

ORIENTATION

Space Field

Tarthang Tulku

The next three essays focus in turn on the three facets of the TSK Vision: time, space, and knowledge. Choosing 'representative' readings for this purpose would be a hopeless task, since the presentation of the vision is constantly new, constantly creative, always spinning off new possibilities that could not have been anticipated from anything that had gone before. Accordingly, I have simply opted for essays that were short, powerful, and self-contained, and that touched on themes raised repeatedly in the TSK books.

The present essay starts with a deceptively simple statement: "Within conventional time and space, knowledge becomes available to a knower." Reading or hearing this statement, it is easy to miss the significance of the link between its first and second phrases. Space

and time appear or operate in a certain way; in this case, the “conventional” way. Each way allows certain structures to manifest and excludes others. Within conventional time and space, the structures allowed to manifest are those of a knower, someone capable of knowing. But of course, only certain kinds of knowing are available to a knower. The relationship works in both directions: once a certain kind of knowing is in place, it can only reveal space and time in operation in certain specific ways. That is what the next few paragraphs go on to work out. The knower is located as ‘bystander’, and the bystander knows the objects available to a ‘bystander way of knowing’; that is, objects as ‘outsiders’. As a result, certain structures emerge automatically, beyond our ability to question them: structures like ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘distance’ and ‘separation’.

It may seem, as sometimes happens in the TSK Vision, that we are operating at an impossibly abstract level. In fact, however, exactly the opposite is true. We are being shown very concretely how it comes to be that we live in limited ways, never quite participating in our own lives. A given mode of space-time gives a specific way of knowing, and we live out the consequences. What is more, we accept what we know as what is so. Imagine that in the old fairy tale of the prince turned into a frog, the prince forgets that he was ever anything other than a frog. He lives in frog lairs, he croaks out frog messages, he devours frog food. What other options are there?

That is in fact precisely the question that the essay raises. Having named the limits that shape our lives, it invites us to challenge those limits by “considering

the world of conventional space . . . as the shifting exhibitions of a field,” all equally “given together.” This is a remarkable move. The notion of ‘given together’ undermines all claims of substance and fixed identity. It allows freedom to emerge.

In the field of what is given together, even logic and reasoning do not stand outside the field. We can rely on logic, but knowledge based on it will never escape the limits of the field. Einstein famously remarked that it remained a great mystery why our minds should be able to comprehend reality. The notion of a space field that encompasses both reality and our way of knowing makes the solution to that mystery almost self-evident.

As is often true in the TSK Vision, recognizing limits in operation—recognizing the field as field—creates the possibility for new knowledge and new ways of being to emerge. Conversely, the failure to appreciate the field-dimensionality of space affirms conventional limits on knowledge, which manifest as mysteries, paradoxes, and the like. And given the nature of the field, these limits on knowing are also limits on being.

In the second half of the essay, there is a shift from the physical space-field to the psychological space-field. The link between inner and outer space is entirely natural from a field perspective. As we have seen, conventional space and time give us the bystander interacting with outsiders. But bystander and outsider are linked—almost mirror images of one another. Any attempt to confine the mental within its own separate domain distorts the field as it actually operates (For a brief and profoundly evocative investigation of

this important point, see Chapter 5 of Love of Knowledge). The essay touches on these themes only briefly. See in particular the way it challenges the tendency, so common in our science-drenched view of reality, to dismiss the ultimate importance of 'subjective' experience.

The recognition of space as a field is described here as operating on the 'second level' of TSK inquiry, because it makes first-level structuring principles available for questioning. It is inquiry at this level that allows for field transformations. As our appreciation for field constructs leads us to the workings of field dynamics, we emerge into a world of boundless possibility.

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Within conventional time and space, knowledge becomes available to a knower. The knower operates as the observer of appearance, and thus is located in space in a particular way: The knower is situated in a place, emerging from a background. As part of this 'locatedness', the observer stands outside what is observed, playing the role of a "bystander" unaffected by the object under investigation.

The 'bystander-observer' has various preestablished qualities, including character or identity, attitude, and the faculties available for performing observations. These qualities contribute to 'locatedness', determining the 'focal setting' for observation. Objects appear and are identified as 'outsiders' on the basis of the concerns and attributes that the "bystander" brings to them. The

identity of the “bystander’ is juxtaposed to the identity of what appears before the “bystander’. Particular ways for gathering knowledge are established, setting limits on what can be known. What is disclosed to knowledge is tightly bound to these determining conditions, as a transcription is tightly bound to the original recording.

