

I will take more space in this Orientation than usual to review what we discussed in the phone call. That's because the options presented in the Week 3 readings seem to me central to the alternate vision of time and time presented in DTS, and I want to take this chance to call them to your attention.

In earlier sessions, we saw that DTS invites us to "live in the future." Viewed in terms of the usual past-present-future structure, this makes no sense at all—the future is beyond our reach. But that usual structure centers on the past, as we have seen. The future we are invited to live in is not the past's future; it is the future's future. And this 'future future' links to the past's future only in unexpected ways. In fact, from a past-centered understanding, the future future hardly counts as the future at all. That is why Rinpoche gives us a variety of other ways of thinking about it that focus on aliveness, dynamics, momentum and the like.

It may help make sense of these possibilities to reflect that the usual ppf-structure of time, which we sometimes think of as exhausting all possibilities for experience, is in fact clearly incomplete. When I fall into a fantasy, or while I am dreaming, I do not occupy the past, the present, or the future—I am outside the usual temporal structure. For instance, suppose I daydream about being rich. We automatically assign that sort of daydream to the future ("One day I'll be rich!") but that is only a convention, because we don't usually try to link that imagined situation to our present state through a sequence of happenings that leads from 'now' to 'then'. The 'future' in this sense is just the place of all possibilities. Recognizing this, we are already close to the 'future-centered' future that we are investigating.

During the phone call, we traced a couple of consequences of this future-centered view of the future. One is that we don't need to think of the moments through which and as which the future arises out of the present as being tiny point-instants, each gone before we can take hold of it. Instead, a moment is an ongoing, never-arriving dynamic, one of multiple 'streams' in which we could be (and are) immersing ourselves as the activity of living unfolds. It has no particular duration—not short, not long.

The second consequence, which came up at the end of the phone call, is that when the text invites us to go to the "point of arising" where the future comes into being (99), that point may not be identical with, or 'right next to' the tail end of the present; that is, it may not be the 'next' moment in time, the one that follows the present. Instead, the future could be understood to arise as the continuing of the present stream of experience. Think of a stream of lava flowing down a mountain-side: the aliveness of the stream is not at the tip or tongue, the point farthest down the mountain, but at its source; that is, in the volcano. You might try engaging the practice of "going directly to the point of arising" with this orientation in mind and see where it leads you.

The "point of arising" practice is one of four that we discussed in the phone call. Three of them presented in the reading for Week 3, and the other is based on DTS Ex. 11, which I have already referred to several times. Here I just repeat them briefly, with references to where they are discussed in the text:

1. Going to the point of arising (99).
2. Looking for aliveness in experience, however it manifests (100). This is the one we worked with in the phone call, and the one I suggest you focus on this week.
3. The aliveness of fundamental questions that cut through old structures (101).
4. The aliveness of the momentum that fuels the stories we tell/inhabit (DTS Ex. 11).

Together, these 4 offer a rich set of possibilities, possibilities it would be great to explore on retreat, to put in a plug for the summer intensive at Ratna Ling.

Let me add one more thought. We have spoken of the power of appreciation and gratitude, which undermine the sterile claim of the self to own experience. To this we could add the power of forgiveness. Like appreciation, forgiveness is a starting over: a letting go of the past. I have discussed this point in an essay in the book *Light of Knowledge*, drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt (250-60, 284-86). You might like to take a look.

Finally, here are a few thoughts on the reading for next week. We start a new chapter, which in turn starts with a question: if the future is the realm of freedom, why do we embrace instead the frozen structures of the past?

The answer suggested is that we insist on identity as a kind of shelter to protect us from the onrushing flood of time's dynamic, which would otherwise sweep us away. Look especially at the first full paragraph on 103 for a description of this move. I am reminded of a lovely sentence in *Love of Knowledge*: "In one unified action, the self takes a position, posits a situation, and imposes meaning."

With this question as a starting point, the inquiry in the chapter shifts to the role played in experience by the sense of a witness. That is where we will start next time.