

Guidance for Week 8, TSK 193–202

We're starting a new chapter, in which Rinpoche proposes that we can investigate "extensions" of ordinary experience (miracles, visions, etc.) People usually find this notion interesting, but it's best not to get too involved in it. He also puts this in terms of developing greater intimacy (with our own experience), and this is a fruitful way to proceed.

The discussion that starts the chapter points out that we ignore time, ignore its dynamic and immediacy. This is because we need time to be available as a background. But appreciation for time allows for different kinds of experience, experiences that do not depend on a stable, solid background against which to take shape. A distinction is made here (194) between each arising situation and the 'content' of that situation. This is a very useful distinction, one that we have talked about before. When we focus on the content of an experience or situation, we are foreclosing possibilities for new kinds of experience. It is within the experience as an experience that we discover the intimacy of time.

As a move in this direction, Rinpoche introduces here the idea of a 'read-out'. The definition that he gives here is one that has proven very helpful to people over the years: "The term readout is a reminder that particular appearances are the informing, communicative outputs by 'time' of a particular focal setting on 'space'."

In later TSK books, Rinpoche places less emphasis on the read-out principle, but the idea that it points toward is fundamental. No one event determines the next event. Just this is the foundation for the profound possibilities for freedom and TSK offers.

In the reading for this week, Rinpoche patiently shows how this fundamental principle of freedom applies to all elements of our experience. The discussion of "walking through walls" (198) is one that usually intrigues people. We can look at it in our phone call.

In the last phone call, I mentioned an image from Dynamics of Time and Space: we could think of experiences being flat (the point came up in connection with the self and its failure to appreciate time as operating 'at the same level'. The read-out principle is another way of saying something very similar. As Rinpoche says at the bottom of page 198, "no factor of experience is more fundamental than the readout wherein it takes on significance."

Notice that Rinpoche suggests that even the readout insights itself is not the final word. This way of understanding or interpreting what time presents is helpful primarily because it "undermines" the ordinary view without establishing anything else that would take its place. As Rinpoche writes, "everything can be suddenly left open to question."