

## **IMAGINE WHAT I DON'T KNOW**

Imagining what I don't know,  
And I don't know,  
I imagine what I don't know.

I know what I imagine is what I don't know,  
And what I know is not what I imagined.  
That much I know.

I can only imagine what I don't know.

That was a short poem I wrote long ago about “knowing.” It may drive a few of you away. LOL. I seem to never give up trying to express the ineffable, even though I know it cannot be put into words, yet I continue to try.

And so, now for a REALLY difficult concept, of possible interest only for those who want to learn the realization practices like Vipassana and Mahamudra meditation. Let's call it “The “There” and the “Then” that is here and now. If you can get any sense out of this essay, please let me know. If not, I apologize. Here goes.

What we don't know (the unknown), we tend to invent, fear, or imagine and too often we are simply mistaken. And this is because we imagine what we don't know as somewhere other than right here – some other place, some other time. A common example is always placing the “unknown” just out of reach as in “out of sight, out of mind.” For example, right now we imagine that the bardo, after death, is some place other than the here and the now. Try it out. How far away is the bardo going to be when you die? That's what I mean by a miss-take. Except for the past, there is no “there” and “then,” but only the here and the now.

In other words, we imagine the unknown of the future as the “there” and the “then.” That is, IMO, a bad habit, especially when all the dharma teachings pinpoint the Present Moment as the only avenue we have. Yet, we imagine our future, like the bardo after our death or our future enlightenment, etc. as anywhere but here and now. Yet, all we have ever known (we all know it) is the here and now. Anything, else is in the past or the future.

Everything that we “think” we have to face after death we are facing now. It's only that little thing called “time” that separates us right now from then. And even time itself will always be right here and now. I believe it is a mistake to imagine or assume that what we may fear of the future is not present now, where it can actually be addressed. It's always right here and now – everything.

As to our mind, hopefully that is something that we are already somewhat familiar with, if only because of our nightly dreams; and the dharma texts tell us that this waking life is but a dream as well. In effect, we are already living our own dream or nightmare. How could we not be; we are only right here and now, ourselves. We can't see beyond

ourselves, because all our sense organs are all right here. And now, something I would ask you to consider:

Not commonly known, the mind is flexible and as physical as we are. And up to now it is my belief (from my own experience) that most of us have never used the mind for more than intellectual concepts. I repeat: the mind is as physical as we are physical.

It has never occurred to us that the mind is ambidextrous, so to speak. The mind is not just idea-prone, but viscous as well; it has textures. We are too quick to “think” with the mind, rather than to do anything with it viscosly. The mind, IMO, is susceptible to shaping. It’s like kneading bread; we must put our hands into the mind directly and work the mind like we do physical exercise.

We each have to (need to) go into the mind ourselves and exercise enough to create space within there, room to live and be aware in, and set up shop – living room. We can go into our own mind and just stretch or expand it, much like we might erect or put up a tent, pushing and working to raise or expand this imaginary tent or space inside our mind so that we have some room or space. How do we do this?

To begin with, we do this by searching the mind; instead of just thinking of answers conceptually, we search our mind manually, not just intellectually. We actually get off our mental-duffs and go into our mind and search hard and long for an answer to any questions we have or are given by our dharma teacher. For example:

My teacher once asked a group of us: “Is the mind the color “Red?” Then he asked us to spend the entire day and night looking in our mind for the answer to that single question and report back to him at the next session. And we all did just that. But clever me, I just quickly thought “No, the mind is not the color red or any given color.” As usual, that was just exactly the wrong thing to do. My teacher was not asking me to “think,” but rather to search my mind thoroughly, exhaustively, and completely to find out if the mind was the color red. I didn’t do that, but I should have. And this failure on my part brings to light a quintessential point to fully grasp for those wanting to learn the more advanced non-dual dharma practices.

Instead of just think, think, think all the time, we have to learn to actually use the mind as if it were a muscle that we have never exercised to create space or room, one that can be expanded just by our exercise and effort. Again, like putting up a tent in our mind, we have to stretch, pull, and massage the mind until it becomes elastic and ultra-flexible.

We can learn to LIVE in there. Like working with clay (wedging), we have to make our mind more flexible, but most of all we have to search our mind until we exhaust all possibilities. We must completely exhaust all questioning by searching, by actually ourselves taking a look around in our mind, something we have never done. We must exhaustively search throughout the entire mind. If we just “think,” we have already missed the point.

The mind is not just some abstract thing as I once assumed it was. It is EVERYTHING there is, all wrapped into one, and it has “suchness” too. It is viscous. And the “suchness” of the mind, well, that’s us. We too are representatives of the mind. LOL.

You may get tired of hearing me rant and rave about the physicality of the mind, but this discovery was total news to me. I had always skimmed the concepts off the top of the mind and never gone for a swim. As they say, “Come on in, the water is fine.” And it is.

The sooner that we can begin to exercise within the mind itself, the better; in other words, become familiar with the mind. I have understood that this present moment is the key to knowing the mind and it’s, well, always present and right there. The brilliance of the present moment blinds us until we become accustomed to enduring it. It’s like the Sun at Noon. We can’t look directly at it, but gradually we can become familiar with it. We also can become familiar with our own mind.

That’s about all I know. I am working to become familiar with the present moment, but it is not easy for me. My habit, all I have ever known, is to hide in the darkness of thought and concepts and to not look directly at the present, much less endure it. I am not alone in this.

With all the current emphasis on physical exercise and getting in shape, the mind also has a shape it should be in. It is up to us to get our own interface with the mind in good shape. As dharma students, what I have tried to describe in the above lines, the sheer physicality or viscosity of the mind is, IMO, the key that I missed in preparing for the pointing-out-instructions that lead to the recognition of the true nature of the mind.

I wish I had known this earlier. I will leave you with another little (to me) fun poem.

## **NEVER KNOWN**

If I know,  
I don’t know I know,  
And I don’t know I don’t know I know.

I don’t know what I would know,  
If I did know.  
That’s how I know I don’t know.

So, I don’t know,  
I know I don’t know,  
And I know I know I don’t know.

I have never known.

[Photo by me yesterday. ]

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[http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links\\_to\\_Michael\\_Erlewine-V2.pdf](http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links_to_Michael_Erlewine-V2.pdf)

“As Bodhicitta is so precious,  
May those without it now create it,  
May those who have it not destroy it,  
And may it ever grow and flourish.”