

Week 9 Orientation, DTS 250–252

The focus for this week, the final week in the program, is DTS Ex. 2 and its commentary. We are already familiar with the basic suggestion here: instead of focusing on the content of thought, as we usually do, we can focus instead on the activity of thinking. It is a question of shifting from the past tense (the has-been thought) to the present (the ‘am thinking’).

In the phone call, I suggested it might be helpful to identify an intermediate level between the content of the thought (or perception—remember that Rinpoche treats them as more or less identical) on the one hand and the activity of thinking on the other. This intermediate level could be said to consist roughly of the ‘background’ of the thought: the one who is thinking, the reactions and judgments that come up as each thought or perception is identified, recognized, or ‘re-collected’, etc.

Also in the phone call, I suggested another exercise, presented by Rinpoche in one of his non-TSK books. When a thought comes up, hold it as long as you can. In this way of practicing, you keep the content of the thought at the center, but (paradoxically) in doing so you de-emphasize that content. It would be interesting to ask yourself if taking this very different approach to thoughts and thinking parallels or supports the exercise suggested in the text.

In the reading, Rinpoche asks why we accept the invitation of thoughts to enter their world. He ties this tendency in to a lack of knowledge. This theme of knowledge is one that we saw in the last reading also. Awareness that does not center on thoughts is presented as having a natural attunement to knowledge. On the other hand, a focus on “the structure of substance” (251) seems opposed to knowledge. Of course, this goes against our usual way of understanding, since knowledge is usually considered to be knowledge of this or that substantial ‘thing’. But we have come far enough in our exploration to understand why this ‘standard’ model confines and limits us. It is the aim of the TSK vision to undo those limits.

Finally, notice the link made in the commentary between thinking and time. We have already looked at this in terms of shifting from past to present. But there is more to the “time of thinking” than this. Let this be a topic for your explorations in the coming week.