

Guidance for Week 9

The reading for this week, our final reading for this program, continues to emphasize that our usual rigid structures of experience fail to do justice to the dynamic of time. We do not have to move from one moment to the next, each moment pre-determined by the previous moment. Nor should we accept the outcome of any particular statement about the way things are, even statements that seem to embody profound truths. This is the point examined at the bottom of p. 202 and the top of p. 203.

What do you think about the discussion on p. 203 about the compatibility of various different religious insights, even when they seem on the surface to contradict each other? The distinction being made here is based on the idea of second-level time. As the book says, an infinite variety of second-level experiences is possible. Still, there is an ongoing question: granted that time can present all possibilities, and in fact does so, how can we 'control' this process? It is one thing to recognize that time can present an infinite variety of experiences, and another to shape it in a particular, positive direction.

Or perhaps that way of thinking is exactly the problem. When we try to control time's dynamic, we are putting the self in charge, and to do this, we first have to freeze time's dynamic, since that is the foundation for asserting the existence of the self to begin with. The alternative is simply to open to Great Time. We can trust the knowledge that results (Great Knowledge) to guide us in positive and fulfilling directions. We can return to a "wise innocence" (205) and "real balance" (206).

Opening to Great Time means going beyond any and all insights that come at the second level, no matter how compelling or fascinating. As Rinpoche writes at the bottom of p. 204, the read-out law must be self-challenging. The first consequence of this is that any read-out, any experience, will also be self-challenging.

Ex. 26, Transcendence of Pointings, is presented as a way of making the move to Great Time. Please practice it formally or informally during the week, and we'll discuss it in the phone call. Notice how the description and commentary for this exercise draw on the language of this chapter to present a picture of our experience that is very different from any ordinary view, but by now should be fairly easy to make sense of. If there are aspects you don't understand, this would be a great topic to bring to the online discussions.

Finally, as I suggested in the last phone call, be sure to let the insights we have been exploring come into play as you react to the routine events of your life during the week. This will be especially important at times of frustration or negative emotions. If any particular 'read-out' is self-challenging, what is there to be frustrated or negative about? One might worry that this approach would lead to a kind of apathy, but by now we know that this is not so. Do you see why? What about in your own experience?