

AN INCANTATION

We have to be in the automobile in order to drive the car. It's no different with our physical body, the mind, and its use. We can't know the mind from thought and concepts alone; living only conceptually is non-sensual -- nonsense.

Certainly, there is a vast western tradition of esotericism on what are called out-of-the-body experiences and their pitfalls. It's only too easy to flee incarnation (and our fears of it) and seek refuge beyond (or above) the physical in conceptuality and intellectualization. We all are acquainted with those who don't yet know what they are talking about. How does all this relate to the Dharma?

Just because there are thousands of books on the dharma does not make it primarily conceptual. It's not. The mind (as used in the dharma) is distinct from mental conceptuality and is as physical as physical can be. It's all one-thing and not two, although we can divide things by two (subject and object) to examine them intellectually and do. Nevertheless, reality remains in actuality singular, as in this present moment. It's all one.

My point is that if we study the dharma only conceptually, that is intellectually, the chances of it making any sense to us will be minimal. At best, we might get a blueprint, road-map, or conceptual view of the dharma, a disembodied ghost of an idea at that. Instead, we each must plunge our hands and selves into the matrix of life itself, into whatever physicality makes sense to us and feel it. Concepts must be grounded in flesh and lived. We must EXPERIENCE to live and have skin in the game. That's the entirety of what the dharma is about: realizing that experience.

"Understanding," yes, but that understanding is intellectual; life must be lived, experienced in the flesh,

and known. And that means, as mentioned, that we must have skin in the game. And, by “known,” I mean (and this is the essence of dharma) “Realized!” we have to realize what we are experiencing. And by “realized,” this should not be confused with conceptual “understanding” as mentioned above, but rather our dreams and ideas must be made to matter and become real, as in we are “fully immersed,” experiencing, and passing through life to the exclusion of any doubt, self-consciousness, or second-thoughts.

In a similar way, the dharma teachings are like freeze-dried seeds or kernels that only require the water of realization to reconstitute themselves and live again in us, now. However, they must be planted in the present moment and grown from there, from the bottom up and not just from the top down.

I used to write (and liked to write) what I called “mantra poems.” To my mind, these mantra-poems, if recited aloud and clearly, can re-invoke the spiritual empowerment that precipitated the original poem (and its initiation) so that it lives again in us now. I can’t guarantee that will happen, but here is a poem I wrote in the 1960s, perhaps 1967, about a concept that is technically called (in the western esoteric tradition) “The Monad.”

You might give it a try and see if you can invoke it. The word “Will” in the first line refers to the “Will” that holds the world together and allows it to cohere. I write a lot about the inadequacy of words to describe reality, and it’s true. However, here I write about the power of words as a signature of reality. I was perhaps 25 years old at the time.

And allow me to share what amounts to almost a caution: On the very edge of language, where prose gives way to poetry, and then somewhat farther yet on to the far-edge or fringe of poetry itself, where poetry

verges on nonsense, live what I call these mantra poems, of which this is one.

To recite a mantra-poem aloud is to dare to call it to mind, to call it forth from the Mind and initialize (recreate) it once again in its original purity. Perhaps some of you might be able to invoke a reconstitution. It's like a magic incantation and hologram.

EVERLASTING LIFE

What "Will" in words not wake
Clear sleeps,
And clear, sleeps on.

What wakes stands watch to see that sleep as sound.
What wakes will serve to set asleep,
Inset a sleep with standing words,
That wake,
If ever, last.

And on that last,
In overlay,
Our life.

Yes,
To lay at the last a life that ever lives,
To ever last that "last" of life,
And in ever-lasting life,
Everlasting ...

We have a life that lives at last.

[Here I am with my friend Kevin Morris deep in conversation at the yearly Harvest Gathering near Lake City in western Michigan. Kevin and I go all the way back to the "day." The Harvest Gathering is three days of music (100 or more bands) that congregate to play for each other and for a thousand or so people who come to watch. Photo by Corrina Van Hamilin.]

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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.”