

## Opening Unknown Time, Summer 2013 Orientation for Week 5

I'll start with the news I announced in the phone call: in the fall, there will be a shift in this online course. We will go back to a format we tried several years ago, in which we work our way through the Study Guide found in the first part of *When It Rains, Does Space Get Wet?* The study guide has 36 units, and we will review this material in twelve 6-week sessions, spaced out over two years. This means we will do 6 six-week sessions a year (we have more recently been doing four). This works out to 36 weeks a year, so it still leaves plenty of time for breaks in between sessions. The program will include one optional retreat each year.

This new program will also serve as a teacher-training program. Teacher trainees will take the whole program and will also have some other assignments. The retreat for them will be mandatory, and for this purpose I may try to schedule extra retreats in Europe and South America for this purpose. The Teacher Training is being done in cooperation with Nyingma Centers, so I am expecting at least two people from each of the four Nyingma international centers to take part, in addition to any of you who are interested, and perhaps others.

I already have a schedule for the two years, but I want to review it again before sending it out. For those of you who wish to plan, however, I can tell you that the retreat at Ratna Ling in the U.S. is tentatively scheduled for June 8-13, 2014. If any of you know already that you want to participate and can't make those dates, the retreat could happen in the second half of June as well. Let me know. Keep in mind that I will be in England for a retreat at the end of August, but that is not part of the Teacher Training. There is also a separate retreat in August 2013 organized by Nyingma Centrum in Holland.

Now for the Orientation. As I've been doing for several sessions now, I'll start with a few comments on the last reading that relate to material we did not discuss. The section called "The Appearance of Time" (160-162) re-introduces (compare DTS 80-86) the mechanism of "recording." The examples of recordings given in the text may surprise us, since several of them are strongly physical in nature. But our sense that somehow the physical should not figure in to the way we understand time experientially is just another example of how the temporal order carves experience up, naming and identifying and telling us that physical and mental processes are fundamentally separate from one another. This is an example of a point made at the top of 161: our sense that experience has particular sources (e.g., light impinging on the retina of the eye) is "the prerecorded content of other recordings."

The analysis that follows on 161 is quite subtle, and calls for an inquiry that would have to unfold over time. Perhaps we can look at it during the retreat. Although it may sound abstract, it goes to the innermost heart of our ordinary acceptance of ordinary time. The idea is that we can't just jump to direct experience of linear time as a mechanism (though perhaps we sometimes have a glimpse of this). Instead, we have to proceed via second-order mechanisms or 'rules'. This is again the mechanism of mechanisms pointing toward each other.

This discussion lays the groundwork for a strong claim of freedom as central to time. As the text says, events just 'pop up,' 'alongside' such mechanisms as cause and effect, persistence, and change. Here we are really at the most basic level of experience. Could we really see it this way?

The reading for the coming week explores this possibility of freedom, but does so indirectly. It offers a kind of aesthetic appreciation for the boundless displays that time offers: pointless and infinitely divisible. Take a look at the questions in the third full paragraph on 164, and play with them if you wish. A key phrase is this: "Whatever we imagine the possibilities for knowledge to be, the Body of Time envisions and expands a fuller understanding."

We are close to the end of the program, and we might reflect on the 'methodology' being put into place here. It is not systematic, except insofar as it systematically encourages inquiry and questioning. Instead, we are asked (164) to "inhabit the inwardness of time." This really does have an aesthetic element to it: the rhythm of the dance, the space of the painting, the intimacy of encounter with another. It is all part of (165) "the creative impulse through which appearance itself manifests . . . : an unrestrained play of emerging arisings."

We did not have much time for practice in the phone call: the 'presentness' or 'presentingness' of time. I suggest you continue with this practice, but in fact the whole of the assigned reading is a practice, one you can work with at any time and all times. Let us call it the practice of the Body of Time—a practice of 'alongsideness' that takes nothing for granted.