

Session 9, Week 5, February 8

Transition and Orientation

In the last phone call, we discussed what it would mean to return to the nameless, as well as the limits that may prevent us from doing so. I pointed out that there are themes in our own cultural heritage, mostly associated with Romanticism, that prepare us for this idea. Here is the quote from Wittgenstein suggesting that silence gives access to a different form of knowledge. (I modified the translation again; it is now even more loose, and perhaps a bit biased):

*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.
There are things to which words give no access. Only silence will do.*

Of course, we are not primarily interested in Western cultural history. In the phone call, we focused especially on the difficulties involved in pursuing a meditative path toward the nameless, or toward stillness. We also looked at sense experience as a possible path that could take us 'beyond' words. There is an inherent problem here too, because sense experience ordinarily presupposes the structure of subject/object perception, and this structure guarantees the reign of names, concepts, identities, and substance. Here I'm going to expand on this last point.

The substance and reality of experience consist of (22) the "special intimacy of subject and object." Usually "intimacy" is a positive word, but here intimacy locks us in its embrace, leaving no way out. It operates in two directions (23), pronouncing "the substance of what is and the 'isness' of the one who experiences." In practice, this becomes what the text calls "two-way ownership, referring qualities back to entities that possess them and referring experience to ourselves as the one who experiences."

From this perspective, aiming too intently at any kind of reality 'beyond' naming, whether it be the direct experience of the senses or some higher reality beyond words, only ends up affirming the substance of some unknown interior. No matter how rich encounters with such and unknown may be, they are also fixed and limiting, for they leave us affirming "our own undeniable certainty." (24; cf. LOK ch. 29) It is here that tuning in to the power of the field communiqué shows an alternative. It is here that we arrive at formless openness, tracing the circle of zero.

The reading for this week suggests that we can invite space back into the picture. But exactly how can we do this? We cannot simply turn space into a different kind of substance, for in that case we lose the capacity of space to accommodate, which makes space what it is. Instead, we are asked to discover space as active 'within' appearance. Doing this requires that we allow space to appear as the fundamental mystery.

We are not quite ready to leave behind the field communiqué, even though it will no longer figure as a prominent theme. It would be a mistake to do so, for, as last week's reading pointed out (27) that a focus on the communiqué could teach us how to restore appearance as appearance, "stripped of its claimed substantiality."

With this in mind, here is the walkabout for this week: Look for the dynamic of the field communiqué within appearance. Put differently, envision substance as a message communicated forward by the mind in ongoing acts of naming. In doing this walkabout, give 'substance' an expansive definition. It includes anything we consider to be real, and thus includes our own thoughts and emotions and those of others.