



Diamond Mountain University

Depth Course 5: Setting Fire to Your Meditation, Part II

Reading One: Nothing Ever Starts

The following translation is an excerpt from Master Kamalashila's text on meditation., called Bhavana Krama, or The Steps of Meditation. Master Kamalashila wrote three such books on meditation, all with the same title, the one we are using is the middle one. This work can be found in Tibetan in the ACIP database, TD3915, folios 28A-28B.

ཡང་དག་པའི་དངོས་པོའི་རང་གི་ངོ་བོ་ནི་དོན་དམ་པར་ན་སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པ་ལོན་སྟེ། རིགས་པ་དང་
ལུང་གིས་གཏན་ལ་དབབ་པོ། དེ་ལ་ལུང་ནི།

वस्तूनां स्वरूपं च परमार्थतो ऽनुत्पाद एवागमतो युक्तितश् च निश्चितम् ।
तत्रागमतो ।

Pure truth—the true nature of working things, is the simple fact that ultimately, things never start. And this can be established both through logic and through authoritative sources. Here firstly are the authoritative sources for this.

འཕགས་པ་ཚོས་ཡང་དག་པར་སྤྱད་པ་ལས་སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པ་ནི་བདེན་ལོ། །

यथोक्तम् आर्यधर्मसंगीतौ ।

It is just as the exalted sutra, Perfect Summary of the Teachings, describes when it states:

སྐྱེ་བ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ཚོས་གཞན་ནི་མི་བདེན་ལོ་ཞེས་ཇི་སྐད་དུ་གསུངས་པ་ལྟ་བུའོ། །

अनुत्पादः सत्यम् असत्यम् अन्ये धर्माः । इति

It is true that nothing starts. And the other—that there do exist objects which start and so on—is untrue.

དེ་ཡང་དོན་དམ་པ་དང་མཐུན་པའི་ཕྱིར་སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པ་བདེན་ལོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་ཀྱི། དོན་དམ་པར་
ནི་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡང་མ་ཡིན། མི་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡང་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། དེ་ཐ་སྐད་ཐམས་ཅད་ལས་འདས་པའི་ཕྱིར་
མོ། །

एतच्च च परमार्थानुकूलत्वाद् अनुत्पादः सत्यम् इत्युक्तम् परमार्थतस् तु नोत्पादो
नाप्यनुत्पादः । तस्य सर्वव्यवहारातीतत्वात् ।

Here the phrase “It is true that nothing starts” relates to ultimate reality. But ultimately, there is neither starting nor not starting to things—it completely transcends any description.

ཡང་དེ་ཉིད་ལས་བཀའ་སྤྱུལ་པ།

पुनश् चात्रैव चोक्तम् ।

In this same sutra, it was also stated:

རིགས་ཀྱི་བུ་འཇིག་རྟེན་ལ་གནས་པ་ནི་འཇིག་པ་དང་འབྱུང་བ་ལ་མངོན་པར་ཞེན་ཏེ། དེའི་ཕྱིར་
དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ་ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ་དང་ལྡན་པས་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་སྐྱེ་བའི་གནས་བསལ་བའི་ཕྱིར་
ཐ་སྐད་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་སྐྱེ་ལོ། ། འགག་གོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་ཀྱི། འདི་ལ་ནི་ཚོས་གང་ཡང་སྐྱེ་
བ་མེད་དོ་ཞེས། །

उत्पादनिरोधाभिनिविष्टः । कुलपुत्र । लोकसंनिवेशः । तस्मात् तथागतो
महाकारुणिको लोकस्योत्त्रासपदपरिहारार्थं व्यवहारवशाद् उक्तवान् उत्पद्यते
निरुध्यते चेति न चात्र कस्यचिद् धर्मस्योत्पादः । इति ।

O Child of Noble Family, those who remain in this broken world are chained to the idea of endings and beginnings. And it is for this reason that the incredibly compassionate Those Gone Thus speak in the nominal terms of “starting” and “stopping”—in order to prevent alarming someone who is caught up in the world. But I tell you this—there is no starting whatsoever to things.

