

Week 5, March 29
WIR 132-135, DTS 51-58, DTS Ex. 6

Transition and Orientation

I did not make very clear the practice I originally meant to have us do during the phone call, and that I am now suggesting you do during the week as a walkabout. Here is a description you could work with during the week; I present it in several steps:

1. We saw in the reading that the zero-point 'I', viewed symbolically in its form as the letter 'I' flipped on its side, marks out a whole world: the base-line structure of subject and object and the distance between. From the two points marked out by the top and bottom of the letter 'I' come four points that locate, and from each of these 4 more, giving the whole of 16.
2. This symbol suggests that the whole of the world we experience is a manifestation of 'I': of 'me and my concerns'. The 'I' as symbol thus helps us recognize that the world we engage is simply an 'extension' (an interesting word) of 'I'.
3. The practice is 1) to cultivate this way of experiencing the 'here' of the 'I' as encompassing the whole, symbolized by '16'; and 2) to let "the 'here' of 'I am here' open into the fullness of space." (SDTS 10).
4. In this way, 'I am here' can become a gateway to zero (SDTS 34). As I mentioned in the phone call you could understand this way of proceeding as an expanded version of TSK Ex. 25 (Intimacy).
5. You could think of this walkabout as exercising a kind of 'x-ray vision'. The world of your concerns and engagements is also the space-geometry world of points and lines, 'here' and 'there', and 'zero and 16'.

Moving on, during the phone call Michael asked a question I said I would answer in this Orientation. He wrote in the chat box:

I find it confusing that the diagram of 16 (top of page 242) has no single baseline, and the central point (presumably the zero point) is no longer an "I" nor a 'here' looking out at a single 'there'. The baseline gets replaced by a looking out in four directions, each of which is itself the center of another four anchors.

My response is rather simple: do not try too hard to bring the drawings into alignment with the text. As I see it, the drawings from 241-247 offer various ways to derive '16'. The point at the center of the drawing at the top of 242 is one possible stand-in for 'I am here', but so is the x-y axis as a whole that gives 16. I think those are already two different ways of proceeding, even though they are shown in the same drawing. To think this through further, you could read SDTS 17-24, and especially the last paragraph on 24. Incidentally, it was Leslie who worked with Rinpoche on these drawings. Unfortunately, she is not here to help us understand.

For this coming week, we return to Dynamics of Time and Space. Compared to our brief excursion into SDTS, we are now back in more familiar territory. The analysis that opens the reading is similar to many other analyses we have looked at in the past: Space and space-freedom are available at the center of present experience, but our ordinary ways of minding “cover over” this availability. In contrast, SDTS starts from a perspective that pays little heed to conventional understanding.

Last week’s reading from SDTS ‘pointed out’ that when we find ourselves at the center-point of experience—as we always do—we are also already at the center of a whole world, structured by the ‘I am here’ (As I mentioned, there is a parallel here to what contemporary philosophy defines as ‘embodied cognition’.) SDTS resolutely explores how that world is structured without ever referring back to conventional knowledge. That is part of why it is so challenging. DTS offers an approach that is more accessible, and also more familiar from our ongoing TSK inquiry. It inquires into how our “active naming and identifying structure [that] world in which space has disappeared” (DTS 51).

We have looked many times before at the fundamental TSK analysis that is repeated here: thoughts (and other mental events) stand in relation to the mind as objects stand in relation to physical space (See Session 3, Week 2 and Session 4, Week 4, and more generally, Ch. 3 of TSK). You could think of this as simply a matter of definition: When TSK speaks of space, it includes the mental space in which experience arises. Still, this is a big stumbling block for many people, because we take it for granted that space is ‘active’ or relevant only in the physical realm. Since the TSK Vision adopts a different definition, it often happens that people simply refuse to go along, or else try to understand ‘mind space’ as only a metaphor. Given this resistance, it’s important to revisit and clarify this point, which is what the reading does.

The reading moves from a consideration of ‘thoughts in the mind’ to ‘stories that let substance take form’. The story ‘I am here’ is the archetype of this approach. It is what TSK refers to as the “founding story” (LOK). Consider in this context these lines from the caption at LOK 168: “Self found founds founders/ Story discloses closed / Dimensions of knowledge.”