

## Spring 2012 Online TSK: Orientation for Week 4

In the phone conversation for Week 3, we did not deal with the last few paragraphs of the reading, starting with the sentence on p. 55 that reads, "It might seem that we could cut through these complications by going to direct experience, prior to all thoughts."

This is an important topic, because it helps us get clear on what is special about the TSK vision. Although we have touched on it before at different times, I'd like to use this opportunity, so let's start with these paragraphs at the beginning of the next phone call.

The question raised here—does it make sense to try to break through conceptual mind to direct experience—also raises an issue related to the practice we did during the phone call. I asked you to explore the streaming, bubbling flow of thoughts, "flashing into the mind from one moment to the next." The link is this: when we do this practice, we may not necessarily have "direct experience" kinds of insights (though this is one possibility).

The link is this. Doing this kind of practice is a way of inquiring into how thoughts shape experience, in order to break their grip. Put more in terms of space, it's a way of investigating how we live in a solid, substantial, thought-generated world, with no possibility of escape. But it would be a limited approach to imagine that the whole point is to escape to "somewhere else," to the "magical land" of direct experience, and to be disappointed if that doesn't happen. Try doing this practice with this perspective in mind. You could balance it out with the 'Abiding in Thought' and 'Space between Thoughts' exercises that we have already been working with.

(Going beyond attempts to go 'somewhere else' ("over the rainbow") seems to be the moral of Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a classic American children's book written more than a century ago. If you have the time and would like to read that interesting book, I am downloading the illustrated first edition to the website. (Disclaimer: I haven't read the book myself since I was about 9 years old. But the story stays with you.)

At the end of the phone call, Hayward asked me to say something about the term "multidimensional appearance," which appears on p. 55, 8 lines down. I don't think this is a very complicated term. It's linked to the idea that the world we inhabit is not just physical, or fundamentally physical, but is a meaningful world that we engage at many levels. Appearance reflects these levels of engagement: meaning, emotion, intention, links to the past, aesthetic appreciation, and so on. It's closely related to the term "interactability," coming up in a couple of weeks (p. 63 of DTS), so you may want to look there.

Now, about the assigned reading for next week. In the material that we'll start with, left over from this week, Rinpoche questions whether the point is to try to arrive at 'direct experience,' free from thought. Well then, is there a more fruitful approach? That's where the reading starts. "Suppose," says the text, ". . . we simply paused to notice thoughts as thoughts—the simple phenomenon of thinking." The point is to look into thoughts without assuming in advance that they establish a world, or establish anything at all. This is thoughts as the appearance of thoughts, and it takes us right back into the theme of 'the zeroless' that we looked at in the last program.