

NOT-KNOWING IS A WELL OF INFINITE DEPTH: A context that reflects truth, welcomes service and points to divine mystery and grace.

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Summary

This paper is a chapter adapted from a completed, yet-to-be-published book with the working title: *Awakening To The Sanity Of Presence: Being Sane In An Insane World—A Traveler's Guide*. It is clear that thinking anyone knows anything must be surrendered to honor the paradoxical nature of pointing to not-knowing and to not be entangled in the mind's grandiosity, concepts or pseudo-knowing. Purely from total naked vulnerability with no concepts to hang on to, pointers to not-knowing arise in six themes that serve as gateways to freedom for aware knowing and inhabiting who we already are. Truth is seen as a defining quality of not-knowing. The six themes are: 1) Not-knowing has a context 2) Egos are threatened by not-knowing 3) Witnessing reveals not-knowing 4) Not-knowing opens the gate to service 5) Living Truth, the defining quality of aware not-knowing, sets one free and 6) Not-knowing is silent divine mystery and grace. These themes are not presented as a literature review, but to reveal from numerous angles a rich domain that welcomes an aware not-knowing of limited impermanent duality nested in unlimited unchanging nonduality. A process interweaving across all themes is the movement from unaware not-knowing to aware not-knowing that, in turn, necessarily and sufficiently allows aware knowing to blossom. Aware not-knowing is likened to a well of infinite depth that surrenders everything and unveils truth, true knowing, joyous suchness of being, egoless empty reality, a vast divine mystery and grace, and timeless, all-encompassing, not-knowable wonder.

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Introduction

The purpose of this introduction is to present not-knowing, the limitations of the ego-mind, the value of surrender and to state the six themes of this writing. Not-knowing is at the heart of nonduality given that there is no body, person, I, me, or one to know anything living in these human mind-body mechanisms on the plane of the empirical world. Thus, while accepting what arises each moment is knowable, the person (I, me, or one) accepting is not-knowable. Not-knowing is greatly undervalued in Western society, possibly related to feeling highly vulnerable, unprotected and existentially naked. Without flinching, escaping, turning away or running away, the vision for this writing is to inhabit aware not-knowing by surrendering all to naked presence, being and truth. Paradoxically, while perfection as a concept is unknowable, as expression it can be ever-present in all awake moments, as is aware knowing.

An ancient iconic story is emblematic in introducing not-knowing. The story tells of the Buddhist monk Bodhidharma who lived in the Fifth / Sixth Century and is generally acknowledged as the leading transmitter / patriarch of Zen to China. As passed through the ages (Broughton, 1999), Bodhidharma encountered Emperor Wu (Xiāo Yǎn), a passionate supporter of Buddhism. Emperor Wu asked him, "How much karmic merit have I earned for ordaining Buddhist monks, building monasteries, having sutras copied, and commissioning Buddha images?" Bodhidharma replied, "None, good deeds done with selfish intent bring no merit." The emperor then asked him, "So what is the highest meaning of noble truth?" Bodhidharma answered, "There is no noble truth, there is only void." Next the emperor asked, "Then, who is standing before me?" Bodhidharma stated, "I know not, Your Majesty."

Bodhidharma responded in the only way he was able—in totally surrendered not-knowing. With nothing to stand upon, you can only honestly admit standing on nothing. The author experiences a resonance and kinship with Bodhidharma. A number of years ago, and repeated often since, the words "And what do I know?" spontaneously erupted out of this being's mouth, in simply being honest with no particular agenda or intent, after conversing with a client. Remarkably, the client appreciated it!

In order to arrive at what you do not know
 You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
 In order to possess what you do not possess,
 You must go by way of dispossession.
 In order to arrive at what you are not,
 You must go through the way in which you are not.
 And what you do not know is the only thing you know
 And what you own is what you do not own
 And where you are is where you are not.
 —T. S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets* (1968), "East Coker" stanza III

Poet T. S. Eliot knew the value of ignorance, dispossession and recognizing all you are not in being very close to not-knowing as a compatriot you both own and do not own. Seeing, acknowledging and embracing our inherent unawareness can be a wayshower for a full experience and awareness of not-knowing, as all that is known.

Socrates, the originator of philosophy, the Socratic dialogue and critical thinking, throws down the gauntlet when he repeatedly observed that he neither knows or thinks he knows, does not think that he knows what he does not know, and that the only thing he knows is that he knows nothing. The paradox of Socrates' awareness appears as a contradiction, yet all being true, reveals that Socrates understood that he did not know and did not think he knew, while also holding that the only thing he knew was he did not know. In fact, the topic of knowing is one of enduring interest in the field of philosophy given the study/debate of epistemology, or the study of knowledge and knowing.

Addressing not-knowing, most religions, spiritual teachers, realized masters and mystics are in consensus that reality and Truth are not directly knowable in experience. It would appear that the nature of reality, Truth and knowing of the Absolute is inexplicable and undefinable, ineffable and not-knowable. According to spiritual teacher Rajneesh (1976) [aka Osho], spiritual masters know nothing and have attained "perfect ignorance" given that with the death of the dreamed up phantom ego, there is no longer any one to quest for knowledge that is impermanent and exhausting. With the dropping of knowledge and its seeking, you are God's fool in making no claim to knowledge while lingering in innocent silence, open curiosity and present awareness. Perhaps the greatest writer in the English language, the bard William Shakespeare, created the character of the fool, playing opposite the king in several plays, who unrelentingly pointed to Truth using flamboyant, humorous absurdity. Absurdity and humor gets us out of our minds, allowing wisdom to arise with honest maturity. Not-knowing seems distinct from superficial ignorance, lost confusion and agitating doubt, since each is only disturbing, self-defeating and dangerous, at least in seeing what is real.

So, how can the direct experiential awareness of not-knowing be approached from any direction drawing upon the mind and its inherent dualism, polarities and flood of concepts? To know not-knowing simply is not possible for the mind given that not-knowing itself subscribes to no approach, technique, knowledge, understanding, scripture or concept.

What remains is complete surrender to Awareness or Consciousness, like a total demolition, deconstruction and deprogramming of everything supposedly known and admission of complete failure, much like experiencing death and annihilation. Then, the imaginary ego-mind has no air left in its sails—it goes nowhere and is nothing. In other words, to enter the domain of not-knowing, it takes losing your head to come into your senses, heart and guts. There will be no answers sought or found, only an encompassing and inhabiting of a vast mystery hiding in plain sight every single moment.

The greatest hurts, disillusionments and growth have arisen in this author's life in noticing that what appeared at one point in time as certain and known, was unveiled at another point in time as an illusion and just not so. Artemus Ward (1991) pinpoints it: "It ain't so much the things we don't know that get us into trouble. It's the things we know that just ain't so." It

seems like a common experience to think you know when in fact you do not know, what may be called educated or learned ignorance.

With all the cognitive biases, prejudices and preconceived ideas of the mind, isn't not-knowing a prudent safeguard for the ego-mind's grandiosity, self-righteousness and myopia? How can the ego-mind, which actually doesn't exist since it is purely a concept, be so sure it really knows and then think it is right about what it seems to know? Such questions are likely to already contain their answers.

Zen master Suzuki Roshi reportedly said that not-knowing does not mean you don't know. There is a place in traversing the human experience to develop the capacity to know and similarly to cultivate not-knowing. In fact, one overarching theme of this paper is the movement from unaware not-knowing to aware not-knowing that, in turn, necessarily and sufficiently allows aware knowing to reveal itself. Shakyamuni Buddha repeatedly cautioned against believing anything and directed people back to trust their own experience. Spiritual teachers suggest that in not-knowing, one actually knows the essential.

To bring an open consciousness or beginner's mind does not require forgetting what we do know as helpful tools in navigating the relative world, only a release of opinions, interpretations and judgments in any situation, all made up by the fictive self. The Zen mind of wakefulness and mindfulness supports a self-forgetting of the false ego-self and all its dreamed up conceptions mistaken for reality, while using what is most practical and helpful. Isn't not-knowing a key safeguard to hold lightly all that is assumed to be known in this ever-changing world? Isn't not-knowing a way to not be limited or constrained by what seems to be known, since the world may have moved on? Can we bring a readiness for life to be not the same as we habitually expect and have grown accustomed? Perhaps things are as we've known, and perhaps not. Checking with the mind won't help; checking with life can and does.

Not-knowing or the unknown serves as a pointer in this writing for neither ignorance nor don't-knowism, only as a signpost revealing the way it is in this moment. Everyday life illustrations and clinical examples are offered to help demonstrate and flesh out the six themes. Adapted stories have no source other than author unknown since the original telling has no origin or teller. Capitalized words point to the Absolute.

The six themes of this writing weave an interlacing tapestry that makes a whole far greater than the sum of its parts. Truth is seen as a defining quality of not-knowing. The six themes are: 1) Not-knowing has a context 2) Egos are threatened by not-knowing 3) Witnessing reveals not-knowing 4) Not-knowing opens the gate to service 5) Living Truth, the defining quality of aware not-knowing, sets one free and 6) Not-knowing is silent divine mystery and grace. The six themes to address not-knowing are complementary and interdependent, each one adding to a fuller understanding of the whole, much like various views of a diamond help illuminate all its facets from different angles and perspectives. This multi-dimensional approach can yield a shining emptiness and a resplendent fullness inside an aware not-knowing and the possibility of true knowing.