Suppose we decide to investigate space ‘as such’. The juxtaposed identities of “bystander’ and ‘outsider’ will impose limits on the knowledge available through such investigation. We can put it this way: The ‘locatedness’ in operation at the start of the investigation is conditioned by space, and thus will determine the nature of the space that investigation discloses. Space establishes the setting, allows the factors in terms of which the investigation will proceed, and determines such fundamental structures as ‘here’ and ‘there’ and the distance ‘between’.

We can challenge these limits by considering the world of conventional space, ‘within’ which the “bystander’ observes ‘outsiders’, as the shifting exhibition of a ‘field’. The various aspects of ‘locatedness’, including the attitudes of the observer, the positions taken by a self, the ways that objects take form, and space as the ‘domain’ for ‘locatedness’, would all be given together by the ‘field’.

Within such an all-encompassing ‘field’, objects with specific qualities arise and pass away, move and interact. Logic and interpretation match their movement, ‘making sense’ of it in accord with human needs and desires, setting up a characteristic kind of knowledge. The parallel unfolding of mental operations on the one hand and the ‘laws’ of nature on the other, so often regarded as a puzzle or a mystery, can be seen as a consequence of the

'field' in operation, for each 'member' of the 'field' supports and subtly mirrors all the others.

Conventional space shares with the 'field' its mysterious ability to allow appearance to appear. Yet space is also simply another aspect of the 'field', given together with 'outsiders', the 'bystander', and the 'natural laws' that govern the cosmos.

Carefully considered, even 'given together' is an aspect of the 'field' in operation. For conventional experience, 'being given together' manifests through fixed juxtapositions that both express and establish identity. But we can imagine a 'field' transformation through which 'given together' would express quite different qualities. Such a transformation is not allowed for within the 'field', which cannot encompass itself. But if the 'field' traced to an unknown 'source', it seems that an entirely different 'field' could operate as well.

Gravity Field

When the 'field' that allows first-level appearance and experience to appear is not disclosed as a 'field', this same nondisclosure takes the form of characteristic limits on knowledge. Examples of such limits are the barriers between mental and physical and between space and matter, the mystery of creation, and the 'power' of space to allow. Since such mysterious structures will not be seen as available to be explored as expressions of 'field dynamics' and 'field mechanics', these aspects of the 'field' will not readily emerge as 'topics' for inquiry.

This restriction on knowledge can also be understood as a limit on being. The possibilities allowed by 'field dynamics and mechanics' are the only ones available. Could such inherent limits on being somehow be transformed?

Consider what happens when someone in the prime of life dies suddenly. First a particular consciousness and knowing, linked to a particular time and space through embodiment, is in operation. Then (we might imagine) comes a moment of instantaneous recognition of danger, when these factors all change drastically. Then a sudden wrenching shock, like an earthquake. Suddenly time itself 'collapses'. Energy, memory, awareness, perception are all reconstituted: The old 'field', its limits maintained through the constant 'feedback' of an echo effect, is gone. There is total discontinuity, like entering a black hole—space, time, and knowledge in the conventional sense are gone.

This kind of dramatic change is rare in conventional experience, precisely because the 'field' is pervasive. An underlying force, a kind of 'gravity', sustains a 'mechanism' according to which everything operates. A specific knowing is allowed, and through 'field feedback mechanisms' this knowing itself shapes the 'field' and what it will allow.

Such a structure is essentially conservative. 'Gravity' pulls on new experience as the gravity of a black hole might pull on distant matter. If something 'not-allowed' within the 'field' did present itself as a candidate for being, it would either go unacknowledged or else be interpreted by 'field-determined' knowledge and given

form by 'field-determined' space in such a way that it would fit in 'after all'.

Yet the very pervasiveness of the 'field'—the mutually shared embodiment of the 'field structure' that characterizes its members—suggests that if change did somehow manifest, its impact would be dramatic. In a single 'moment' the whole could give way, allowing completely new possibilities to 'embody'. Space could allow new form and time could present new worlds, while knowledge, aware of the limitations at work within old ways of knowing, could penetrate obstacles as though they were no longer there.

While the 'fields' of physical space and the temporal order ordinarily seem almost impossible to transform in this way, the psychological domain allows for a fluidity that makes a degree of transformation seem potentially within reach. For example, someone who 'falls in' love or 'sinks into' depression enters a different world; as the spatial metaphors suggest, this world may actually present physical time and space in subtly different ways. Near-death experience or religious conversion may have even stronger effects.

