

Guidance for Week 6

We start now with chapter 8, in which there is a focus on an experiential exploration of the nature of time.

At the very outset, we have to face up to the fact that in this program we are not following the very strong advice that Rinpoche gives at the beginning of the chapter. As he writes in the first paragraph, the path for understanding 'time', or Great Time, is to first explore Great Space. If that means that we should read Part One of the TSK book, we are not doing that.

However, Rinpoche does offer a second alternative, the one that he presents in this chapter (see 165): developing a wider perspective on the 'self'. As Rinpoche writes on page 166, the self is an embodiment of a lapse of understanding of time and space. But it is also true that the self embodies time. So the challenge is to investigate this embodiment, which we ordinarily understand as a lapse of knowing, as an expression of knowing—the kind of knowing that we want to stimulate.

We have looked several times over the past few weeks at the difficulty we encounter when we try to activate a different understanding or experiential realization of time. This is what the text refers to on page 167 as a "local resistance factor." The suggestion is that even this resistance is a part of a "celebratory drama." However, instead of celebrating that drama, we get caught up in it (a little like someone who forgets that a play on stage is not "real life," and this misses the opportunity to appreciate the aesthetic dimension of the drama unfolding before her.

The problem is that we have made a commitment to a more limited way of being. As a result, we find ourselves subject to a kind of bewilderment. In particular, when we investigate alternatives to our usual way of being in time, we don't know how to proceed; how to put this alternative into practice. Notice especially the discussion on page 169, which suggests that the way this bewilderment usually pays out is that we accept the volition of the self as one manifestation of time and the energy of nature (the appearance of what appears) as another manifestation. Notice also the discussion of mental dialogues (170). We don't usually think of our mental dialogues as creating a certain form of time, but that is exactly what is being said here.

The idea that the self is an object timed out by time (170) is a fundamental challenge to our usual understanding. We will explore it further in the program this winter, when we focus on thinking and the stories told by the self. Here, the approach to viewing the self in this way is given by Exercise 17, "The Object and its Glow." Please do try to practice Exercise 17 over the next week. It offers an alternative to the self-centered view of time that we ordinarily put into practice. The commentary here is very helpful in indicating what is and is not being suggested.

Pages 174 through 178 present a series of exercises that we will not do. Notice that Exercises 18 and 19 are closely related to the more informal exercises we've been looking at in the last couple of weeks, the ones found on pages 144 and 149. Exercises 21 and 22 add another dimension that we will not be exploring in this program. It would certainly be interesting and valuable to do that exploration yourself.