འཕགས་པ་སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ཚེས་ཡང་དག་པར་སྤྱད་པ་ལས་ཀྱང་བཀའ་སྤྱུལ་ཏེ།

आर्यबुद्धसंगीतौ चोक्तम् ।

And as it was spoken in the exalted sutra, *Perfect Summary of the Buddha's Teachings*:

ཚུལ་བཞིན་འདྲི་བ་ནི་གང་ལགས། ཚུལ་བཞིན་ནི་གང་ལགས།

कतमा योनिशः पृच्छा । कतमा योनिः ।

“O Holy One, what is the right question? What is the correct way?”

བཀའ་སྤྱུལ་པ། སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པ་ནི་ཚུལ་བཞིན་ནོ། །དེ་འདྲི་བ་ནི་ཚུལ་བཞིན་འདྲི་བ་འཛོལ་།།

आह । अनुत्पादो योनिः । तस्य पृच्छा योनिशः पृच्छा ।

He replied: “Nothing ever starting is the correct way. And asking about this is the right question.”

ཡང་དེ་ཉིད་ལས་བཀའ་སྐྱེལ་པ།

पुनर् अत्रैवोक्तम् ।

Also in this same sutra, we find the passage:

ཁོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ནི་ཙའི་སྐྱོ་སྟེ།
འཆི་འཕོ་དང་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་བྲལ་པ་དག་གོ།
ཁོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ནི་དེ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྐྱོ་སྟེ།
དེ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱོང་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྐྱེར་རོ།
ཞེས་འབྲུང་ངོ།

अकारमुखाः ।

सर्वधर्माश् च्युत्युत्पत्तिविगताः ।

अभावमुखाः सर्वधर्माः ।

स्वभावशून्यताम् उपादाय ।

इति ।

All existing things are the door to causelessness,
Free of dying, moving on, and rebirth.
All existing things are the door to the true nature,
For they are empty of any true nature.

[Note: the first line of this quotation is most likely a corrupted version of ཡིག་གི་ཙ་ནི་ཚོས་
ཐམས་ཅད་ཤི་ལོ་ཅེ།: "The letter Tza is the door to all things." This is a reference to one of the
syllables of Manjushri's mantra.]

འཕགས་པ་བདེན་པ་གཉིས་རྣམ་པར་འགྲེད་པ་ལས་ཀྱང་།

आर्यसत्यद्वयविभागे च ।

And we find these words stated in the exalted sutra, *Dividing Into Two Truths*:

སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པར་མཉམ་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་མཉམ་པ་ཉིད་དོ་ཞེས་བརྗོད་དོ། །

अनुत्पादसमतया सर्वधर्माणां समता भवति ।

All existing things are completely equal, in the sense of completely equally
never starting.

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པ་ལས་ཀྱང་།

प्रज्ञापारमितायां चोक्तम् ।

Spoken as well in the *Perfection of Wisdom*:

རབ་འབྱོར་གཟུགས་ནི་གཟུགས་ཀྱི་དོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྣོང་དོ། །རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་པའི་བར་དུ་རྣམ་པར་
ཤེས་པའི་དོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྣོང་སྟེ། རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྣོང་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྤྱིར་རོ་ཞེས་བཀའ་
སྤྲུལ་ཏོ། །

रूपं । सुभूते । रूपस्वभावेन शून्यं यावद् विज्ञानं विज्ञानस्वभावेन शून्यम् इति
स्वलक्षणशून्यताम् उपादाय । इति ।

O Subhuti, the heap of form is empty of having any true nature of physical form, and this is the case all the way up to the heap of consciousness being empty of having any true nature of consciousness. For they are empty of having qualities of their own.

ज्ञानं यो विज्ञानं रूपं ।

हस्तिकक्षये चोक्तम् ।

Stated too in the *Play of Elephants*:

। गद'य'सु'व'सु'द'प'य' ।
। द'द'स'य'ग'द'य'द'द'द'द'द'द' ।
। द'द'द'द'द'द'द'द'द'द'द' ।
। द'द'द'द'द'द'द'द'द' ।
। द'द'द'द'द' ।

न कश्चिद् लभ्यते भावो यस्योत्पादस्य संभवः ।

असंभवेषु धर्मेषु बालः संभवम् इच्छति । इति ।

You won't see any thing at all
For which a start is possible:
What children crave to come about
Are things which cannot come about.

