

As I mentioned in the phone call for Week 8, in which we looked at the first part of Chapter 13, Rinpoche suggests at the start of that chapter that if we carry out a special kind of telling, a special kind of story, the telling itself can take us beyond the realm of telling. Put differently, our ordinary way of relating to time arises within a story that commits us to time as linear and static. But if we tell the story of telling stories, we may be able to break free of the content of the story. In the phone call, we focused on the moment of recognition, when we break free of the story by recognizing it as a story. This would be a different way of working with time's momentum.

As a practical matter, one way of doing this, which we also discussed in the phone call, is to look at the places of heaviness, anxiety, and so on. It may seem that at this point we are turning away from the telling of a story and focusing instead on a more immediate level of feelings, moods, and so on. But this distinction is not as clear as it seems. What if our feelings and moods are themselves an outcome of stories that we inhabit? In that case, the way we are feeling is an opportunity to recognize a story in operation, and insight into the way we tell stories is a way to transform what we are feeling in a more positive direction.

Just one more point (I apologize for this rather conceptual analysis. I have just been reading some philosophy, and it is flavoring my thinking as I write). I wrote at the end of the last paragraph that insight into the way we tell stories can transform negative feelings in a more positive direction. But we need to be careful. It is not that we are supposed to tell a more 'upbeat' story (as though we rewrote a piece of music from a minor key to a major key). Rather, the realm of dynamic time, alive and free from ordinary limits, is inherently more positive.

Now, back to the story that the chapter tells, the story of the conductor. The story is about time, the time that supports the telling of stories. In our usual stories, the momentum of time is turned toward the concerns of the self, leaving us trapped in a certain temporal order. But the story of conducting identifies the temporal order, and this has the potential to transform: See the quote at 127, which I already referred to last week: "Once the temporal order is identified as a construct, it can in principle be differently constructed."

In the reading for this week, the theme of structuring experience is taken up a literal way, by looking at prepositions as the building blocks—the nails and screws and tape—that make such construction possible (129). Can you be sensitive to this 'constructing' in your own stories?

Chapter 13 ends with the question, "Is there a knowledge that will make available more directly what remains unformed in the temporal dynamic? And Chapter 14 takes this question up, looking at what might be called "the beyond within." The discussion here reminds me just a bit of the current confusion in cosmology, which has been forced to the conclusion that some 94% of the 'matter' in the universe is in principle unknown to us: just blank darkness.

The chapter asks (135) how we can transform speculation into knowledge. That is where we end this course. Of course, you can read the rest of the chapter. But although there are practical reasons for ending here, this unfinished structure of the course is itself a gesture. Merleau-Ponty wrote that a work of art is never finished, only abandoned. That seems true for inquiry also. And the aim here is not to abandon the inquiry, but to let it continue.

As a practice for this week, one that nicely engages our concerns in this program, let's do DTS Ex. 14A, pp. 302.v