Not-knowing Has a Context

In this section the context of not-knowing is illuminated from several perspectives, including everyday examples, who is claiming meaning, and beginner's mind. Discussions of "self-luminosity" in Tibetan Buddhism, listening presence, developing a capacity to be accident-prone as a readiness to experience awakening, and experiencing epiphanies that reveal the actual situation, all point to the possible context of aware not-knowing as ushering in an aware knowing.

Is meaning found purely in context? Let's take two brief illustrations in the everyday relative world to give a taste of how crucial context can be. First, consider dating someone attractive enough to be with, yet not to be committed to. See this in the context of numerous possible mates, and see this in the context of he or she being the last man or woman on earth. It changes everything. Secondly, sense how the man looking for the perfect woman feels in going from candidate to candidate. When he finally finds her, he is wildly elated, until he discovers that she is looking for the perfect man, and it is not him. In both examples, a shift in context instantaneously changes everything. German existential philosopher Heidegger knew the importance of context in reputedly stating that no one could honestly understand a hammer without an understanding of nails, wood and the human necessity for shelter. Gaining clarity of psychological and spiritual inquiry may illuminate our inquiry. Nondual author Chuck Hillig (2003) makes this distinction:

Psychological inquiry appears to concern *content*, and is directed towards solving some problem. Spiritual inquiry seems to be not the same since it concerns *context*, and it is more directed towards discovering *who* has the problem. (p.160, italics in original)

So long as we look through the lenses of ourselves—the psychological sense of self—all the contents seeable is maya or illusion, the ego-mind's dream world. It might be useful to see awakening as a shift from a preoccupation with the contents of consciousness to the discovery of a context of consciousness, often encouraged by spiritual teachers through persistent, sincere presence, meditation and witnessing.

Without conscious clarity of a context, can any fact or reference point be meaningful? Yet, does not-knowing make any claim of meaning anything? Who would make such a claim? This would seem to be the proverbial horns of the dilemma—if not-knowing makes no claim to meaning since it is bereft of the imaginary "I" and ego-mind's meaning-making judgments, and clarity of context is essential for anything to be meaningful, then is not-knowing bereft of context pointing to no meaning or is there an alternative context appropriate for not-knowing?

One way to break this apparent conundrum and perplexing obstacle is in observing the contexts of daily living since these continually reveal a growing awareness of environments or fields. Adyashanti (2011) forwards the experience of becoming more comfortable inside the space of not-knowing, yielding a developing sense of being intimate with yourself and presence. He sees a primary quality of the space of not-knowing as it being aware and conscious of itself, and mentions Tibetan Buddhists use of the term "self-luminosity" or self-knowing for this. That is, who we are knows itself as a vast field of being and not-knowing. It seems our Truth is

nothing more or less than this expanse of aware not-knowing. He is careful to note that practical knowing in the relative world, such as the knowing of useful information to function in everyday life (for example, what is your name and where are your keys), is not in any way in opposition to or diminishes the field of not-knowing.

Blossoming out of the core of our being is another kind of knowing that eclipses the mind's unending mental stream of thoughts and opinions, one that opens a lightness of knowing that can be called insight, intuitive understanding or inspired thinking, all uncontrollable by will and a pure expression of the unknown. Within this "self-luminosity" or intimacy with oneself, including presence and transcending the mind's preoccupations, wise action can use concepts to point to what transcends them, like astute spiritual and secular teachers enlist to inspire their aspirants, devotees and students.

Within the possible context of aware not-knowing, listening presence has a quality of being a fine candidate for deep exploration. Listening presence would seem to express aware not-knowing given that it continually reveals wise action. Nothing would seem to be more primary to presence than cultivating the art of honest, whole-hearted listening in interested calm silence. Listening, real honest listening with one's whole heart, body and being, begins in presence and unaware not-knowing leading to aware knowing. Does any one know anything about what will arise from within or without in any moment? Isn't it the not-knowing nature of each moment that brings the gift of surprising spontaneity?

To explore listening presence is challenging when you realize that human females speak at an average rate of about 250 words per minute and human males speak at an average rate of about 125 words per minute (Brizendine, 2006), while it is a common experience for humans to cognitively process reading text, writing and speech at many times this rate. Listening presence begins with the awareness and acknowledgement of all we bring to listening every moment: our filters, prisms and lenses of past history, feelings, beliefs, prejudices, judgments, assumptions, biases and opinions.

In the author's experience, a process of pausing, watching and seeing what blocks listening presence brings up a multitude of fears. A profound openness and willingness to face and feel these fears may help loosen their hold on us. Being with them, we can start to desensitize, relax, and decode their messages. In addressing what wants to be expressed, all can now be gratefully released. Suspending assumptions and judgments, comparisons and status, agendas and taking anything personally can open space to simply listen. Anyone can bring a conscious intention to see through them all to what is real.

On occasion the term "beginner's ear" has crossed this one's path, probably alluding to the use of "beginner's mind" or "no-mind" in Zen that points to a fresh, available, open and uncluttered mind. Is this just another way to deepen our capacity for surprise and delight, awe and wonder? Beginner's ear or pure listening points to a fundamental openness without prejudgment to what is actually said and heard here-and-now and letting all simply be exactly as it is. Greeting one's self and another with a beginner's ear demonstrates palpable respect, presence and caring for oneself, the speaker and the conversation.

Science fiction author Robert Heinlein (1961) coined a new verb for beginner's consciousness: to grok. Heinlein portrayed grokking as a fundamental way of knowing that is holistic, intuitive, direct and immediate. It is the type of rapport you timelessly offer by entering oneness with another's inner experience. A Zen saying, "hearing with one's eyes and seeing with one's ears," points to a unity and wholeness of perception and being that is at the heart of beginner's consciousness. Listening presence points to a possible context of aware not-knowing that takes time and is timeless.

Psychologist Lawrence LeShan (1974) mentions an older sense of the word "understand" that is relevant in cultivating aware not-knowing, including listening well. In contrast to the standard meaning of understanding, that is, breaking something down into component parts and describing how they work together, is the meaning to "stand under," that is to comprehend and perceive something by being a part or participating in it as an organic, whole and complete process. This description appears to fit the experience of the artist, entrepreneur, inventor, innovator and mystic, and listening presence. Listening presence naturally calls forth many qualities from within, not least of which is our generosity of spirit to develop the muscle of going beyond our ego's self-centeredness and extend ourselves to include our intimate insides and another with our undivided attention and total surrender. We can bring a growing relaxed comfort and willingness to be in silence for ourselves and with another as we take the simple steps to bring ourselves into presence and whole complete attention. A growing trust, broadening openness and deepening compassion naturally blossom in listening presence. It plainly embraces what is with open arms, open heart and open spirit, inhabiting an intimacy within and without. So what is the context of not-knowing, other than aware not-knowing itself in a lovely intimacy within.

Spiritual teachers talk about developing a capacity to be accident-prone as a readiness to experience awakening, not-knowing and Truth. Suzuki Roshi is reputed to have stated that enlightenment is an accident and what spiritual practice does is simply make us accident-prone. A variety of spiritual and religious practices, including all forms of meditation, yoga, tai chi, chi gung and contemplative prayer among others, are invitations and opportunities for accident-proneness and welcoming the unpredictable, the surprising, and vast mystery of not-knowing. In this context, the allowance, willingness and deep acceptance of discontinuities in what is experienced as reality allows awakening to not-knowing and True Nature to arise. How would accidents be recognized when asleep? Without awakening and patient readiness for the accident, how could it be glimpsed? Cultivating receptivity for accidents, that is, events that break the routine, habitual patterns of thought, word and actions, also known as anomalies and discontinuities, can help us see the unpredictable not-knowing.

Several examples poignantly illustrate the shift in context from unaware not-knowing to aware not-knowing to aware knowing. Recently a friend from years ago phoned and this one joked with him as usual, until picking up his serious tone. Now in aware not-knowing, he shared his present diagnosis of prostate cancer and an imminent operation. In aware knowing, this author's tone shifted to offering caring, acceptance and compassion. Another illustration comes from author Stephen R. Covey (1989) who related a memorable incident on the New York subway. A man boarded with his screaming, unruly children, apparently upsetting Covey's peace. With the father seeming to do nothing, Covey became irritated over his not taking

responsibility for his children. When he could bear it no longer, he confronted the man about taking greater control of his children. The oblivious man acknowledged the situation and stated that they had just come from the hospital and his wife had died an hour earlier. Suddenly Covey saw his unaware not-knowing and shifted to being aware of his not-knowing. As Covey felt compassion in aware knowing, he offered to help. Indeed, the context had very quickly changed.

Egos Are Threatened by Not-Knowing

Standing inside the imaginary false sense of self or ego, the ego not only sees no value in not-knowing, it perceives not-knowing as deeply threatening and terrifying since its house of cards is built on the bravado of knowing reality with certainty, a complete illusion. Even ruling out instances when one would be expected to be informed and wasn't, it is still a common experience living in the world to hear sharp criticism by authority figures over anyone not-knowing. This implies that one ought to know in most, if not all, situations and not-knowing is unacceptable, condemnable and punishable.

As being somebody is a defense against being nobody, so knowing is an ego defense against the sheer reality of everyday, absolutely ordinary, run-of-the-mill not-knowing. The ego-mind and brain know only knowledge accumulated in the past and can be of no help whatsoever in seeing value in not-knowing in the present. It is precisely in being a nobody or no one, in the total absence of 'you', that allows not-knowing to arise in presence. Free from the I-concept, subject and objects, and the phantom tyranny of past memories and future expectations, see if only pure embodied listening, joy, peace and natural happiness shine forth in Truth. Isn't it in your total absence that who you truly are arises now?

