

CCI TSK Online Programs

Winter 2009

Thoughts, Stories, Self

Guidance for Week 8

Subject and Object, LOK 33-40

We are jumping around in LOK: The reading for this week is Chapter 5. It would be nice to say this is because we are challenging the linear narrative, but I can't really make that claim. This order just makes sense to me, given our focus and concerns (given the story we are putting in place).

The chapter presupposes familiarity with the term "technological knowledge." We can equate this with "single-minded knowing." Once the world has been set in place, once the founding story is in operation, the whole task for knowledge is to make it possible to realize the aims of the self. Knowledge becomes a kind of technology: a way of getting what the self wants and needs.

The reading traces the consequences of the move toward technological knowledge, in terms of the distinction—so fundamental to our thinking and understanding—between the subjective and the objective realm. This split is especially powerful in Western society, because in most cultures the gap between subjective and objective realms is mediated by a sense of the divine. In that understanding, our own concerns may be only subjective, but (to simplify) God's subjectivity is our objectivity. But we don't have the option of exploring that answer to the subject-object split.

The consequence of this split is spelled out early in the chapter: "What is meaningless comes to the fore by default" (another of my favorite sentences from this book). The move toward reality as meaningless is one we may reject intellectually, but it is written into our flesh in this culture, ever since Pascal, who wrote, "The vast silence of infinite space terrifies me." This presupposition is part of what makes it difficult for us to make sense of more traditional modes of thinking: either we reject them because they do not match up with 'objective reality', or we embrace them, but in a way that makes their truth wholly subjective. This may sound like a philosophical point, but it colors our approach to experience at a deep level. You might try tracing these tendencies out in your own thinking, or at least being aware of them. But it won't be easy to do that without serious reflection, because they are so pervasive.

It would be good to keep working with LOK Ex. 21, Protecting and Projecting, noticing the stories we put forward and rely on and how, when a challenge to a story comes up, we quickly tell a new story to make things all right again. If you have the chance to do some formal practice, try TSK Ex. 28: A Cycle of Knowing. This exercise relates to the reading for the past week. It offers a way of beginning to challenge "single-minded knowing" and arriving at (LOK 174) a "more fundamental" knowledge.