantia’. The discussion (it centered on Aristotle) was short, but it does make the point I cited it for: ‘ousia’ is better understood as activity: “a determinate being doing what it does, being what it is.”*

Now, back to the themes of the session. Toward the end of last week’s reading from TSK, Rinpoche asks whether space is in some sense fundamental; whether existence ‘at bottom’ is space. It may sound like this is a metaphysical claim about the nature of reality: just as Thales in Ancient Greece said that everything is made of water, so TSK says everything is made of space. But that is misleading: space is *not* the source and fundamental substance of all that appears. Rather, whatever appears requires space to appear, and its various properties and qualities are identified through the capacity to name and interpret, which itself arises in a particular ‘space of understanding’. The reading we have been doing from DTS helps clarify this distinction.

The way in which space could be said to be ‘fundamental’ does not depend on—or contribute to—the dualism of ‘something’ and ‘nothing’ (TSK 9). More generally, when we recognize the role of space, other dualities also cease to matter as much. You might think here of such dualities as perception and object, mental and physical, or ‘from’ and ‘to’. Notice that the image of “the mind’s eye” (it comes up twice) instantly bridges the mind/matter gap. Finally, the discussion in last week’s reading of forms retaining an “ambiguity” that preserves “expressions of a higher-order unity” seems to suggest a kind of openness: a willingness to accept that whatever we think is so might be otherwise: might also operate on an inspiring symbolic level.

The reading for this week, all from SDTS, suggests ‘I am here’ as a starting point. This makes an interesting contrast to the idea that space is fundamental. You might ask yourself whether the two viewpoints are diametrically opposed, or whether ‘I am here’ is just a version, an expression, of ‘space as fundamental’. Put differently, if you think in terms of “space projecting space into space,” which of the three occurrences of ‘space’ could be equated with ‘I am here’? Any of them?

The reading introduces the notion of 16, which could be thought of as a symbol of completion. What is the relation of that completion to the starting point of ‘I am here’? To zero? The text describes the way that points are marked out to bring something into being. Does this activity ever depart from zero? (A clear answer to this question is given at the top of SDTS 5. Is that the end of the matter?)

The reading says at 5 that we have no basis for calling what is being presented in the text either true or false. Then what is the point? Are 'true' and 'false' the right measures? One possible way to approach this question is to reflect on what is being presented in light of the claim from last week's TSK reading (TSK 6) that space gives room for activity (see SDTS 34). It seems fair to say that this activity offers special access to the TSK vision precisely because it does not claim to found anything at all. Perhaps this is because it is active as a symbol is active (36), active in a way that "makes things go." I offer this as a possibility, not an interpretation.

Don't forget to look at the various diagrams starting on p. 241 of SDTS, some of which illustrate the passages we are reading. Do they help clarify what is being said?