

Spring 2010 - TSK Online Program – The Self in Question: part 3 Week 4 - Guide

We have started exploring what might be called the “TSK style of inquiry.” It is a style of inquiry that does not depend on the self being the one who inquires, a kind of inquiry that happens within the happening of what happens now, alive to that happening.

For those of you who have stayed with the program over the last six months or so, you may wonder why it has taken this long to start doing this kind of inquiry. The answer is that we have been conducting a more conventional kind of inquiry, one that made it possible to call the self into question. When LOK says, “Knowledge is not what the knower knows,” it takes a certain background to be able to make sense of that saying. Now we have that background understanding, and we are ready to act on this other alternative.

Notice again that we are not saying we need to drop all positions. As Rinpoche put it in last week’s reading (page 272), “positions are expressions of knowledge, rather than structures that limit it.” We are interested in the knowledge within each position, more fundamental than any attempts at conditioning.

The reading refers to this different kind of inquiry as “free and open.” It is free because it is free from the position as position, and also free from the conditioning that supports each position: the reasons and explanations that ‘make sense’ out of what is so. It is open because it accepts everything that arises within each conditioned position, excluding nothing. It is a little like the freedom available when you play a game, or perhaps when you play a role in a theater production. As I said in the phone call, you may fool yourself, may tell yourself that you are free when you are not (If you want a test, try turning away from something you really want, or toward something you really hope to avoid. But don’t feel you have to test yourself. That’s just one approach.)

In the phone call, I used the example of emotional responses, but of course the prospects for free and open inquiry apply to every part of our experience. There is a short list at the bottom of p. 273 of the kinds of elements that operate within each situation: you might experiment with the examples given there. In each case, the point is to observe “without friction.”

There is an interesting discussion at the end of the chapter of how this way of knowing helps us activate the dynamic of time. That possibility is probably easier to explore in a retreat setting, or some other intensive practice situation. But you may find it helpful to expand inquiry to include the temporal dimension. See where it leads.

We’ll leave time in the phone call for some discussion of LOK Ex. 5.