

**The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious.
It is the fundamental emotion which stands
as the cradle of true science.**

**He who knows it not and can no longer wonder,
no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead.**

~ Albert Einstein

**I saw the mystery of things for 15 seconds.
Now it has made me a servant for life.**

~ Kabir

**Student: You talked about the first principle again, but I still
don't know what it is,**

Teacher: I don't know is the first principle.

The name that can be named is not the eternal Name.

~ Tao Te Ching

**I mean Negative Capability, that is,
when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries,
doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.**

~ John Keats

Life is Mystery!
I am alive AS Life and
I AM Mystery!

Through The Eyes of Life
I am alive AS the Mystery of Life!

I am beyond concept, beyond definition.

My home is paradox and contradiction.

I am the web weaver of the fabric of the nameless
and the unknown.

I am sheer unknowingness, primordial ignorance.
I am the architect of awe.

I am the shine in the eyes of a bewildered infant,
as well as the fading gleam in the eyes of the dying.

To behold the Mystery with eyes made of amazement
is to bless and be blessed.

If I must be spoken of, speak
of me in whispers and call me by my true name.

I AM Mystery! I AM Life!

Waking Up To Mystery

I will repeat my desire to avoid vilifying the mind here. The mind is what the mind does, which is conceptualize, categorize, judge, imagine and remember. These capacities, in and of themselves, are wonderful and miraculous, having done much to aide humanity in its unfolding. Minds are like guns, it's what we do with them that causes us problems.

If you are able to drop the conceptual mind, which means the mind that automatically turns experiences and perceptions into mental representations, images or chatter, you can live in a world where the natural beauty and mystery becomes obvious and everything is shining as the Mystery of Life.

**Do not say, "It is morning,"
and dismiss it with a name of yesterday.
See it for the first time as a new-born child
that has no name.**

~ Rabindranath Tagore

Wake Up Call: Over Conceptualizing

In each and every moment, everything *is* as it is, before the mind, any mind, can say how it is. Anything and everything *is* as it is. Before your mind can name, judge, describe, conceptualize or categorize in any way, anything and everything *is* as it is, already.

Take for instance, the piece of paper these words are written on. The piece of paper and the words simply are. They exist, before they are called, piece of paper, or words. They exist in their simplicity and in their immediacy. (This is important, so you must get this!)

Each moment of experience can be seen as a movement of shrinking, from sheer Mystery, to a human experience, to a

personal experience. Experience is shrunk from Mystery, to human experience, to ‘my’ experience.

Again, take the experience of reading these words before you.

The perception of these words is a direct, unmediated experience of Mystery, undefined by the mind. Then, from that experience of Mystery, the mind names, conceptualizes and categorizes, according to one's culture and conditioning, language, place and time. This puts experience into the human realm of meaning, which is much different from that of a cat or alligator looking at these words.

From this human realm, experience is further shrunk into the personal realm. Not just what it means to any human, but now what it means to a particular human i.e. me.

A simple example would go as follows: As we look out the kitchen window, things are observed. Whatever is seen, is seen as it *is*, before it is named. Then, the mind labels one of the things that is seen as, snow falling. At this point we have moved from Mystery, to a human concept, i.e. snow falling. Any human would see and agree with snow falling, though they may use a different language. Then the mind usually has an opinion or judgment, depending on the mind, *about* that named thing, in this case, snow falling, and further shrinks experience from human concept to personal concept. Snow falling becomes either, damn snow falling, or beautiful snow falling, depending on which mind is doing the observing and judging.

At this point, we have gone from sheer Mystery, to human concept, to personal meaning. Mystery is pushed through the processing plant of the mind, gutted and packaged, free of any signs of its original shape and ready for our own personal consumption.

Sell your cleverness, buy bewilderment
~ Rumi.

Practice: Bewilderment

It is not difficult to cultivate the skill of allowing the experience of radical unknowing to arise spontaneously in experience, or as Rumi suggests, to buy bewilderment. If you have begun to understand how the mind acts like a screen or a filter that processes experience by interpreting it into conceptual meaning, then you will also understand how this activity can greatly diminish the inherent joy of simple and direct experience.

Start by looking up and around you wherever you are, with the understanding that you really don't know anything about what you see. You see the surfaces of things, shapes and objects, but those objects don't come with built in meanings.

Allow yourself to relax into an experience of looking without thinking. Just see. Allow attention to stay energetic, while drifting through your immediate environment, without staying on anything for more than a moment. Just touch and go, look and flow, see and know, without thought.

Do this for as long as you like, to get a feel for it. I recommend making a daily practice with it, until you have the capacity to instantly experience the moment non-conceptually. I call this, Flashing Bewilderment.