ཡབ་དང་སྲས་མཇུག་བཤམས་གྲུང་།

पितापुत्रसमागमे चोक्तम् ।

And spoken in the sutra, *The Meeting of Father and Son*:

ཚོས་འདི་དག་ཐམས་ཅད་ནི་དུས་གསུམ་དུ་མཉམ་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མཉམ་པ་དག་སྟེ། འདས་པའི་
དུས་ན་ཡང་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་དོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ན་ད་ལྟར་བྱུང་བའི་དུས་ཀྱི་བར་དུ་དོ་བོ་ཉིད་དང་བྲལ་
བའོ་ཞེས་བཀའ་སླུལ་ཏེ།

सर्व एते धर्माः सर्वे समास् त्रैकाल्यसमतया । अतीते ध्वनि सर्वधर्माः
स्वभावरहिता यावत् प्रत्युत्पन्ने ध्वनि । इति ।

Every one of these objects is the same, in the sense of their utter sameness within the three times: since even in the past all things lack a true nature, then everything up through to the time presently occurring is also devoid of any self nature.

དེ་ལྟར་རེ་ཞེས་ལུང་གིས་བརྟག་པར་བྱའོ། །

एवं तावद् आगततः प्रत्यवेक्षणीयम् ।

This is how we should explore the true nature of things for a while, through the use of authoritative sources.

The following translation is a selection from Je Tsongkapa's middle-length text on the Steps of the Path, entitled Lam Rim Dring, where he explains a quotation from the King of Concentration Sutra. This Tibetan text can be found in the ACIP database, S5393, folio 478B. The King of Concentration Sutra itself is presently being input by ACIP and has yet to receive a reference number; this original passage can be found in chapter 29, verses 13-16 in the Mithila Institute edition of the Sanskrit text.

A Dream We Are Sure to Feel

དེའི་སྤྱིར་ངེས་པར་ཡང་ན་རང་གི་ངོ་བོས་གྲུབ་པར་འཇིག་པའི་སྐྱོ་འདོགས་དང་། ཉམ་ལྟ་དང་
དངོས་པོ་ཡོད་པར་ལྟ་བའི་མཐར་ལུང་ལ། ཡང་ན་དངོས་པོ་རྣམས་དོན་བྱེད་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་གྱིས་
སྐྱོང་པར་འཇིག་པའི་སྐྱར་འདེབས་དང་ཆད་ལྟ་དང་དངོས་པོ་མེད་པར་ལྟ་བའི་མཐར་ལུང་བ་ཡིན་ནོ།།

And due to that it is definite: one will either fall to the extreme of attaching an essence to things—believing that some self nature to things does exist, with the view that things are unchanging, and that working things exist. Or else, one will fall to the extreme of denying things altogether—believing that working things are without any ability to perform a function, with the view that things have stopped, and that there are no working things.

དེ་ལྟར་ཉིང་ངེ་འཇིག་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ལས།

Thus it is stated in the sutra, *King of Concentration*:

།དེའི་ཚེ་སྤྱིག་མེད་སྐྱོབས་བཅུ་ལྟན་པ་ཡི།
།རྒྱལ་བ་དེས་ནི་ཉིང་འཇིག་མཚོག་འདི་འཆད།
།སྤྱིང་པའི་འགོ་བ་མི་ལམ་ལྟ་བུ་སྟེ།

།འདི་ལ་མི་སྐྱེ་སྲུ་ཡང་འཆི་བ་མེད།

तहि कालि सो दशबले अनिघो जिनु भाषते इमु समाधिवरम् ।
स्वप्नोपमा भवगती सकला न च कश्चि जायति न चो म्रियते ॥१३ ॥

It is at this point that the Victor,
The one free of sin who holds the ten powers,
Explained this highest meditation:

“The movement of the world
Is like a dream. There is no one at all
Who is born here, and none who die.

