

Week 3 WIR 139-141, VOK 83-90, 157-163, TSK Ex. 29

Transition and Orientation

(I recently came across an interesting article by a Buddhist teacher named Ajahn Sumedho on space, called “Noticing Space”. Since it has some resonance with TSK, I asked Kyle to place it on our ‘Resources and Links’ page. You can find it here: <http://www.creativeinquiry.org/develop/resources-and-links/>.)

At the close of the phone call for Week 2, we did a practice based on the third full paragraph on p. 110. We can read this paragraph as an invitation to let ourselves experience how it feels to live on the basis of the knowledge to which the witness testifies. Relying on the witness, we are cut off from the world we seek to make sense of, as well as the dynamic flow of time. The result is a characteristic ‘feel’ of “frustration and not-knowing, repetition and pain.” To these markers, I added some other suggestions (perhaps included under pain): agitation and isolation. ‘Dullness’ is another possibility, and I am sure there are more.

There is something valuable in looking at the ‘feel’ of this witness-based knowing, which is also a not-knowing. The ‘feel’ of the field is not easily named and identified, and in that sense it does not rely on the testimony of the witness—or perhaps it is better to say that it gives a way of going beyond the testimony of the witness. That is important, especially for us at this point in the program. My sense is that those of you actively participating in the phone calls and using the chat box have some very clear insights into the TSK Vision. Now we need to get serious about the main point, which is activating the vision in our lives.

With that in mind, the walkabout for this week is to continue with the same practice. This is a subtle practice, because we take the ‘feel’ of the field so much for granted, so you may want to sit quietly for a while to see if you can get in touch with it. Alternatively, you could just do the walkabout at a time when you are already feeling negative, perhaps for no reason you can identify: afraid, or somehow empty, or just ill at ease. Whatever the feeling, let it lead you into an exploration of the not-knowing hidden within the witness’ knowing. It may be that the feeling itself becomes quite strong, so that you experience strong negativity. Just remember that what you feel is based on the claims of the witness, and those claims are not solid, even when they seem most convincing.

In doing this practice, we may not know how to proceed (DTS 112, paragraph 2). But we don’t need to be too precise. We are not trying to get to some specific insight; instead, we are accepting an invitation turn inward. As the reading reminds us, this does not mean relying on subjective experience, since the sharp distinction between objective and subjective realms is in fact part of the knowledge-realm that the witness testifies to.

The knowledge that the witness makes available hides a deeper not-knowing. But if we can

‘not know’ our ordinary knowledge, new possibilities may open. If ordinary knowledge is in some sense the enemy of a deeper knowledge, then this other way of ‘not-knowing’ or ‘un-knowing’ seems to offer good prospects for activating that deeper knowing. That is where the readings for the coming week lead us.

In introducing this theme, *When It Rains* points out that a turn toward not-knowing may be therapeutic. It suggests exploring that idea in other TSK books by searching for variations on the word ‘therapy’. This is easy to do if you have the TSK CD; there are only 15 occurrences. Here is one, from KTS 209, that is relevant: “Going directly to the ‘feel of open space, . . . ‘[d]oer and ‘doing’ become aspects of action rather than separate entities. [This] invites an analytic and therapeutic observation—an evocation of knowledge.”

The reading from VOK turns toward the realm of feeling and emotions in another way (VOK 86-87). Here the suggestion is made that we might be able to move toward new knowledge (“invent a new mind”) by replacing the concern of the self—wanting, desire, and getting—with a focus on what we can contribute. In Session 12, later this summer, we will look at the way that Great Love plays into Great Knowledge. Is this small suggestion here a kind of preview of that approach? We don’t know yet, but the shift is worth exploring on its own. Compare also VOK 160: “It is attitude that sets up discriminations and determines their significance, and attitudes can be lightly worn, varying in mood and attributes, open to knowledge instead of closed to the unknown.” This ‘light’ approach can itself be understood as a kind of not knowing.