Now you can become a Flasher without going to jail.

Practice: The Moment Without You

After much struggle in trying to put into words and share the idea of the practice of Mystery, I had an experience that may be helpful to share. If it is not helpful it may

confuse you and that may lead to an experience of Mystery too. But, if it does not lead to an experience of Mystery, at least it will fill a little of this book that I am writing and amuse me while I'm trying to express the un-expressible.

Right this moment now, become open to everything around you, as if your whole body/mind is a sensing organ. Allow yourself to get a very strong sense of where you are and the time of day.

Now, see if you can get a sense of this moment, minus you, as though you were not in it, but it is still happening, just as it is. Allow everything to be what it is, before it is even perceived by you. Realize that you don't matter to this moment, so let it be what it is, without violating it with your interpretations.

The unexamined life is not worth living
~ *Socrates*

Practice: Becoming a Quester

You were born into a world of answers, thrust into a prefabricated matrix of meaning, that was fashioned by the hands of those who went before you.

Have ever watched the curiosity of a child, as they toddle from object to object, wanting the word that represents it? They point, we label with a word, they repeat and waddle off to the next mysterious object, satisfied they have demystified the last one. So goes the process of indoctrination into the conceptual world that will soon color the totality of their Life.

While there is nothing malicious about this educational process, it does pave the way for a substitute Life of words, labels, definitions and concepts that will eventually drown

out that innate curiosity. Now as adults, if some curiosity does somehow accidentally make it to the surface of your awareness and you want to know what something is, you simply look it up on the internet or in a dictionary. Problem solved.

To become a Quester, is to rediscover and then cultivate that innate curiosity that has been smothered with cheap answers. To become a Quester, is to seek the questions that are not meant to be answered, but rather are meant to be held and experienced, allowing them to affect you and draw you into inner places long ago forgotten.

What is this? Who am I? What is really true?
These questions can be held in awareness and playfully, gently massaged of their mysteries.

What is this? Who am I? What is really true?
These questions can be held in awareness and ruthlessly pursued, squeezed of their mystery without mercy.

What is this? Who am I? What is really true?
These questions can be loved for their impenetrability, their un-answerability and their capacity to remind you that some questions are not meant to be answered.

**Try to love the questions themselves,
like locked rooms and like books
written in a foreign language.
~ Marie Rainer Rilke**

Other questions can undermine how you experience the moment, exposing your ceaseless craving and dis-satisfaction with how things are right now.

What is wrong with this?

The question, what is wrong with this, is useful when struggling with desires that so often pull you away from how it is, into the fantasy of how it could be. With repeated inquiry, perhaps while walking or simply sitting in silence, the question allows you to see directly that there is never anything wrong with this moment or this experience, but the mind makes it *seem* that there is. Try it now if you like. Or not.

**What's wrong with this moment
unless you think about it?
~ *Sailor Bob***

With time and persistence, it is very easy to develop a strange affection for these questions. Maybe this is because they remind us of our lost innocence and a time when that curiosity was close to the surface, a large part of who we were. Now we are made of answers and self-certainty, no longer interested in such childish inquiry. Maybe.

Or maybe I have no idea why affection develops and I am simply trying to provide you with the answer, to show you how smart I am and to save you the discomfort of not knowing. Probably not.

Practice: Beginner's Mind

The first words from Suzuki Roshi in his well known and beautiful little book, *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*, were: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few."

Beginner's mind is the original mind, the mind before it is the mind.

Beginner's Mind is the innocent mind, before it pretends to be smart, or worldly, or wise. It is open to receiving doubt

and understanding just the same, because it is not full of anything. Rather, it is empty and therefore receptive.

Beginner's Mind sees things as they are, not as they could be, or should be, or were. It approaches each moment as an unknown, unfamiliar, with full attention, curiosity and care, as if it will never appear again. It will not appear again, but Beginner's Mind cannot be certain of that.

As I type these words, I have become very uncertain what Beginner's Mind is, but I will proceed none-the-less. Beginner's Mind always proceeds, even when uncertain. Especially when uncertain. Except when it doesn't. Then that is also Beginner's Mind.

Beginner's Mind might be reading these words right this instant, and suddenly, Surprise! it found you.

Beginner' Mind is Surprise! mind. You need not look for it, because it is already looking for you, but if you find yourself looking for it, no worries, because that is Beginner's Mind too. Surprise!

Now, having told you what Beginner's Mind is, let me tell you what Beginner's Mind is not. Beginner's Mind isn't not nothing.

It is now that you might want to forget everything I have just shared with you and simply find out for yourself what it is. Obviously, I do not know.

If you find out what Beginner's Mind is, I would be grateful if you would let me know.

Surprise!

**Psst...
You Awake?**