To get some sense of how threatened the ego-mind is of not-knowing, consider how the mind quickly jumps into using intellectual concepts and reason to keep not-knowing at bay. If any illusory subject or false "I" is activated and references an object, then isn't "I don't know" only an intellectual awareness? Doesn't the very speech act of saying anything "about" something or someone assume some person or ego-self acting as a subject commenting on some object, thus keeping the discussion on an intellectual basis of understanding? Sage Jean Klein (1984) speaks of such intellectual awareness as "second hand information," that is, borrowed information based upon hearsay, what is read in books, and what passes for common sense. The mind only offers unending content and dead past conditioning.

Similarly, isn't the mind content to use all forms of ego defenses, passive-aggressive strategies, manipulative tactics and outright avoidance, denial and lying to avoid the simple acknowledgment of not-knowing? Consider the dream ego-mind as a conceptual mechanism aiming to get what it wants and get somewhere, as well as avoid what it does not want and where it does not want to be. What interest would this repository of past conditioning have in not-knowing? How could it bask in being right and superior in addition to avoid being wrong and inferior so long as it allows not-knowing? The alternative? The false ego-mind is threatened by "first hand experience" since it is a beautiful candidate for one to inhabit an experience or perception that directly points to presence or truth, without referencing an intermediary using "about" or like a subject relating to an object. Modern illustrations of embodied presence or truth, not "about" any thing, would be talks to aspirants by spiritual teachers inhabiting presence

that are transcribed into books. Such experiences would appear to demonstrate state specific learning, a theory that says what is learned in one state of mind, condition, or context (e.g., under the influence of a certain drug, while listening to a certain type of music, being in a certain place, etcetera) is best recalled/retrieved and remembered in the same or similar state of mind, condition, or context. Research findings have demonstrated empirical support for the theory and it has been applied in education, sports psychology, motor development and research on memory and how drug states affect memory (Godwin, et. al., 1969; Petersen, 1979; Marian & Kaushanskaya, 2007).

The ego-mind's closed imaginary world is anathema to any exploration of not-knowing, including direct first hand experience in the form of embodied presence or awakening. In my private practice as a psychologist, it is more than chagrining to have new clients, once having directly experienced presence without the ego's mental activation, then listen to their minds in talking themselves out of transforming their life challenges so it will continue to stay in control of their lives. Two other illustrations of embodied presence that the ego-mind would heartily resist are Hindu sage Nisargadatta Maharaj (1973) in his spiritual masterpiece *I AM THAT* and Eckhart Tolle (1999) in his popular book *The Power of Now*. Did an author write either book? Or was each book a record of direct, inhabited experience in Presence that some time later was transcribed, edited and published? Given both discourses show all signs of being presented in presence, and in accord with state specific learning, it would make sense they can only be fully experienced and truly land inside someone reading or listening who is equally present. Both writings exemplify depthless surrender of the psychological self, no one knowing nothing in emptiness inhabiting a vast suchness of being. An alive, embodied, aware not-knowing is unveiled. What interest would the fictive self have in experiencing such matters?

Interestingly, the dream ego-mind really has no defense for not-knowing when the Absolute breaks through the empirical world of experiences inside these human bodies. Whether in the form of epiphanies, miracles, spontaneous remissions, serendipity, or unexplained events that have a certain symmetry (what psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung called synchronicity), these events are typically seen by the ego-mind as freak, unexplainable glitches and mysteries in the rational and reasonable fabric of the universe. It would take nothing less than standing in silent, present witnessing consciousness, unobstructed by the fear-driven past conditioning of the mind continually projecting into an fabricated and unknowable future, to see unreasonable events such as those described above for what they are—the Absolute appearing to bubble up, come through and express in the empirical world.

Witnessing Reveals Not-Knowing

To see through and beyond the mistaken identity of the ego holds the opportunity to glimpse or have a taste of the Absolute, the nondual context breaking through the relative world's duality context. All changes when one inhabits this very moment of being, and further is able to pause and watch or witness the ego-mind, and see what the ego-mind is up to at this moment. The realization dawns that the ego-mind cannot be who one truly is. At this precise timeless moment the essential space of not-knowing can become available, accessible and on-line in awareness. This moment is simultaneously a moment of deep surrender of the false

identification with the ego-mind and a watershed to see and profoundly be in awe of the incalculable value of not-knowing that naturally reveals who we truly are.

Consider witnessing, alternatively called noticing, observing and watching, as the ability to stand in the fictive ego-mind's blind spot of inhabiting presence and see the ego-mind's means of operation, its fixations, fears, judgments, opinions, positions, likes and dislikes. Given the universal experience of the mind appearing to always be "on", with the exception of deep sleep that is not accessible, it requires standing in the fictive ego-mind's blind spot of aware presence to permit a seeing of who you cannot be.

The theme of witnessing reveals not-knowing is explored from multiple angles. This investigation includes experiencing the unknown, cultural anthropologist Carlos Castaneda's shamanic work describing "not-doing" as necessary for "stopping the world", working with 'parental introjects', right action in Buddhism and clinical applications.

It is evident that while one can subjectively know what one feels and experiences in the relative world, one cannot know any of this for another since one is not inside another's body. One can observe what people do and notice behavior patterns, but one can only be oneself. What one thinks one knows is drawn from past memory, thought and associations along with projected expectations of a dreamed up future, all courtesy of the ego.

How do past memories or future ideas prepare one to know now? If not with direct experiencing, witnessing of what is real in the now, how would one see True Nature? Who one truly is can no more be defined or named than can Divinity and the universe. Since the mind or ego itself is a complete fiction, how can it plead anything but blatant ignorance? Hindu spiritual teacher Nisargadatta Maharaj (1973) clarifies: "My not knowing was in itself knowledge of the fact that all knowledge is ignorance, that "I do not know" is the only true statement the mind can make" (p. 392).

All true witnessing of the ego-mind begins in awakening to this present moment and experiencing "what is." Peter Fenner (2001), a former Tibetan Buddhist monk, takes not-knowing a step further in admitting that, although there is nothing to know, one should go ahead and experience the unknown. This is to approach experience with no interpretations, meaning or understanding. In this stance there is nothing that can be known about the unknown, including who we truly are. As no eye can see itself, so no one can know who one truly is. Here dwells the mystery for all ages. One gets off the merry-go-round of endless working on, getting through, figuring things out, getting more done, and moving on so what can emerge is life itself, and not having to change anything about it. Who could imagine that such a scary emptiness could be so rich, full and freeing? Who is open to experience not-knowing being aware of itself? Experiencing the unknown seems to require nothing less than a through-going deprogramming the cult of the ego-mind.

It has rung true in experience that Truth and not-knowing completely stop the mind. Look for yourself since each is beyond all concepts, thoughts and beliefs. The moment "I don't know" is acknowledged, verbally or inside one, conceptualization in all its disguises tends to no longer work, appears irrelevant and loses our interest. In this timeless full stop, notice the Truth of I AM

is unveiled in a complete absence of the I-concept or me. The intriguing work of cultural anthropologist, Carlos Castaneda (1972), seems somehow fitting and germane. Castaneda describes “not-doing” as necessary for “stopping the world” as a part of his shamanic training with his teacher Don Juan. This witnessing act serves to deconstruct ego assumptions of certain knowing and point to nondual uncertain not-knowing. For Castaneda, pointers to “not-doing” are being without doing, explaining, or drawing upon beliefs and having a whole body feeling of the world as a single holistic perception. “Not-doing,” or not doing what you know how to do, is done by the body in a natural motion, and bypasses the mind. He portrays not-doing as the first step toward the existential man accruing power, and no amount of rational and reasonable thought can begin to explain what it is. Castaneda describes “stopping the world” as a way of collapsing the world as we know it through stopping of thought and surrendering a system of conditioned beliefs he calls the “world-construct,” an organizing grid projected onto external reality.

This author and psychologist has had opportunities to test out ‘stopping the world’ in opening up not-doing and witnessing though intense inhabited presence and deconstructive inquiries. At moments when a client exhibits an authentic readiness to look deeply and witness habitual ways the world is seen, what is discovered is the culturally conditioned mind with its system of known beliefs holding this paradigm together. Then, the client can engage in a process of de-conditioning and deprogramming from the ego-mind’s apparent dominance and open access to aware not-knowing, then aware knowing and True Self.

Guiding clients through witnessing the mind’s images of their parents, that is, their parental introjects, has offered clients the freedom to see their parents as flesh-and-blood human beings, warts, failings, clay feet, and blind spots, as well as talents, abilities, genius and brilliance, each for just what he or she is. In doing this clients can make the inner shifts and take the outer actions to begin making peace with their parents. With taking steps to heal the wounded images and perceptions of key people in our lives, this often opens up a growing willingness and interest to be of service to the very people we are connected to, having realized just how deeply hurt and angry, misunderstood and wounded they are.

Buddhists honor right action that naturally springs forth from the union of not-knowing and nonjudgmental witnessing within each present moment. To bravely acknowledge not-knowing is a gargantuan risk since it turns the ego’s world of worry, guilt, separation, and specialness on its head. To admit to not-knowing is to develop the strength, maturity and humility to acknowledge the prevalence of chance events, randomness and incomplete information throughout life as we experience it on earth.

