

Week 5

WIR 101-103; KTS 62-71

TSK Ex. 24 (and TSK Ex. 25, 26)

Transition and Orientation

We are looking at how to restore to the temporal order that time measures out “the energy and ‘aliveness’ of time.” (52) As we discussed at the beginning of the last phone call, this meanings giving up our commitment to the (first-level) *momentum* of linear time, which—despite its link to change—is in the end static. We have looked at several ways to do this over the last few weeks, and I won’t repeat that discussion here. As I mentioned at the end of the phone call, however, I do want to pull together several suggestions in the readings for Week 4 that point toward this possibility for restoring aliveness.

The first comes up in connection with language. At KTS 52, Rinpoche raises the possibility of a “different language” that make language into a hidden resource (Remember the discussion at 51 of language as a vehicle to analyze, to interpret, and to create.) Whether we can activate this potential depends, he says, on “the intention and the dynamic that language expresses.”

The second suggestion comes at KTS 58: “Simple appreciation for time and its presentations . . . suggests that the allowing of space and the dynamic flow of time . . . [lead] to questioning and to a heartfelt way of being based in openness and vitality.” And the third suggestion follows in the next paragraph: “An appreciation that sustains inquiry can calm and balance the self’s tendency toward self-involvement and self-identification, which ‘takes over’ the energy of time and prevents it from flowing freely.” The focus for our purposes is on the ‘inquiry’ that appreciation sustains.

So these are three suggestions for engaging the dynamic of time: cultivating intention, appreciation, and inquiry. This may sound like emphasizing our subjective experience of time: a call to exercise or transform our intention, our appreciation, and our inquiry. But as we discussed briefly in the phone call, we cannot stop at subjectivity, for (56) “the knowing self is always one step behind its experience, swallowing its food before tasting it.” Instead, we should consider ways to put these three orientations into effect that allow “knowing with the knowing of the logos,” which raises the possibility for knowing time itself. That is the walkabout practice for the week.

By the way, it’s interesting to compare these three suggestions or orientations to traditional Buddhist mindfulness practice. It’s possible to think of the practice of mindfulness as a time-centered practice, grounded in appreciation of what presents itself. Yet we have to go beyond mindfulness at this level, for we start with intention not centered on the self and are stimulated toward inquiry. Those of you in the teacher-training program may want to reflect and write on this potential connection.

In the discussion in the phone call, we made a sharp distinction between the ‘dynamic’ of time and the (self-centered) ‘momentum’ of lower-level time. In the reading for this coming week, however, we have to change this language around a bit, because here the possibility is raised of activating a second-level momentum, one that does not center on the self. First-level momentum is perhaps better understood as a shadow of this deeper, more ‘alive’ momentum. (66)

At this second level, we are aiming at the quality of “richness and depth,” (WIR 103), which is surely related to the “openness and vitality” referred to above. The shift in imagery in the opening chapter—from the frozen patterns of the temporal order to the far more flexible patterns woven into a robe or fabric—offer a metaphor for the move from the frozen, established first-level momentum to a more fluid second-level momentum. The pattern in the fabric, after all, can perhaps be rewoven.

Whatever the vocabulary we use, the point here is to be aware of two different 'levels' of experience, perhaps related to the two ways of using language that we explored briefly last week. Alive to the aliveness of time, knowing with the knowing of the logos, we start to understand more fully the sense of time as motionless, invariable, and pointless.

All this puts the notion of 'rhythm' in a new light. As the reading says (68), "instead of saying that an object displays a rhythm, we could say that the rhythm displays the object." This does not likely mean that we are now conceiving of rhythms as somehow substantial? Instead, the focus on rhythm may help us refer the patterns of what appears to the unchanging dynamic of time.