།མི་མས་ཅན་མི་དང་སྲོག་ཀྱང་མི་རྣམས་དེ།
།ཆོས་འདི་རྣམས་ནི་དབུ་བ་རྒྱུ་ཤིང་འདྲ།
།སྐྱེ་མ་ལྟ་བུ་ནམ་མཁའི་སྲོག་འདྲ་སྟེ།
།རྒྱུ་ཡི་རླབ་འདྲ་ཞིང་སྐྱིག་རྒྱུ་བཞིན།

न सत्त्व लभ्यति न जीवु नरो इमि धर्म फेनकदलीसदृशाः ।
मायोपमा गगनविद्युसमा दकचन्द्रसंनिभ मरीचिसमाः ॥१४ ॥

“You cannot even find a living being,
Or a person, or any creature—all these things
Are as a bubble, or a hollow reed.
They are like magic, or lightning in the sky;
They are the same as the moon
Reflected in water, or a mirage.

།མི་འགའ་འཇིག་རྟེན་འདིར་ཡང་ཤི་ན་ས་ནི།

།འཇིག་རྟེན་གཞན་དུ་འཕོ་ཞིང་འགོ་མེད་ཀྱང་།
།ལས་བྱས་རྣམས་ནི་ནམ་ཡང་ཚུད་མི་བྱ།
།འཁོར་བ་ན་ཡང་དཀར་ནག་འབྲས་བུ་སློན།

न च अस्मि लोकि मृतु कश्चि नरो परलोकि संक्रमति गच्छति वा ।
न च कर्म नश्यति कदाचि कृतं फलमेति कृष्ण शुभ संसरतो ॥१५ ॥

“It is not the case that there are those
Who die in this world, and who then
Move onto another and live again;
Nonetheless, once a deed is done,
It never fades away. Black and white
Results still ripen within the cycle of pain.

།རྟེན་པར་མ་ཡིན་ཆད་པར་མི་འགྱུར་ཏེ།
།ལས་བསགས་མེད་ཅིང་གནས་པ་དག་ཀྱང་མེད།
།དེ་ཡང་བྱས་ནས་རེག་པར་མི་འགྱུར་མིན།
།གཞན་གྱིས་བྱས་པ་ཚོར་བར་འགྱུར་བའང་མེད།

न च शाश्वतं न च उच्छेदु पुनो न च कर्मसंचयु न चापि स्थितिः ।
न च सोऽपि कृत्व पुनरस्पृशती न च अन्यु कृत्व पुन वेदयते ॥१६ ॥

“The world is neither unchanging,
Nor is it stopped. There is no
Collecting of karma, nor does it stay;
Nonetheless, once a deed is done,
Its touch is unavoidable, and a deed
Done by another we can never feel.”

The following selection was taken from an unpublished work of Geshe Michael Roach, entitled Katrin: The Secret Teachings on Healing Yourself, and How They Reached Tibet. This work was written during Geshe Michael's three-year retreat, from 2000-2003.

शान्तोदिताव्यपदेश्य धर्मानुपाती धर्मी ॥१४ ॥

Shantodita-avyapadeshya dharma-anupati dharmi.

III.14 The stopping of things,
and the starting of things,
are things that have a certain quality:
they flow from the quality
that they cannot be pointed to.

September 19

"You remember," said Katrin first today, "when we talked about the pen?"

I nodded. He had a way of planning his lessons so that I would never forget them. I could still see the cow's head and chest crushed into the little doorway.

"We talked about its emptiness, the fact that it wasn't a pen by itself, since it didn't look like a pen to everyone. And we decided that, if you do see it as a pen, it must be your own mind making you see it that way."

I nodded again, already lost in thought. This single idea brought up so many other issues. But Katrin was going on.

"That was a thing at rest, a simple thing just sitting there. Today we have to talk about things when they start to do something: things that affect other things." He stopped abruptly and then suddenly, inexplicably, looked very sad. He turned his face to his lap, and was still for a moment.

Then, still without looking up, he said quietly, "Your brother Tenzing. What

was it you said he died from?"