A shedding of the false self’s supposed knowing and tapping into witnessing not-knowing in presence can be seen in several ways. Whenever the ego-mind is spotted and seen for just what it is in apparently knowing what it clearly does not know and is incapable of knowing, it dissolves and disappears. Simply asking “Who?,” as in “Who desires?,” “Who fears?,” “Who worries?,” “Who is angry?” and “Who wants to control?” when strong emotional states come forth and, briefly pausing, pulls back the veil on who one is following and allowing to run the emotional show of their life in that moment. These questions only make sense within the context of a belief in a separate self wanting or seeking something. In this very moment all is

deconstructed and what is real is rediscovered. For example, one middle-aged female client who chronically upset herself over perceiving verbal feedback from her husband as irritating and insulting was asked, “Who is irritating you?” and “Who is insulting you?” and “Who is making another responsible?” These questions helped her see the ego-mind playing the role of victim and served as a therapeutic springboard for the release of resentment, taking offense and signing another up to behave in some fashion, and for enhanced growth in her marriage.

Another illustration of this shift in perception is when the mind puts negative judgments onto what is, thinking one really knows. One can ask someone being judgmental from the space of presence with witnessing, “For whom is it hard?,” “Who is depressed or upset?,” and “Who thinks it knows?” Having built a fine therapeutic rapport allows an opportunity for the client to see who is being listened to and followed. In the afterglow, brilliant, clear silence prevails. Several clients have also found it helpful to ask, “Am I reacting or responding?” and “Would I rather be right or happy?,” then watch which is accurate in actions. This serves as an acid test to highlight whether a given action, thought or feeling experience derives from the mind’s conditioned reactivity, or from operating out of apparent choice drawing upon fine judgment and skillful means in presence. Openly accepting accurate feedback over “what is,” now within aware not-knowing, is often experienced as a step in embodying who one truly is. When you can humbly acknowledge that you don’t fully understand, then you’re free to receive new information and engage in flexible self-inquiry. In bringing an open mind, body, heart, spirit and Awareness you rise above the ‘personal I’ that takes all things personally. Out of this inner space arises the wellspring of all possibility. While alternatives exist in thinking, a new possibility does not exist in thought; it is purely experienced within as an aware not-knowing vision of the present. Within the aware space beyond ego is the bright light of Awareness itself. Witnessing consciousness illumines everything.

Not-knowing Opens the Gate to Service

A great benefit of cultivating an attitude of not-knowing emerges in it naturally calls forth and opens the gate to service. This theme is investigated through the prisms of invention, failure, surrender, curiosity, self-discovery, disasters, volunteering, meeting clients where they are, and clinical examples.

Those offering service in innovation and invention know the priceless value of not-knowing. Call it persistence, indefatigability, grit, or sheer stick-to-itiveness; one cannot overrate the ability to stay constructively engaged in witnessing a challenge with a receptive valuing of not-knowing along with a vision already whole and complete in the present moment without needing to believe anything. Where would humankind be without people who possess such qualities? One honest, accurate answer is in the dark. Thomas Alva Edison tested over 1,600 substances before finding tungsten to be effective in holding an electric charge in a vacuum tube, better known as the incandescent light bulb (Josephson, 1959). Edison is reputed to have said he had not failed, only found 10,000 ways it wouldn’t work. In a workable structure of discipline, imagination and intuition trump worldly knowledge time after time.

While it is suggested that not-knowing organically invites being of service, not-knowing hardly guarantees success and, in fact, equally invites and welcomes apparent failure. Paradoxically, it's purely by failing well that the space equally opens to succeed beautifully. Said differently, seeming breakdowns are precisely what allows for genuine breakthroughs. A seeker or inventor who clings to a specific outcome or identity almost guarantees failure. One fails repeatedly and spectacularly well when one holds tight to some belief or memory, experience or dream, or takes a position (often filling in the blanks negatively in fearfully assuming the worst). In surrendering what is not, that is, all conceptualizations, projections, past memories and future expectations, one discovers life as itself, flowing in equanimity, within one's own exquisite order, natural happiness, all in presence. To acknowledge one doesn't know is not a weakness; rather, it is a powerful strength that offers a view from outside the ego's self-righteousness and points to Truth seen inside witnessing consciousness. Not-knowing in the realm of universal spirituality as well as religion can be perceived as applied service, stewardship and fellowship to life, which can progressively evolve into a rich deep realization and a fully embodied Original Nature.

The inherent curiosity and stimulation inside of not-knowing draws us outward to consider others' needs ahead of our own, therein revealing ourselves to ourselves and changing us in unforeseen and surprising ways. It is a common observation among those who regularly volunteer that the act of giving is the gift received by the giver. Further, in being of aid to another you get to really know people, their circumstances and aspirations, assets and challenges, commonalities and peculiarities, all powerful life lessons that inform one of the diversity, strengths and vulnerabilities of human beings, and enhances self-awareness. Being of help to another tends to chip away at the ego-mind's narcissism and selfishness, and simultaneously broadens and deepens appreciation, connection and loving-friendliness.

The heart and essence of not-knowing is the ushering in of authentic service in a multitude of forms, all of which can open up and help develop a direct experience of appreciation and gratitude of the humanity of our fellow human beings. One illustration comes in the wake of the 1985 devastating earthquake in Mexico in which 10,000 people died and the world-famous Spanish Tenor Plácido Domingo lost four dear relatives. Domingo helped assist rescue efforts by digging through the rubble looking for survivors in addition to raising millions of dollars through numerous benefit concerts in support of those who were its victims, those with AIDS and survivors of other natural disasters. How could anyone go through such an experience and offer repeated support without it changing one?

When anyone "comes from" bringing authentic not-knowing, how can one not discover the condition of humanity and the world that is right here-and-now? Seeing the unmet need prompts many people to volunteer services, whether reading to the blind, tutoring students, helping in hospitals or offering support to the infirm, challenged and destitute. Simple acts of service come directly out of awakened not-knowing, such as holding a door open for another, letting another go first, picking up something another dropped, offering a smile or being a welcoming, kind presence. Seeing social injustice, lack of sovereignty and unequal opportunities along with all forms of abuse of power have served as catalysts for many people to assertively speak up, protest and engage in acts of social activism to provoke change in the public and

private spheres worldwide. In large and small ways, seeing from the awareness of not-knowing allows Life to convey what is important to offer and be receptive to respond. Not knowing prompting curiosity, stimulating dialogue and service can regularly arise in the therapeutic enterprise. Even factoring in a wealth of diagnostic and therapeutic knowledge, abilities, strategies and healing approaches, the therapist who embraces not-knowing remains present and aware of all communicated verbally and non-verbally by the client along with their own direct experience, feelings and associations that arise for the therapist. Dwelling in the space of not-knowing powerfully helps keep an open Awareness to the beckoning of life itself and the infinite possibilities in each moment.

Therapists who include not-knowing and bring the intention to be of service to their clients may have little idea what direction the therapy session(s) is going, or exactly what therapeutic approaches can be most fitting and effective for a given client since all is in flux on this relative plane. Because all healing comes directly from Truth, therapists and healers don't have to "know" what they are doing. Attuning to Truth, the client already can be aware of everything, as can the therapist, facilitating useful contribution and service. Reputedly, navigators of large airlines and ships usually are 99% of the time somewhat off-course and, with repeated competent slight corrections, arrive at their destinations virtually 100 percent of the time. Is this analogy any different than effective therapy? Or vibrant living?

Within this not-knowing milieu of therapy, the therapist can be available and vulnerable to dance with the client on numerous levels that directly respond to the client in this moment and be of relevant practical service. Clinical examples of not-knowing opening life transformation and true service are ubiquitous. The therapist simply saying something innocuous like, "No one knows everything you know, and this goes for this therapist as well," or "What does anyone absolutely know with their minds?," or just "What do I know?," serve as a welcoming opening and forum for the client's own inquiry, discovery and illumination since now they are freed to pause, watch and see for themselves, no longer under the direct or implied tutelage of an authority figure who seemingly knows better.

Another not-knowing version is to sometimes add saying "I don't know" to a conceptual or evaluative comment, whether something is good or bad, what you should or shouldn't do, and who you think you are or aren't. Some examples: "Improving study skills is good to boost your grades, and I don't know," or "You should eat less and lose weight to be healthier, and I don't know," or even "You are so well intentioned and equally so self-defeating with this project, and I don't know." True empowerment, beyond all the nonsense about taking power, points to the ability to tap internal resources in counting on yourself as your own authority. What greater gift and service can we offer...and what do I know?

Living Truth, the Defining Quality of Aware Not-knowing, Sets One Free

If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8: 31-32)

It is suggested that Truth, albeit the pointing to Truth since no one can know truth but can only

be truth, serves as a defining quality inside of aware not-knowing. Exploring the innumerable expressions of living Truth emerges as the heart of understanding not-knowing since both are in the Absolute realm and are nothing else than our True Nature. The word Truth is used here not in the sense of an absolute truth (e.g., here is the truth) or some relative truth (e.g., that may be your truth, but here is my truth). Truth is seen as being what lives, is real, palpable and expresses itself through actions in this moment, one's inseparable connection to the fabric of life, our ground of being and the universe. Said another way, Truth can equally be seen as an expression of what shows up in life as effective, as in the immanently practical wisdom of doing whatever works, a view credited to Shakyamuni Buddha.

