

Opening Unknown Time – Spring 2013  
Orientation for Week 3

In the phone call for Week 2, we emphasized that the reading we are currently exploring focuses on how we seem bound to conduct the pre-established, like an orchestra conductor bound by the score, the conventions of the orchestra, the players and instruments, the expectations of the audience, etc. We live in a world set up in advance, with creativity only possible in the “shadow spaces” around the edges.

Several of you made comments during the phone call that suggested ways to find the aliveness within that seemingly ‘hopeless’ situation; for instance, in the dynamic of the conducting itself; in the embodied energy with which the self rebelliously resists this declaration of bondage (before this reaction too becomes a part of what is conducted); or in the possibility for conducting—instead of the presupposed—the new vision that TSK presents. I encourage you all to explore these possibilities, and also to develop your own.

We also worked with an exercise in which we set out to contact the aliveness of the immediate presenting moment and then looked to see how that aliveness gave way to the sameness of the conducted—the next bead on the string of beads. This practice, which bears some connection to the discussion in the first TSK book of ‘coming out’, is a good one to work with during the week. More generally we are continuing to look at the possibility of contacting the aliveness of experience as the true ‘heart’ of time.

The reading for the coming week continues to lay out and describe the restricted and restrictive ways in which we ordinarily conduct (suggesting, perhaps, that we could conduct more freely). Look at the description in the paragraph on pp. 121-122 of how these restrictions operate, keeping in mind the possibility that each element described there could itself be questioned.

How can we make this possibility come alive: how can we question in this way? One clue is Rinpoche’s reference on p. 122 to our “inattention” to possibilities that would take us beyond the usual structures. Perhaps attention to what is possible comes with its own aliveness, its own link to time’s dynamic, and perhaps that aliveness can serve as a gateway to such questioning. Remember that in the previous reading Rinpoche suggests that imagining other possibilities easily turns into hollow fantasies. Perhaps a newly expanded attention to what is possible can give substance to such imagining. If you read the section assigned for this week with that possibility in mind, it may come alive quite differently.

A final thought: the top of p. 125 offers a striking image: voices whispering in the still of night, shaping the space of appearance. Could an attentiveness to new possibilities add a new voice to the conversation? Could this be a way to shape the space of appearance differently?