

Given Together
Spring 2016, Course 2

Transition to Week 10

In last week's class, we focused on stories; this week we turn to thoughts. I will be suggesting that thoughts are more closely related to stories than we usually think.

First, let's link the idea of stories back into TSK. There's a good treatment of stories in Chapter 8 of *Dynamics of Time and Space*; see also *Love of Knowledge*, pp. 171-173. The distinction between stories and the content of stories made in the *DTS* reading seems to me important, and we will discuss it. Incidentally, we talked in the phone call about the phrase "once upon a time," which comes at the beginning of fairy tales; *Dynamics* remarks on the phrase that ends many fairy tales: "And then they lived happily ever after." You could also take a look at the discussion of the 'field communiqué' in *DTS*, starting at p. 16: the communiqué communicates the field; as part of that, it communicates the story (see *Dynamics* p. 23).

The stories that give shape, form, and meaning to the space we inhabit structure the whole of our world. This means that when the story shifts, we shift into a new world and a new space. That is why I spoke of 'space shifting'. Dreams are perhaps the clearest example of this: as we fall into the dream, we find ourselves inhabiting the space of an entirely different realm, one in which time, space, and the logic of appearance may all be quite different.

As we discussed, however, space shifting does not only happen when we enter the world of a dream; it is ongoing. A good example is what happens when I remember a past event. If we don't look closely, we tend to assume that when we remember, we stay firmly situated 'here', in the present, looking back at the past event as though looking through a telescope. That may indeed happen, but it seems more common that I 'inhabit' my memory; in other words, I enter its space (though this 'memory space' is not the same as the space of the remembered event). As a practice, please investigate for yourself whether and in what way this is so.

From stories and memories, we are led naturally into a consideration of thoughts. The dividing line is not all that clear. For instance, is a daydream or fantasy a thought, or is it a story? To really ask this question, we have to rethink some of our assumptions about thoughts. It is often said that thoughts take the form of inner dialog or inner speech, but that does not seem to be true. For instance, if I ask you to *think* of a good friend, what probably happens is that an *image* of that person comes to mind. Is there any reason not to count that as a thought?

Even for thoughts that do come in the form of an inner dialog, if you look for yourself (please do!), you may find that the dialog is actually embedded in an imagined ('imaged') scene between you and another person. In other words, many thoughts seem to be lightly sketched-out stories. We could also reverse this description, saying that stories are more fully developed thoughts. We might call them 'thoughts of the whole'. We will go into this in the next class.

At the end of the last class, I introduced the idea that while stories give form and meaning to the spaces we inhabit, we cannot inhabit the stories themselves. We are very prone to confuse these levels: the story that infuses inhabited space with meaning, and space itself. When we fall into this confusion, we

lose contact with the space that we inhabit. It disappears, because the story *as story* has no space available within it. And when we do not inhabit space, we cannot be aware. All this holds equally for thoughts (at least certain thoughts). We will continue to explore this point next week.

The basic exercise for the week is to investigate for yourself how space shifts as new stories arise, so that you are constantly inhabiting different worlds. The point of inquiry here is how experience arises as an integrated whole, given its form through the story, or 'thought of the whole'. For those of you familiar with *Love of Knowledge*, you could compare the discussion there of what Rinpoche calls 'the logos'.

The realization (if that's what it is) that we are always inhabiting 'storied' space offers many opportunities for exploration. Here are some walkabouts that encourage such exploration:

Alternate Spaces: Go for a walk in an area where other people are present. As you observe them in a precise, neutral way, ask yourself what stories shape their worlds. The point is not so much to get a sense of the content of their stories, though that may come, but rather to get a sense of how they are absorbed in their stories. There is good website you can use to get a sense of this: <http://www.doctorhugo.org/bodylanguagesequences/series1/>. (To see the short videos, click on the boxes at the bottom of the screen.)

Fictional Spaces: Go outside or to a café, bringing with you a work of fiction. Start reading; hopefully you will get involved in the story. From time to time, look up from the book and open as fully as you can to the space of the world around you. Go back and forth between the two. Take your time.

Travel Spaces: When you are traveling in a car or other form of transport, it is as though you are inhabiting two spaces at once: the space through which you are moving, and the space within the vehicle. Which space are you inhabiting? Can you go back and forth between the two?

New Spaces: When you enter a new space (for example, when you leave your house or apartment, enter a store, etc.) make a point of inhabiting the new space fully. What is involved? How long do you stay in the newly inhabited space before another space shift occurs?