Some interpret the quote above as Truth itself will set you free, not realizing it is the put-into-action speaking, acting and living truth that sets one free. Paraphrasing a Zen saying: to know and not to do is not yet to fully know. Before exploring Truth by pointing to what it isn't, consider what masks the imposter "I" reliably and predictably uses to obscure aware not-knowing of Truth. Interestingly, the dreamed up ego-mind appears to unrelentingly construct artificial problems, issues and troubles over almost everything, including Truth, and understandably so given it seemingly being anathema to presence, honesty and truth telling. Of course, once the dreamer is revealed and seen, the dream as a social construction of reality collapses. Truth is neither one nor two; it is only emptiness. Want the Truth? When you talk with a child less than eight years of age who hasn't learned to lie, listen to raw unrehearsed honesty. Be in awe and surprise. Look for yourself to see if Truth is "what is" lived right here and right now. Speak truth, live truth, act truth—all point to action as most revealing truth.

Does Truth have anything to do with knowing anything? Or rather, is Truth all in the aware not-knowing or, more specifically, seeing through and releasing all that is false purely leaves what was always here and present—the simple, plain, ordinary lived Truth in action ever unveiled as "what is so." Truth is not hidden given that it is on broad display everywhere; it is purely our eyes that are closed. Spiritual teacher Nirmala reputedly stated that while a self-image necessitates very high maintenance, Truth requires very low maintenance. In this author's experience, lies require great effort and struggle, just as adults experience daily stress or resistance to change and what is. A most striking contradiction in our society is the fundamental disconnect between idolizing truth as the golden path for success in anything, while showing a thorough-going myopia, disdain and hypocrisy for Truth in everyday living. Does speaking and acting inside Truth know either disconnection or hypocrisy? With Truth as the defining quality inside of aware not-knowing, what exactly is the naked Truth? What is more primary and undeniable than one's existence and the actions in one's life? And what authority is necessary in one's experience of that existence? Isn't every element in one's existence natural and self-evident? One holds the truths of one's existence and experience of life as self-evident, since no evidence is necessary and no authority is required. Truth needs no defense or proof in being self-evident. Is it any different with aware not-knowing or who we truly are?

In the context of Truth as the key pointer to aware not-knowing, Ramesh Balsekar (1999) writes: "...the only Truth is I Am—I exist. That is the *only* Truth. Everything else is a concept." (p. italics in original) Since truth and aware not-knowing are concepts as well, each as a concept cannot be Truth and here is a litmus paper test revealing what counts and does not count as Truth. Underscoring Buddha's right perspective, Balsekar reminds us his spiritual teacher

Nisargadatta Maharaj repeatedly said, “Understanding is all.” Balsekar (1989) and his protégé Wayne Liquorman (2009) see the final or ultimate understanding as seeing through the illusion of duality and an absence of ego-mind’s false claim to authority / authorship, unveiling one’s impersonal, always here, True Nature reflecting Truth.

Understanding, as used here, is not the analytical reduction of the thinking mind that breaks down things to figure out how components work together, but is closer to transcending all thought and entering a realm of intuitive inner seeing and heartfelt inspiration. Aboriginal peoples, artists and mystics recognize alternative ways to know as universal timeless Truth. Letting chaos, ambiguity and uncertainty simply be is a key to self-organize and usher in creativity, which is reminiscent of the ancient metaphor of a glass of muddy water being left to sit naturally settles the impure, leaving only clear water. This sense of understanding points to the ancient meaning to “stand under,” noted earlier, as in a realized sage’s direct experience of life in this moment, Truth again as lived action. The union of who understands and what is understood indeed can reveal understanding itself or pure Awareness, without any person showing up. When having answers to all questions loses its valence and power to attract, then a deepening sense of peace can flow since there is nothing left to figure out. Any analytical effort to make sense of this understanding is only a hindrance to it. Examples help clarify. Spiritual teacher and author Jiddu Krishnamurti (1929) noted: “I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect.” Nondual writer and teacher Jean Klein (1984) confirms: “There is no system, method or technique by which to approach reality, it reveals itself when all technique and systems fail and the futility of volition is seen.” In both of these examples, innocent surrender arises that releases the mind and all questions and answers dissolve.

Balsekar (1999) noted that ego attempts to attain certain knowing by repeating affirmations or using formulas is as futile as any effort to realize the Tao, and amounts to: “putting legs on a snake” because “everything is Tao.” Trying to intentionally concentrate or give unnecessary explanation may be likened to adding a beard on a eunuch or gilding the lily—all unnecessary and a supposed Zen sin. The Talmud reputedly states that when you add to truth, you subtract from it. Adding anything on top of Awareness itself and see if it immediately devolves into the fictive ego’s content of awareness. The ego spouting its story to another ego seems to have little interest in aligning with Truth. When actions and communication honestly point to Truth, all of good will naturally tend to breathe, relax and be in the here-and-now. These signs are remarkably accurate pointers to true knowing being present.

Lao Tzu’s (2008) recent translation of the ancient Tao te Ching suggests that being is born of not being. In like manner, knowing and not-knowing are inseparably one, given that all aware knowing naturally grows out of aware not-knowing. You can neither know nor not know who you are. You can only be who you truly are. Only by acknowledging how much you do not know, can you begin to see how much you do know.

Cultivating a “don’t know mind,” also called a beginner’s mind, no mind and pure perception, is a keystone in Zen Buddhist tradition. The recognition of our unawareness is the launching pad to appreciate not-knowing. Since ego-mind only gums things up with endless layers of beliefs, polarities and attachments, paradoxically the less you think you know, the more

freedom you truly have to not-know, know and live. With the mind and its fixations less in the way, Truth in action shines forth.

The more one is willing to witness and free the ego while accepting not-knowing, the more the bounty of the universe opens up for true knowing in action. Paradoxically, not-knowing is the very doorway to actual knowing and affirmative knowledge. The reverse is also true: the more one believes in all the data stored in the chattering mind, the more closed-minded one is. Thus, say “Yes” and the ego-mind disappears; say “No” and the ego-mind appears to get stronger. To make assumptions, hold prejudgments and carry beliefs block being open to now. No one can think and truly listen, be present and aware at the same moment. Hold attachments and jump to foregone conclusions sabotage seeing what is. Say, “I already know” and end any possibility of learning or growth. Good luck in having a constructive dialogue with anyone who thinks they already know and are surely right in their mind!

Not-knowing is an acknowledgment of the limits of worldly knowledge through a willingness to shed interpretations, theories and causal explanations. Not-knowing is a conscious release of beliefs, labels and judgments of the divided mind. To not know sheds all false pride and opens up an authentic faith and humility that is unbounded Truth. To not know is to suspend both belief and disbelief in this moment. Adyashanti (2009) calls enlightenment “a demolition project.” A process of subtraction, renunciation and surrender in knowing who one is not, opens a spacious stillness for seeing who one is. To surrender knowing opens up aware not-knowing, which is a clearing to truly know in lived actions.

To be aware of the limitations of the thinking mind is a humbling, healing balm for fear and pride, inferiority and arrogance. Mystic Jiddu Krishnamurti calls inner not-knowing the unguarded intellect and reputedly notes that to know is to be ignorant, while not to know is the beginning of wisdom. Not-knowing makes no claims to anything. When one makes peace with not-knowing by accepting what is without resistance or paralyzing personalization, one surrenders to a deeper knowing. What illustrations serve as signals of the Truth of aware not-knowing, and its absence? Spiritual teacher Adyashanti (2009) offers an aware not-knowing question to those who coordinate his satsangs and retreats when they hit a stuck place: What is the truth here? Apparently the innocent act of raising this inquiry seems to cut through all ego-mind fluff of considerations and qualifications, judgments and comparisons, to reveal the only matter that actually does matter—Truth in action. The kerfuffle over nothing usually disappears as quickly as it appeared. A relevant example, whether true or apocryphal, is of Mahatma Gandhi being asked at a news conference how he would explain his apparent flip-flop in taking a diametrically opposite view than he had espoused the week before. Apparently he paused and grinned before answering: “I learned something since last week.” Gandhi was aware of what he knew and did not know, and this was completely disarming and gave no hot-breaking news story for the press.

Another illustration: calling all that is false and phony, inauthentic and disingenuous, often with the use of the word “bullshit,” has on more than one occasion opened the space for heart-felt speaking and pointing to Truth. Such blunt boldness in verbal behavior has the shock value of a loud wake-up call to come out of our mind’s habitual somnolence and arrogant self-righteousness. Often giving aware attention to the not-knowing reveals who is speaking, whether

operating in aware or unaware not-knowing. Aware not-knowing is an opening for true knowing. It is fine to call things as they are, whether it is an excuse, lie, rationalization, argument or avoidance, and it is quite another to do it through respectful queries that engage one's presence and witnessing the wounded ego. Without all of this in place by having built a fine, resilient therapeutic rapport and working alliance, you may not particularly care for the client's upset and blowback. In fact, you may not see this client again.