Perhaps similar changes occur often, without our taking cognizance of them. Our 'experience' of time, space, and knowledge may alter from moment to moment; if we fail to acknowledge and appreciate such changes for what they are, this failure could itself be a part of the 'feedback' mechanism that the 'field' structures.

Such a possibility (which could be 'established' as 'true' only by incorporating it into the conventional 'field') offers a new perspective on certain 'well-known'

aspects of experience. Shifts in mood and outlook, already allowed for but dismissed as 'only subjective', might point toward changes that affected the 'field structures' themselves, as though the operative 'law of gravity' could suddenly be repealed.

The steady arising of new events in time, usually taken as confirming basic 'field mechanisms', might signal a creativity 'available' in each moment of structured 'field experience', suggesting that the source of 'power' within the 'field' is independent of the 'field mechanism'. Space, time, and knowledge might be less structured in scope and operation than is usually imagined; indeed, it might be that they could operate in nonstandard, even 'miraculous' ways.

Active Allowing

The possibility of such 'field transformations' giving rise to 'nonstandard' happenings suggests an 'allowing' that may be intrinsic to the 'field' as an innately indeterminate structure. Like first-level space in comparison to the objects it contains, the 'field' is not 'fixed' or rigid in the same way as the entities it presents. Cognized by a knowledge that understands appearance as 'field presentations', it might appear as newly expansive and embracing. The second-level knowing invited by a 'field-centered' way of inquiry might present the 'field', with all its fixed realities, as the projection of second-level 'space'—a creative and allowing 'medium' that could invite what the 'field', understood in first-level terms, would otherwise exclude.

Even within the 'first-order mechanisms' of the prevailing 'field', conventional views of space can be called into question. For example, the model of 'subject-knowing-object' allows for methods of observation not bound by the innate limitations on human senses. Augmented by instruments that reveal microscopic detail and cosmic vastness, the senses present a world in which standard 'field structures' seem to break down.

In the mental realm, theories and speculations contrary to conventional experience can be entertained, yielding new insights and modifications in models of what is real. Knowledge itself can be understood as an allowing 'field' within which such first-level phenomena as thoughts and images arise. The limits of reason can be identified, while at the same time reason can be used to challenge presupposed 'field mechanisms' as inconsistent or incomplete.

Certain ways of knowing may similarly open for exploration of a 'field' within the 'field'. Thus, psychology investigates the domain of human wishes and concerns. It asks how emotions and setting influence perception, how cognitive structures influence emotions; how stories and beliefs shape the known world and influence personal interactions. Analysis on this level, while still bound to the basic 'field' (for example, in seeing the domain of inquiry as 'only subjective'), can reveal certain aspects of the 'field structure and dynamic' and make them available for investigation.

Active inquiry can assure that knowledge continues to expand, revealing new attributes of the 'world' that the 'field' allows. Each first-level boundary or border points 'beyond' the element bounded. Together, entity,

boundary or limit, and what encloses that limit display the underlying 'field mechanism' and the dynamic in accord with which it operates. For example, viewed as a 'border phenomenon', 'shadow' at once brings into play the dynamic interaction of 'light' and 'opaque substance'. Again, psychology can look at 'border phenomena' in stories, in a way that links each story more fully with direct experience.

In all such analysis, the mechanisms and mechanics of the 'field' itself will remain 'off limits'. But this limit too might be open to investigation. Suppose that knowledge could draw on the dynamic of the 'field' directly, rather than mirroring the limits and distinctions that the dynamic establishes. Not bound by 'field constructs', it would offer a knowing sufficiently comprehensive to allow for not-knowing as well. Even the acknowledged impossibility of a knowledge 'beyond' the 'field' would be directly knowable.

A knowledge attuned to the 'field dynamic' and not confined by 'field constructs' brings to light the interaction among space, time, and knowledge—understood not just as aspects of the 'field dynamic', but as second-level structuring principles more basic than the 'field'. Alive to this interplay, our understanding of human beings, human concerns, and human interactions could move to a new level of insight.

A comprehensive starting point for such knowledge is appreciation for the active allowing and accommodation of space. Within the first-level 'field', this will mean appreciation for vastness and openness, and for the creative aliveness that flows in waves throughout all appearances.

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With such appreciation, the substantial entities that appear within first-level space and the world that we habitually inhabit take on new significance, reflecting the availability of second-level space. They are revealed as 'exhibitions' of the 'field': magical displays, splendid in their richness.