Just hearing my beloved brother's name spoken out loud, for the first time in over half a year, pierced my heart. My eyes started to water, and I looked at my lap.

"I don't mean to make you sad, child," my Teacher said softly. "There's a reason why I ask. It's something important."

I nodded and swallowed slowly against the knot in my throat. "He . . . there was . . . I mean, something started to grow, in his stomach, like a lump or something. And then one night . . ." I couldn't go on. Tenzing sleeping next to us in the family yurt. A nightmare. Waking up, smelling that terrible smoke. His life's blood pouring through the stones on the floor, killing the family fire. The dark and the smoke.

"It's all right, child," he said, his own voice choking. It was a wonder to me how much he felt what I was feeling in that moment. We stopped for a time.

Then Katrin raised his head, and I did mine, and at the same moment our eyes gave each other the same message Go on. It is why we are here. We can help.

"Why," began Katrin again. "Why, do you think . . . I mean, how was it do you think that he first started to get sick?"

I stared down again and collected myself for a bit and thought about it. It was something I had asked myself countless times, countless nights, laying in the dark. "I don't know, really. But I guess there must have been something, maybe something he ate, and maybe it had some kind of poison in it, and when it got down there, in his stomach, it made that lump start to grow."

"Hmm," said Katrin. He turned and looked out the back window, as he always did, to be alone in his mind for a moment. Then he turned back. "But . . . but didn't you both eat the same things?" he asked, gently.

"Exactly the same things." I replied, and it was true, and I had thought about it many times.

Katrin nodded, and gazed at me thoughtfully for a moment, and then continued.

"So can we say," he continued, "that you had very probably eaten the same poison, at some point or another, but when it reached your stomach it didn't make any lump start to grow it just passed on, harmlessly?"

"It must be like that, yes," I said, unable to think or say more.

There was a little yellow apple sitting on Katrin's ancient book table. He picked it up in one hand. "Let's say this is the poison, or whatever it was," he said. "Let's say it is a very strong but very tiny drop of poison, something that got into some food, or some water, or even just the air that your brother breathed.

"It goes into his mouth with the bite of food, or the gulp of water or air, whatever. It goes down his throat. It reaches his stomach."

Katrin raised his other hand, the empty one, up near the one with the apple, palm open. Then he began to bring the apple closer and closer to his palm, very, very slowly.

"There in Tenzing's stomach, the drop of poison comes closer and closer to the skin of his stomach. At some point they . . ." he prompted, just barely touching the apple to his palm.

"They touch," I replied. "At some point they touch."

"They touch at some point," repeated Katrin. "And in that moment, the change begins. Something in the poison touches the skin in his stomach there, at the tiniest single point, and the change begins. The lump starts to grow, right then, right there, at that first tiny point." He reached his hand out to me, palm up, and pointed at the center of it with his other hand. I could almost see that first point, the first tiny point where the poison first touched Tenzing. Something black and tiny and very evil.

"And in your stomach, the poison just passes on," continued Katrin. "No change, no tiny point where the poison and the skin first touch. No first moment when the lump begins to grow."

"Yes," I said. "Yes, like that." Sometimes I had even felt guilty that a lump had not grown in me as well.

Katrin waited a moment so I would be ready for his next question. I felt the importance of it, coming.

"That first point," he said. "That first tiny point where the poison touches him, and starts the lump." He was still pointing to the center of his palm. "Could you see it? I mean, if you were small enough, and you could go down there into Tenzing's stomach, next to that drop of poison, and stand there watching at the very instant that it first touched his skin. Could you see this very first, very tiny point of contact? The first touch? The very beginning of the lump that is going to kill your brother?"

I tried to imagine it. It wasn't so hard. "Yes," I said, with certainty, "yes, you could. If you were small enough."

"Now slow down," said Katrin a little forcefully. "Slow down, and think carefully about what I say next.

"If you can see that tiny point, the tiny point where the one thing touches the other and the change begins, well that means—doesn't it mean that it has some width?" he glared at me.

Maybe it was my emotions at the moment, but I didn't get it. I just stared up at him, feeling the hurt still.