Still another example is a mid-thirties woman in therapy, once a solid therapeutic relationship and alliance had been built. When inquiries were offered that clearly asked her to look at her ego-mind's ever more subtle self-defeating maneuverings, she was initially upset, angry and disappointed in herself and our work to date. She later mentioned experiencing a strong urge to bolt out of the office. This scene was repeated three or four times in the course of our work. Each time she was not only able to bear the feedback, but was surprisingly delighted by the end of the session or came to the next session to discover another way the mind was using under-the-radar methods to seemingly hijack her life, and equally the opportunity to own and live her own life. Afterwards, she released or surrendered being positional / attached and reclaimed being aware of all the hijinks. The Truth of aware not-knowing when she saw herself in actions following the mind was freeing for her in being herself in aware knowing.

Not-knowing is Silent Divine Mystery and Grace

And existence is not only unknown — it is unknowable. The mind is the known, meditation is to stand in the unknown, and existence is the unknowable — which always remains like a horizon, just bordering on the unknown. The closer you come, the further away it recedes. It is always a rainbow, and you can never catch hold of it. — Osho, (1977, p. 201)

It would appear to this author that purely the fact of one's sheer existence or "I exist" and not-knowing being aware of its own not-knowing, have the possibility of actually being knowable by human beings on this dualistic earthly plane. All else is filtered and distorted through the ego-mind's lenses into a dreamscape, with the possible exception of times of taking off these myopic ego lenses in witnessing presence itself. Ultimately, Truth and all in the Absolute realm, can never be known; you can only be, live and experience itself. In the above quote, Osho describes existence as unknowable like a horizon, ever receding further the closer you approach. Ironically, it is the rich, deep and sustaining "I don't know" with no person here that opens presence and witnessing to experience glimpses of the ineffable Absolute, not-knowing and not-knowable as it is, breaking through the relative world.

What exactly constitutes the realm of the known or knowledge? A theme expressed by numerous spiritual teachers, holy people and realized beings captures the distilled essence: all that can be known is in the empirical, phenomenal, relative world of time and space. There are many Zen teaching stories that portray a Zen master whacking, hitting or throwing something at a student who had figured it all out, often stating the world was only a dream. The abrupt, shocking feedback conveyed a key pointer: the relative world is real enough on its own terms, while the mind's lenses, perceptions and separate "I" are the dream. And can the known and

knowledge ever unfold or bring forth the unknown? Or is it that you can't get to the unknown from the known, only known from known and unknown from unknown?

Fenner (2003) contributes to this discussion by distinguishing what we don't know and can be known, such as learning a foreign language, musical instrument or new skill, from not-knowing because there is nothing to know, as in knowing nothing. The former not-knowing is a matter of not having learned a facility or skill set in the relative world, and can lead to feelings of inadequacy and frustration. The latter form of not-knowing points to the unconditioned mind or self and is experienced as liberating given that it frees us from any need to know anything different than we already do in this moment of living. In a way, this form is complete since it inhabits the space of a deep acceptance that there is no object of knowledge, nothing to be worked through, resolved, or acted upon. We experience this space of being a nobody with nothing to know as whole, complete, integrated and fulfilled, and carry on in life.

Look for yourself: in this empirical world, is it possible to know Love, Truth, Freedom, Divinity, Peace or any quality in the Absolute realm? Are not all the verities in the Absolute beyond the mind and its capacities, including who we truly are? Doesn't the passionate juice, verve and panache life energy continuously exudes have their root in the unknowable, the indefinable and the unpredictable? Are not all of these qualities at the heart of the mysteriousness of life and irresistibly attracts our attention, fascination and imagination? Isn't all life and every day you open your eyes and draw breath a living miracle to not be taken for granted and, in fact, to ever more deeply appreciate and savor?

Mystery begins with what the ego-mind cannot decipher. With a separate, individual person appearing to show up, all is perceived through the filter or lenses of this separate self in time and space. Is not knowledge just the conditioning of psychological memory? Aware not-knowing is uncorrupted by memory and conditioning. All that is conceptualized or thought belongs to the realm of what is already known, a result of deductive or inductive reasoning. This is as far as the known and knowledge can lead us. Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1921,1922) knew the limits of the knowable by concluding his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* by writing: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."

Lao Tsu (2008), originator of Taoism and writer of the *I Ching* or *Tao te Ching*, asserted: "He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know" (p. 56) Life draws no conclusions. Ramana Maharshi reputedly states that silence is the only accurate expression of Truth—not the concept of silence, but silence itself. Buddha reportedly said our True Nature is glimpsed in the silence between thoughts. Isn't silence an apt descriptor for the Truth, our True Self and not-knowing as divine mystery and grace?

The realm of mystery is non-conceptual, not say-able, and not-knowable, only point-able at best. Mystery draws attention and evokes curiosity over any inexplicable matter, enigma or puzzle. The mind is most at home in what is called the Apollonian, that is, logic, well-ordered reason and justifications, and eschews what is termed the Dionysian, that is, disordered, unreasonable, sensuous and wild, and has the historical support of the ancient philosopher Aristotle who successfully proposed the criterion of what the reasonable person would do in any given situation as the crucible of Western law. Not-knowing as silent divine mystery surely

embraces everything without bias, including both the Apollonian and Dionysian. At the same time, it is the Dionysian, most exemplified by the work of creative artists, poets and innovative inventors, that offers voice, words, images and form to the symbolic, untamable and wild. Are not all paradoxes, that is, co-existing truths that appear to be contradictions, beautiful illustrations of the inherent mystery of life that befuddles the ego? A contradiction is distinguished by falseness, such as two statements being incompatible. An example of two incompatible assertions would be the earth revolves around the sun and the earth is the center of the universe. Another pair is the world is round and the world is flat. But the deepest truths often can only be expressed through paradox—two seemingly contradictory assertions that are both true from differing perspectives or measured differently, both-and awareness. For example, an electron is both a wave and a particle, depending on how, when and under what conditions an electron is measured. Alternatively, simply see the ocean and waves. The ocean expresses in a form called waves, and the wave is nothing other than the totality of the ocean. Consciousness is like the ocean, and waves are like oneself and everything that is a part of the ocean.

Contradictions or incompatible statements are a sure sign of what is false, while what is real is without contradiction and often paradoxical. Zen master Shunryu Suzuki reputedly said that what is not paradoxical is not true. Of course, being able to withstand the psychic tension in holding the question and its apparent contradictory answers is a source of depthless agitation for the fictive ego. The ability to tolerate the ambiguity of multiple and simultaneous truths that are irreducible is the hallmark of the great unifiers of history—William Shakespeare, Abraham Lincoln, George Bernard Shaw and Walt Whitman to name a few. When there is room for paradox, arguments dissolve and disappear in co-existing truths. At core, a universal common ground is revealed in a not-one not-two, interconnected undivided vastness.

Can true artistry and creativity burst forth from anything other than the silent stillness of aware not-knowing and the unknown, that is, divine mystery? In any momentary experience of joy and wonder, innovation and creation, connection and communion, doesn't one feel awe and astonishment over the sheer mystery of life? Does the aware not-knowing of silent divine mystery in the disappearing of all knowing and knowledge, in the deepening appreciation and bliss of being free to surrender into flowing with everything, release raw creativity? Isn't it out of the space of feeling and loving existence right now and not-knowing it, that the mystery of human experience in this world blossoms?

Inhabiting the direct experience of the world within a being is to feel all flowing within and through you, for with no subject, there is no object, so only the actual facts and actions remain as what you actually experience. For example, birds singing, a friend's speaking, and music playing all occur within, with no object appearing outside. Is there either a doer or a non-doer, a witness or a non-witness, a meditator or a non-meditator? If only looking occurs with no looker and no object to look upon, projection dissolves in no one doing this projecting and no object of projection.

More illustrations: dancing with no dancer, listening with no listener, doing with no doer, and seeing with no seer. There is only dancing, listening, doing and seeing with no subject in the space of aware not-knowing and knowing, that is, True Nature. All these worldly outcroppings describe the process of de-identification, a spontaneous letting go of all false identities, and being

conscious and aware of what remains—existence itself. No representation, whether as subject or object, arises in authentic not-knowing, the only true knowing and that which evokes the vast divine mystery of life itself.

Words can often cloud and not illuminate what is. Nothing communicated with words, including this writing, is the Truth or aware not-knowing. In a way, the very act of our using words to point at Truth undermines and disappears Truth. At best any contents of Awareness can only be a beacon to the context of Awareness itself. There is no way to Truth and Truth is not the way. Is clarity of perception a window into the formless, timeless, causeless, infinite eternity of being? Is Truth sustaining, unwavering, and uncompromising? Poet Yosy A. Flug (2007) captures the essence of what Truth isn't: "Truth is what remains after the total extinction of all beliefs and hopes, fears, ideas and convictions; but first of all forsaking of all distinctions" (poem #34).

Pause, watch and see if this is true and resonates in seeing the possible congruence of Truth and aware not-knowing. Underlying the phenomenal field of forms reveals the field of Awareness itself. Awareness itself sees through the conditioned mind identified with form and freely admits not-knowing.

Illustrations of Truth as silent divine mystery are ubiquitous. A nondual colleague mentioned a technique he uses that seems to inhabit the space of Truth as silent divine mystery. He sits with clients facing some life dilemma staring at a lighted candle together with a sense of timelessness that comes with presence. Within a safe context of mutual aware not-knowing and the silent meditative union with the grace of a lit candle, what tends to bubble up can be quite uncanny. He shares that it is like whisperings from the unconscious, intuition and immanent Divinity arise, and usually astute ones that are quite on-target at that, and are unconditionally welcomed by all present. How can simply sharing the space of presence looking at a lighted candle with another being evoke insights and therapeutic shifts? The mystery is within every one of us, within the majesty of divine loving mystery.

