

Orientation Week 7 LOK Chapter 23

We have begun looking at a fundamental dichotomy between two understandings of time. On the one hand, there is time as it appears in the narrative and is experienced by the self: time that unfolds in a linear way from moment to moment. On the other hand, there is a different 'kind' of time that does not follow these same structures, the time that makes the movement of time from one moment of linear time to the next moment possible (p. 185)

As we discussed in the phone call on Sunday, this second kind of time can be difficult to discover, because we don't even know where to look. But there is also a sense in which it is always available to us. It is the dynamic and aliveness of time, and there is nothing mysterious about that. Still, we have no good way to focus in on this aliveness, because we immediately mistake it for the ordinary, linear sense of time. We do this because that is our training, and because when we do so, we are supporting our sense of self-identity, our 'founding story.'

To explore this second kind of 'timing', I encourage you to work with both Ex. 22 and 23 in LOK, even if you think you do not know how. Try to set aside 10–15 minutes at least, and let that sense of not-knowing settle down, so that it no longer functions as an obstacle. Here is a suggestion: instead of looking at "moments" as a very short "piece" of time (the linear view), look at a moment as including the whole range of time during which are involved with a particular topic (a perception, a memory, a worry, etc.). The next "moment" is what happens when the mind switches to a different topic, without your controlling it. This way of looking may make it easier to see what happens 'between' moments of time.

Any insight you have into the dynamic or flow of time will help reveal that it is not the same as "narrative time." Or perhaps it is better to say that narrative time is connected with the flowing dynamic of time, but that the dynamic cannot be captured in the narrative.

It is the nature of the connection between the narrative and the dynamic that we have to explore. The self answers this question about its link to time's dynamic by claiming ownership, but as the text makes clear (186–7) that answer is much too easy. It also cannot account for creativity.

Here's a passage from a famous Buddhist text that is relevant to the discussion in the text of how we move through time:

"How far is it to the Brahma realm?"

"Very far, O king; it would take a rock four months to reach the earth from the Brahma realm even though it fell 48,000 leagues each day."

"So how can a monk travel there so quickly even by supernatural power?"

"Where were you born, O king?"

"There is an island called Alasanda; I was born there."

"How far is it from here?"

"About two hundred leagues."

"Do you recall any business you did there?"

"Yes I do."

"So quickly you have gone two hundred leagues! Just so, the monk can reach the Brahma realm at once by supernatural power."