

## Spring 2012 Online TSK: Orientation for Week 2

In the second part of our Week 1 phone call, we got involved in a very interesting question that goes to a central issue in the TSK teachings. We were talking about the statement on page 51 of DTS that “we are almost always thinking.”\_As I mentioned, people often claim that this is not true, and in part this has to do with how we understand what it means to think. I laid out 3 or possibly 4 ways to think about what constitutes thinking, which you may want to review.

But there is a still more fundamental issue, one that Kathleen and Marti raised first in their comments. Suppose we look for a space in which there are no thoughts. It may be the space “between thoughts” (see TSK Ex. 12), or it may be the first “pure” moment of a sensory experience (tasting, hearing music, etc.—the examples that David raised.) Is there such a space? No need to be coy here: In TSK Ex. 12, Rinpoche specifically speaks of the availability of such a space. (Whether it operates in ‘direct sensing,’ or whether such sensing is already framed by the ‘thought’ of ‘me and my experience’ is a question we will return to later in the course.)

Now comes the more fundamental question, which has to do with the way we conduct our inquiry. Should we make it our aim to discover that space? And, having discovered it, to abide there? This is one valid way of proceeding. It is not the whole goal (TSK Ex. 12 is followed by Ex. 13, which invites us to consider thoughts as space. But the approach in DTS is different. We see a suggestion in this direction in the reading for next week, which tells us that ‘gaps’ in the structures that thought names, identifies, and formulates very quickly close up again.

The approach we are exploring right now is different. It involves the possibility that we can let the activity of thinking continue, without accepting its claims to create substantial reality. However, consider DTS Ex. 5, ‘Abiding in Thought’ which in a sense bridges the two approaches.

Still, some people may find the search for a space free of thought especially fruitful, especially if you are able to set aside time for extended practice. I encourage everyone to give it a try. Toward that end, here are the instructions TSK Ex. 12:

As you observe your thoughts passing, watch very sensitively for the moment when one thought fades and another arises. This transition is very quick and subtle, but involves the momentary availability of a space which you can contact and even expand. This space has a quality of openness, free from the usual discursive and discriminative thinking.

You may also want to return to DTS Ex. 5 as a practice. Another practice to look at as you go about your day is one that I suggested for the practice day last week: “Look in your experience for what is going on that cannot be named or fixed as certain or definite.”

Finally, I mentioned that the word “relax” or its variants does not come up often in the TSK books, even though it’s of course a valuable practice. According the TSK CD, it is used 88 times across all the books, although this involves some duplication. It is used only twice in the Space section of DTS, and we will look at both of them in this program: see pp. 58 and 65.