Another manifestation of aware not-knowing as divine mystery arose at a seminar. A few decades ago this writer had the supreme good fortune to take every seminar psychologists Jack and Helen Watkins (2011) gave when they made yearly visits to Southern California. Helen was a master therapist, practiced inhabiting "the therapeutic self" and offered emotional resonance with clients in which she co-feels (co-suffers and co-enjoys) and co-understands in a common moment of "withness." Resonance is a temporary type of identification in which the therapist actually experiences inwardly the same feelings as the client, even if in mini-form. Resonance is necessarily balanced with objectivity. At one seminar Helen mentioned one of the most unusual therapy processes she had ever encountered that appears to exemplify aware not-knowing. She shared how a woman had arrived for her first appointment and simply sat in silence, so Helen calmly joined her in the silence. After the appointed time, the clients took care of the charges. This pattern continued for ten sessions. In concluding their therapy together, the client profusely thanked Helen for the marvelous therapy. Helen didn't know what to make of it, yet with a twinkle in her eyes figured that the woman received what she wanted—the silent, supportive space to work things through for herself. Helen had a knack of joining her clients with an

unfailing confidence that healing would occur and that she could aid clients to mobilize their inner strengths, even in accepting deep silence. Their sharing space together embodied the Truth of aware not-knowing, seemingly evoking aware knowing for the client, all in silent mystery.

Divine grace, while a mystery of galactic proportions, also can be considered in human terms as unmerited favor, Divinity's free no-strings-attached action for the benefit of its human expressions. In other words, grace is unearned favor from Divinity—it just comes, unbeckoned, unmerited. Grace bears no need to convince and needs nothing from us, but silently calls for our loving cooperation. Grace arises in the complete absence of “you” and “I”, that is, it eclipses any person in presence itself as being grace. What is more flowing and free than grace? Can the salvation many faiths attribute to divine grace be purely a return to the divine fold of Truth? Divine grace naturally exudes what it is—an effortless shining beauty, total openness, and complete relaxation of all defenses and ego involvement. It is of another realm. Divine grace ultimately is a gift that remains a mystery at heart.

At the center of the mystery of divine grace for those who are so called by it would seem to be an intense interest in Truth, the core defining quality of aware not-knowing. Is Truth knowable or simply point-able like a signpost? Once anyone becomes clear that it is the mind's conditioned lenses human beings typically see everything through, the answer is obvious. Self-evident and spontaneous, Truth remains ever-present in pure unconditioned and unconditional surrender to everything and everyone.

Grace timelessly springs forth in nature bringing beauty and complete relaxation. Like Truth and all within the Absolute, grace has no agenda or need to meet, nothing to say, do or accomplish. Grace is ever new and effortless, innocent and non-manipulative, as a cat stretching, children laughing and playing, a flower opening when it will, the sun or moon rising or setting as they do. What is more trusting, open and loving than the grace inside of everything? Isn't grace another way to point at Divinity and Truth? Are moments of shared human experience, whether breaking bread with another, sharing one's heart and direct social engagement opportunities for divine communion, for an inter- penetrating and inter-being of our hearts and having grace bloom within Divinity?

Ultimately can the aware not-knowing expressed in divine grace be any more or less than a return to who we truly are, that is, Love, Joy, Wholeness, Peace, and Natural Happiness? Are moments of shared brotherhood and sisterhood, sometimes called deep fellowship, friendship and emotionally heartfelt resonance, any different? That is, what if God is one of us? Is greeting every single being in moment-to-moment living as Divine or as an expression of the Divine, anything but the experience of aware not-knowing manifesting as vast divine mystery? How an extraordinary emotionally satisfying and completing experience plays out in the everyday play of ordinary reality is an intriguing mystery as Awareness joyfully finds itself, facilitates healing and wholeness, ever unveiling and being aware of itself. Would aware divine grace have it be any different as it ever creatively unveils awareness of itself?

Discussion and Conclusion

As strange, curious and amazing as it may well be, the virtual reality of the ego-mind, with its proclivity for perceiving dualism and polarities everywhere, appears to be just as willing to be attached to ignorance and what you don't know as it is to thinking and believing you do know. So long as you are for or against anything, including knowing or not-knowing, isn't this just another ego created attachment and polarity? Are holding opinions, making distinctions and taking positions any different? Does it matter whether something is known or unknown, whether there is knowing or not-knowing, once it is realized that each of these are only ego-created polarities to become preoccupied with, dream up beliefs and identities about, and typically cling to agendas and fixations regarding?

Doesn't the ego-mind tend to regularly use anything to seemingly construct perceptions of drama that seem to keep us under its thumb, that is, keep stirring the pot, riding the wave and robbing the treasury, all while we snooze away in unawakened comfort? At the same time, ego as tool can be wonderfully helpful and practically useful. Does it not behoove us to stay in relaxed, aware, eternal vigilance of ego attachments, which are really nonsense and only distort and falsify the object of that clinging? Seeing through all projections as emanating from the false self and synthesizing polarities into a transcendental awareness, Jung's transcendent function, reveals what is—life living us right now.

Since all understanding is only revealed within an appreciation of some context, this initial theme of not-knowing has a context that commands attention. While apparent sense or meaning comes forth once establishing a context, it is only the phantom ghost of the ego-mind that makes up all of this as a story or dream, and also can function as the working mind serving as a helpful tool to navigate and thrive in the world. So what is the context of not-knowing, other than not-knowing being aware of itself? Once a context is seeable, much like a gestalt with reversible pictures, clarity in this awareness spontaneously arises and with it obvious direction. This first attention goes by many names, such as beginner's mind, Zen mind, no-mind and pure perception. An experiential awareness in presence of the infinite nature of not-knowing in its full creative expression is not so much frightening, as it is inviting.

The second theme is the recognition that egos are only threatened by not-knowing. It is suggested that only from the space of witnessing in the complete absence of "you" can the incalculable value of aware not-knowing be seen. This awareness helps account in part for the ego-mind's unwavering fixation and attachment to having opinions, points-of-view, philosophies and knowing, and further being right about them! Not-knowing cannot be tolerated by the ego since that upsets its world. The ego-mind's being enraptured with second hand information or an intellectual understanding of not-knowing was explored as undermining direct first hand experience of life living itself in truth. Whenever not-knowing is discounted, it is clear Truth is not on-line in this moment. It is equally clear who is activated with the agenda of getting something or somewhere. Ways to see through and naturally shed the ill-fitting skin of some hocus-pocus controlling self, while honing a healthy ego purely as a workable tool in getting thing done in the empirical world, opens up not only functional living, but acknowledging "what is so" and being who you truly are. The trick is seeing which is which.

The remarkable power of witnessing, likened to standing outside the imaginary ego-mind to see its means of operating and the falseness of its claim to authority, is the great door opener into the realm of aware not-knowing, the third theme of this paper. Given the universal experience of the mind appearing to continually be “on”, with the exception of deep sleep that is not accessible for us, it takes standing in the imaginary ego-mind’s blind spot of silent aware presence to allow a seeing of who you cannot be. Such witnessing of the mind effortlessly invites a deep surrender of the false identification with the ego-mind and all its preoccupations, judgments and conceptualizations. In this exact timeless moment a spacious opening of not-knowing can be fully accessible and on-line in awareness. Purely in witnessing presence of who we truly are can the truth of not-knowing be fully appreciated. To stand in the context of who we truly are, including aware not-knowing, is to stop the world, as fleetingly glimpsed in epiphanies, miracles, serendipity and surprising events. Castaneda’s experiential whole body, non-rational “not-doing” opening up “stopping the world” can powerfully halt our unconscious participation in the culturally conditioned ego interpretation of reality. It was noted that Buddhists honor right action that organically springs forth from the union of not-knowing and nonjudgmental witnessing inside each impermanent present moment.

One of the most outstanding qualities and contributions of aware not-knowing is how powerfully it opens up the gate to service, the fourth theme. Failurehood in open accepting presence without a shred of believing, opens the possibility of functionality and success, serving life and stewardship, to bloom in the phenomenal world. As the ego-mind’s apparent knowing unrelentingly blocks gaining access to the possibility of truly knowing anything, so seeing, appreciating and adopting aware not-knowing actively invites and whole-heartedly meets life transformation and transcendence. Of course, what does this author know? See for yourself. We’ve seen how the knowing and not-knowing are indeed one, different sides of the same coin, and how admitting unawareness actually is an opening to wise giving. When a being awakens to consciously see the human condition through the lenses of the fictive ego-mind with all of its fear-driven, survival conditioning, this very act helps dissolve and shed this imaginary interloper and gives an opening for what our True Self ever basks in—service freely offered in the most ordinary, everyday ways answering the call of Truth. This space of gentle generosity is simply what beckons or calls as needed or necessary in this living moment, nothing even remotely akin to ‘future tripping’ using agendas, goals, plans and to-do lists, although helpful as purely tools. To respond in effortless actions is described in the spiritual literature as privilege, gratitude and devotion.