Katrin jacked himself up on his seat as tall as he could and laid his hands to the two sides of his tiny body. "I mean," and he squeezed really hard and let his eyes pop out at me, so I had to laugh, "I mean, it's not like one side of that little point, no matter how small it is, touches the other side. If there wasn't a left side and a right side—if the left side was the right side then the thing couldn't be there at all now, could it?"

Then I got what he meant. Even a tiny point, even the hole a pin would leave, or a tiny bit of dust suspended in a ray of sunlight coming through the window—even these things had some width to them. Even these tiny things had sides, and something between the sides, or they couldn't be there at all.

"Right," I replied then. "Right. Even that first tiny point, where the drop of poison first touched my brother's skin, had some width to it."

"Then it wasn't a point, was it?" shot back Katrin, like a trap closing.

"Excuse me?" I said, a little confused.

"Then it wasn't the point, the first point, was it?" he repeated, with power.

I still didn't get it.

"Look at it again," he said. He picked up the apple. He moved it slowly through the air towards his palm, very slowly. Then they touched.

"If the point where they first touch has width," he said, "then they are not touching at a single point. Because then they are touching along a line, along a whole edge—along a whole bunch of points." He stopped and looked at me while I thought that over. He was right, of course. If the very first point where the poison and the skin touched had any width, then it was no longer a single point. And that meant it was no longer the very first point, the point where the lump, the point where the death, first began. In my mind I began trying to envision a real first point, somewhere maybe on the edge of the first point I'd been thinking about before.

"No use," said Katrin, watching my mind on its little search. "No use. That point's going to have some width too."

My mind, a little desperately at this point—and I noticed that, and wondered why—went back to the first point I'd started with. I began to wonder why maybe the whole edge of it then couldn't just have touched the whole edge of my brother's skin—lots of points, all at once.

Katrin squirmed and caught my attention. He was squeezing his little chest between his palms again. "No good," his eyes said. "No good. A drop with an edge like a perfect line? A square drop with perfect edges? Maybe a drop with just one big edge, no front or back?" He threw his hands up in the air and smiled.

"So what do we have?" he said, he insisted. "What do we have then? What do we have that you're afraid to say we have?" he demanded.

I just looked up at him and ran it all through my mind one more time, hopelessly

though, for I knew the answer. And it was, "There was no first point. There was no first tiny point where the poison first touched my brother's skin, inside."

Katrin paused, out of mercy I suppose. And then he said the obvious. "No first point, no second point." He folded his hands in his lap.

"But they do touch," I burst back. "They do touch. They must touch. It killed him."

"No one ever said they didn't. No one ever said it didn't," and Katrin sighed, with an infinite sadness. I waited for him to help me.

"It means," he said finally, "that—as the Master says in his verse—you cannot point to the starting. There is no very first moment, no very first point, that you can ever show to someone and say, 'That's where the lump started. That's when my brother's sickness started.' You only need to think about it clearly, you only need to think for a real moment of clear inner honesty. There is no such point. Such a point could never be. And if there is no point of starting, then the rest is impossible too. This is all," and he waved his arms around the world, around the universe for that matter. "This is all," he said, "impossible. Simply impossible."

"But things happen," I cried. "Things happen. Things touch other things and then the other things change. Things start, things stop. People are born, people die. We can see it. It's real. It . . . it hurts people, really—it does."

Katrin nodded at me silently. "So where is that coming from?" he said softly. "Why do we see those things? How can we see those things, if there is nothing there, nothing coming from their side?" He reached behind him to the window sill, and picked up one of his green bamboo pens, and held it up to me. I understood. I understood. It was something in my mind that made me see it as a pen. And it was something in the cow's mind that made her see it as something to eat. And if one thing ever seemed to touch another thing, if one thing ever seemed to change another thing, than that too my mind was making me see that way.

"Tenzing saw a lump start to grow in him, because his mind made him see it that way," Katrin continued my own thoughts for me, further than they could go by themselves at that moment. "You saw no lump start to grow in you because your mind made you see it that way."

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"The real question now becomes," he said—but we both knew it was hardly needed "why?"