

Orientation Week 9 LOK Chapter 25 and Chapter 27, first section (223-226)

Let's start with the second part of the reading. I think people will find a lot to connect with here.

How can we enter a world in which the existence of the self is not the central reality, in which the witness testifies to a completely different dimension of being? Clearly we (the self) will resist this. The reading from Chapter 27 explores several forms of resistance: forgetting and ignoring, preoccupation, disinterest, and more. The two main strategies are confusion and appropriation. The reading is very clear; my only suggestion is that you take time to compare your own experience to the strategies discussed here.

The reading says that the self may come into question "in moments of surprise or unusual intensity." (223) But this raises a question: isn't it possible for such moments to feel deeply liberating instead of being filled with existential anxiety? For instance, I remember reading a description once of someone who came home to discover that his house was on fire, and it was too late to stop it. Instead of panic or a deep sense of loss, he found himself feeling a sense of deep liberation, as though he had let go a giant burden, and was now free to be whatever he wanted to be.

Are such possibilities recognized in the reading? Not much is said about them, but compare the very end of the reading, where Rinpoche imagines some saying, "Now I see the truth!" Is that what is going on here?

Turning back to the main reading (Chapter 25), we find ourselves continuing to explore how the self can be what it claims to be. There is an interesting discussion here of why we are so committed to the founding story (despite the fact that it does not seem to hold up). There is a paradox that therapists know well: people want to be happy, but they often refuse to give up the causes of their unhappiness. Here that pattern is described at a very deep level.

Let's look ahead a little to the next program. As I mentioned in the phone call, we are going to move through Love of Knowledge in non-linear ways. To begin with, we will continue to explore some of the ways that the self continues to cut itself off from a different way of being and knowing even when it claims to be seeking deep transformation. But then we turn to a different possibility, rooted in the power of inquiry. We will follow the text as it explores this in some really wonderful ways. After that, we will jump back to a much earlier point in the book. The focus is still on inquiry. But the aim will be to apply some of what we have been exploring in very concrete ways. We will look at the patterns that shape our lives, and we will practice ways to see through them. I look forward to it.