The fifth theme is living Truth in action, the defining quality of aware not knowing, sets one free. Truth is used in this writing to be what is real, lives and expresses itself in what works in every moment, our inseparable ground of being. Pointers to Truth, like not-knowing, were investigated revealing that it is self-evident, low maintenance, and stands aside from the disingenuous and the disconnected. Misconceptions were deconstructed regarding Truth, not least of which is that the Truth will set you free. Truth will no more set you free than thinking and believing you are wealthy will make you rich. It is through engagement with life lived moment by moment in aware not-knowing that any being gains entry into true development in actual behavior. Isn’t Truth the flip side of not-knowing since Truth cannot ever be known? Isn’t Truth only pointed at like a signpost of the Absolute that sometimes can be glimpsed in the relative dual world as well as lived and experienced?

Standing inside the Truth of I AM and I exist were flushed out in drawing upon the ancient meaning of understanding, to “stand under,” matching the realized master’s nondual experience of emptiness, not-one and not-two, nothing and everything, neither and both. Speak, live and act truth—all undeniably point to actions as most accurately embodying truth. Truth is portrayed as beyond all words to speak and paths to walk given that you can only be, live and experience Truth. Anything added on top of Truth only distorts and blocks its pure shining resplendent radiance. All that applies to Truth in lived actions equally applies to aware not-knowing.

Finally, the sixth theme of not-knowing is silent divine mystery and grace opens up an awareness of the limits of knowing based on the already known of our conditioned mind, and further that the realm of the Absolute with all timeless qualities, such as Peace, Love and Joy, just do not fit within the common reference frame of knowing for the ego-mind. As such, silent divine mystery and grace are inherently not-knowing and not-knowable, unfathomed and unfathomable. Mystery was perceived as indefinable, unpredictable and usually paradoxical, and transcending the ego-mind’s capacity to grasp, control, organize or find meaning within, and utterly befuddling it. Silent divine grace was framed as unmerited favor from Divinity and a free divine action for the benefit of Truth’s expression, and at root a clarion call for a return to the divine fold of Love and Truth. Ever intriguing is our opportunity to continually surrender to profound peaceful acceptance of the mysterious ground of vast existence, with it being innately ungraspable and paradoxical, as humans in bodies on this blue-green marble of a planet. Awareness and appreciation of divine mystery is seen as evoking profound compassion and a sacred commonality for the human experience with all its comedy and tragedy, triumph and despair, laughter and tears, joys and sorrows, with all of this being within every one of us at all times. When all that is human is accepted and nothing human is abandoned, then divine mystery is sweetly present indeed.

Each example pointed to an embodied “withness” and intimate shared immediacy of presence, typically evoking uncanny intuitions and insights, wholeness and healing. Each one welcomed, thanked and encircled this shared moment of revelation in a warmly touching, understated and ineffable silence. One commonality across these six not-knowing themes is the naked iridescent light of the Truth shines forth in the absence of ‘you,’ ushering in a blossoming creativity. In being open to who we truly are and welcoming the unknown, creativity without intellectual thought, boredom or repetition springs forward. Here in the silent stillness of life, percolating creativity and its unique creations emerge, distinct from some cognitively planned and executed production of art. The artist within every one of us experiences the joy and natural inspiration that comes with the still silence of nondual consciousness. What emerges from these six angles on aware not-knowing is noticing that true artists can tolerate and are comfortable with paradoxical ambiguity, uncertainty, experimentation and improvisation, nothing less than life lived in each unrepeatable moment. They freely give this gift out of welcoming and thanking Truth, what true artists sometimes herald and acclaim as their Muse.

Another commonality in these six themes emerges in the realization of not-knowing being a universal human experience. When people in the field of Psychology speak of reality testing, isn’t this just another phrase for existential not-knowing in all its breadth, height and

depth, along with the more obvious concrete perceiving and experiencing in the empirical world? How can you be aware of ‘what is’ without the aware clarity of ‘what is unknown?’ If a core truth in nondual experience is full emptiness and a rich nothingness amidst all the impermanence that comes with life, then coming to peaceful terms with all the chaos, anarchy, indeterminacy, insecurity, ambiguity, uncertainty and mystery is to completely enfold not-knowing and Truth just as they are. Does this support our lives flourishing in their innate lived not-knowing messiness in being free, needless and flowing? All of this, deeply accepted, simply disappears, leaving only what always is—being at ease, within and without. At the same time, each strand or theme is the opportunity for a new, shared understanding of not knowing, including a profound compassionate acceptance of aware not-knowing and knowing.

Teacher Jean Klein (1990) poignantly asserted, “What is accepted can be known. He who accepts cannot be known. So be the accepting” (p. 267). What counts as the accepting without an acceptor? Aware not-knowing can serve as a context of protection from ego-mind’s clinging to past conditioning. Aware not-knowing also can serve as a sword to cut through all the ‘thrown’ proclivities of the mind, and act as a prudent, humble safeguard in remembering that we are not to be limited by what we think we know. Isn’t this the ultimate freedom? Reality can be experienced lightly as one cultivates openness for the new and allows what shows up as unexpected or different here-and-now to take precedence over what has been assumed to be known. College basketball coach John Wooden offers a fine pointer in reputedly saying that it’s what you know after you know it all that really counts. In expansive, resplendent nondual awareness, there is no other, separation or object outside of who you truly are in this moment. Open your eyes and the universe is born; close your eyes and the universe is no more. Everything that is truly knowable—the alpha and the omega of human experience—is purely within the mystery of oneself every moment. Truth and not-knowing are one and inseparable in the Absolute realm where all reality is whole-heartedly wide-open to accept everything.

Discovering and being aware not-knowing—the only true knowing—empowers you in seeing and inhabiting the space of Truth. Existence’s invitation is to dwell within this clearing itself through embracing everything. Joy naturally arises in the space of not-knowing. It is suggested that aware not-knowing is synonymous with Truth. Then, is it not our genuine privilege, lovely gift and grateful service to spontaneously linger in this context of not-knowing, standing in Awareness itself expressing through our mind-body mechanisms? As is now apparent, one key process interweaving across all themes is the movement from unaware not-knowing to aware not-knowing that, in turn, necessarily and sufficiently allows aware knowing to fully blossom, all in the choiceless awareness of vast existence.

As we began with an iconic ancient story, so we complete with another adapted, re-imagined and timelessly iconic Zen tale that named itself ‘My Cup Overflows’ (Reps, 1968). This tale can serve as an entryway to completely surrender to the paradoxical truth of not-knowing and aware true knowing. A widely admired and learned professor, in his mature years, developed a profound interest in the spiritual dimension and chose a holy person to be his personal teacher. He began a yearlong sabbatical by visiting his teacher who lived halfway around the world in a remote village high in the Himalayan Mountains. After an arduous trek, the professor arrived at his guru’s spiritual retreat.

His host greeted him with a smile, his face radiating love and affection. At once the professor began talking about all he had heard and read about the holy man, what he hoped to learn and his own background. After a few minutes, the holy man gently interrupted. "Please, excuse me. Shall we have some tea?" The professor nodded but went on talking about what was important to him to learn and how he wanted the holy man to instruct him.

He was interrupted again when a devotee of the spiritual leader brought in a tray holding a simple earthen pot, two cups and a beautiful flower in a vase. The holy man picked up the pot and began to pour the tea. As his guest continued to talk, the holy man filled the professor's cup to the rim, and went right on pouring. The professor cried out in surprise. "Stop! Stop! What are you doing? Don't you see that my cup is already full?" The holy man put down the teapot and looked directly into his guest's eyes. "I can teach you nothing."

At first the professor was angry and upset. Gradually this yielded to real confusion. "How come?" he asked. "I don't understand." The holy man replied, "Your mind is filled with all your ideas about me, my teachings, what you will learn, and what you think you already know. There is no room for anything else. For me to teach you anything would be like pouring tea into a cup already full." After a moment's pause he added, "For you to learn anything, you must first begin by emptying your cup."

The ancient version of this Zen story ends here. Imagine what might have happened next. Perhaps the holy man invited this professor to visit him again, if and when he desired. Perhaps days, weeks, months, or years later the professor did greet the holy man once again. And perhaps at this second encounter, the professor was quiet, demonstrating respect for what was beyond words. His attitude would now be one of genuine humility, gratitude, and reverence for living and learning.

It was clear to all that the professor may have learned that there was much he did not know. He had to empty his cup so that there was space inside himself to receive something new. The re-born professor humbly observed, "There's nothing quite like releasing what is unnecessary to allow an acceptance of what is essential." As the holy man then would naturally welcome the transformed professor to study with him, I can imagine the holy man's eyes twinkling as he declares to the professor, "Sometimes it takes losing your mind to come to your senses."

In sum, not-knowing may be likened to a well of infinite depth that surrenders everything and unveils true knowing, a joyous suchness of being, egoless ordinary reality, and timeless soulful wonder. What play and laughter arise in aware not-knowing as Awareness explores, lives and loves Awareness timelessly. If dying while alive exemplifies the art of living, then acknowledging not-knowing, while awash in the worldly ego-mind's believing it knows almost everything, to slowly reveal true knowing equally exemplifies the art of authentic aware knowing.

This writing is like the ancient mythological Phoenix being completely destroyed in flames, only to be born again out of its own ashes. Only by going through total destruction, death

and surrender of the story of ‘me’ can authentic Life itself in complete freedom be resuscitated, rediscovered and revealed anew in a renaissance of Spirit.

Saying a profound “Yes” to aware not-knowing flows into fully enfolding and surrendering to the mystery of vast existence and all the gifts it freely bestows, revealing true aware knowing. Musician John Lennon reputedly said that once you accept the unknown for what it is, then it’s all plain sailing.

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