

Transition to Session 11: The Next Four Weeks

Our next session begins May 3, four weeks from now. My suggestion is that we use this time to discover how we can bring the TSK Vision alive: not just when we sit down to practice, not just when we remember from time to time, but day to day and hour to hour.

Somehow, making this shift is difficult. We all ‘forget’ to practice TSK. We all find ourselves involved in the activities of our lives and in our usual reactivity, our stories of the way things are. We are disappointed when our old patterns occur and reoccur, but we come to expect it.

The materials we have been working with over these last weeks and months help us move at right angles to these accepted structures. They give us a remarkable account—and a powerful vocabulary—both grounded in space-freedom, for investigating how the patterns of our lives take form.

The DTS treatment of space points out how we are always telling (and inhabiting) stories. It shows us how we ordinarily accept those stories as true, activating mental processes so deeply rooted that no alternative seems possible. Yet it also invites us to see each story as a continuing creation rather than an established reality. It undermines substance and the self-imposed limits that keep us from freedom.

The vision that results is one of beauty and wholeness, in which “there are no longer structures that serve to establish and exclude, to breed longing and discontent.” (DTS 69) We find ourselves liberated from “the likes and dislikes, fears and desires of the self.” Most likely you have experienced something of the sense of joy and aliveness that even a hint of this way of seeing and being can bring, or you would not still be in the program.

Yet how often do we experience such joy? I know for myself that I am often far from embodying the TSK Vision in this way. Why should this be? Any story we might offer in response to this question will just be a story, yet perhaps such a story can suggest a course of action, a path of practice, that can support transformation.

As you know, I greatly admire the way the TSK books are written. I love the rhythms and power of their language, their creative forms of expression, and the way they play with words, mirroring the multidimensionality of experience. Over the past few months, I have had the clear sense that our group, engaging the TSK Vision together, has come to share this appreciation. Review the ‘chat box’ comments for this past week, and you will see strong evidence that this is so.

Yet there is a danger here. As we discussed in our last phone call, ‘understanding’ what the TSK Vision has to say on an intellectual level is not the goal of the TSK books, for language and concepts lack the power to fuel transformative action. If our appreciation for the vision

stays at the level of the written word, it can become a form of highly refined entertainment or aesthetic enjoyment, or perhaps a way to feed ourselves with dreams about how it would be to activate the vision, rather than actually doing so.

This is the concern we discussed in the last phone call (see the discussion starting around the 15-minute mark): words and thoughts can trick us into a simulated liberation, remote from the real thing. Accepting the truth of an idea is not the same as activating that idea in our lives. So we come back to the basic question I am suggesting we explore in the coming weeks: how to let the TSK Vision transform our conduct and our way of seeing.

For this to happen, rigorous thinking and aesthetic appreciation do not seem to go far enough. We also need to practice what a longtime student of the vision has called an “ecstatic engagement” with the teachings. Rinpoche speaks in this context of the love of knowledge; as he says in the closing sentence of LOK, “the depth of our love will disclose the range of our vision.”

No one can manufacture love. But whenever we glimpse the power of the TSK Vision—and here aesthetic appreciation and rigorous analysis can be very helpful—we have an opportunity to renew our commitment to the ongoing adventure that the vision offers. When we do, love stirs in our hearts. Little by little, in countless ways and each situation, we can practice “zeroless responsiveness” (DTS 70). For an invitation to explore what this might be like, see LOK Ex. 50.

The session that has just ended reminds us that inquiry is the doorway into this ongoing adventure. Inquiry unfolds in many ways: speculation, analysis, inquiry, and embodiment (DTS 65). We can explore each of them. I just mentioned aesthetic appreciation, and this too might be understood as a form of inquiry, related to the others.

Can we make this inquiry, in any and all of its forms, the ongoing truth of our own lives? When we find ourselves committed to the substance and ‘realness’ of the situation we are in and our reaction to that situation, can we loosen our commitment by reflecting on the way in which things are the way they are? When we are caught in “the patterns of the personality and the tangles of emotionality,” (DTS 66), can we look again: not rejecting our experience as false, but also not accepting it as true?

Over the next four weeks, let’s make that effort together. We can inquire—both in real time and in reflection—into the way things are, and also into the subjective structures we accept as central to our own identity. We can engage our embodied reality and our relations with others—our ways of judging and caring, of putting at a distance and inviting into our lives. We can question the hold that our own emotionality has over us. Each new circumstance that life presents offers an opportunity for applied inquiry.

Let us undertake this inquiry in full awareness of the journey we have been on together,

appreciative of what each of us is contributing, and ready to share our own explorations, whether in discussions on the TSK website or in other ways. We are all part of the adventure of being, and I think we will all benefit from learning what our fellow adventurers are discovering. As you engage the vision, what do you learn? What obstacles come up, and how do you respond?

During these weeks, I encourage you to keep a journal, refining your inquiry through the discipline of giving it form. I also invite you to set aside time each day for more formal practice, in whatever way sense to you. By creating a time and space where the usual structures that shape your life do not automatically operate, you give the love of knowledge room to grow.