

Concentration: The Perfection of Being

What are you doing right now? You weren't reading. You are reading now, but you weren't at that moment. Try it again. What are you doing now? By the time you finished that sentence, you had stopped reading and were busy thinking about the question. Maybe you were tapping your foot; maybe you were looking up at the ceiling. Breathing. Digesting. Wondering what the noise is in the next room. Thinking about something that happened earlier? Wondering what is coming next? Wondering where we are going with this line of thought? What are you doing now? What about now?

If you become aware of your thoughts, you'll notice that they really don't have much to do with what is going on or in front of you or in your body. Your thoughts are all over the place. How can you keep track of anything with a mind this squirrely, never mind realize enlightenment?

Do you feel lost, scattered, disorganized? Are you frequently confused about what to do? Do you take unnecessary risks? Are you a thrill seeker? Do you sometimes think you might have some sort of attention disorder? Do you have a problem finishing what you start? Do you dislike being alone? Are you undecided, easily distracted? Do you feel guilt and regret about your actions?

In the traditional Path of Perfections, the remedy for these problems is concentration, or meditation. In the most basic sense, there are two types of meditation. The first kind is analytical meditation. This is focusing your thoughts and attention on a phenomenon or problem to understand how it works. You don't need to be sitting on a pillow in a monastery to do this kind of meditation. Whether the obstacle is how to overcome the world's suffering or how to work a new computer, analytical meditation is how we understand our world every day.

The second kind of meditation is stabilizing meditation. When people think about meditation, this is the kind they imagine. In stabilizing meditation, the goal is to sit still and empty the mind or direct the attention on a single object like breath, thought, or an image for an extended period of time. With practice over many months or years, you will be able to sit still for longer and longer periods of time and focus on the object of contemplation without effort, without becoming too sleepy or too excited. You will see the object in your mind in clear detail. When you can sit without distraction from your body, your mind, or the outside world for four hours, you will have achieved something called calm abiding.

Many people get a lot of enjoyment from both kinds of meditation, and the benefits are undeniable, unless you feel like denying them. There are times in your life when a rest from the barrage of your thoughts is necessary and healthy. Meditation will help you relax and to gain the composure to view the world calmly.

But will watching your breath for hours or days necessarily help you to realize enlightenment? When you achieve calm abiding, you will see the world more clearly, like a placid sea more accurately reflects the sky than a tempestuous one. You will have the distinct ability to sit still for four hours. You will be able to picture an object clearly in your mind for hours. There is no denying this and no getting around it. If you think these skills are important to your happiness and your wellbeing, then you might look into beginning a stabilizing meditation practice. It is certainly an impressive skill, like tightrope walking or acrobatics, and requires no less concentration. But it is only a skill. Enlightenment is not a

triple axle flip with a ten-point landing or a wheelie. It isn't a trick; it is an understanding. If there had to be a misunderstanding, too bad that the world didn't believe that enlightenment could be attained by performing exciting, elaborate tricks instead of by just sitting still. That error would at be a lot more fun to watch.

Possessing the ability to concentrate is critical for any realization—to remember where you left your glasses all the way to realizing enlightenment. Without the ability to fix our minds upon an object, we would be lost both in the world and in our thoughts. Concentration is not a construction. It is the continuity of our thoughts. But the idea that you must sit, focused on an arbitrary object for hours at a time in order to realize enlightenment is a construction. It is only a belief. If you like to sit for hours, it can be your belief. If you don't, then let it go.

Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike look to the Buddha's example for a method to achieve enlightenment. He appeared to sit quietly breathing until he realized enlightenment. But you need to do more than copy his outward behavior to achieve results. If you heard that it took a Noble-prize winning author 172 days to type his masterpiece, do you think you could reproduce the product by sitting at a similar desk with a similar typewriter and randomly strike keys for 172 days? This is the way children play; they act out or pretend to do what grown-ups do by gross approximation. Do you want to pretend to realize enlightenment? Do you want appear as though you realize it with your friends or do you actually want to realize it? If you want to have actual realizations, we must look deeper than appearances.

It is difficult to even make the argument that you must be able to meditate for long stretches of time to realize enlightenment because enlightenment is not dependent on time at all. It's not like you have to practice sitting still and paying attention for four hours because enlightenment is a double feature movie that only plays once and you don't want to miss anything. It isn't a task or action that must play out over the course of time. It doesn't depend on anyone or anything else's actions. The only thing that you must wait for is your own mind.

Have you ever had a dream while dozing off in the early hours of the morning that seemed to last for hours? Then you wake up and look at the clock to find that only a few moments have passed? Think of the different ways your mind perceives time. When you are busy, it seems to fly by. When you are bored, it seems to creep along. When you are doing something you enjoy, there never seems to be enough time. When you do something you don't particularly like doing, there never seems to be a lack of it.

Think about this: How long does it take to understand something? It varies, right? Some things, you see in an instant and some, you struggle with awhile before you understand. Maybe you can't concentrate because you are distracted. Maybe you don't have the courage to look for the answer. Maybe you don't have the right information to understand what you need to understand. Maybe you have beliefs that are keeping you from looking for the answer in the right way. Maybe you are looking at the concept as something permanent, when in fact it is more transitory. But once you eliminate those obstacles, however long that takes you, if there is an answer, it usually comes pretty quickly. So it isn't really the understanding that takes so long a time to realize, but removing the obstacles from properly perceiving the problem. Realization itself happens spontaneously.

Yes, it is important to realize the impermanent nature of our thoughts and constructions. It is necessary to see for yourself how fickle your mind moves from thought to thought, to fully

comprehend the perfections of impermanence and freedom. To do this requires watching your thoughts for about thirty seconds. You have probably already done this some time in your life. If you want to continue to realize this fact over and over again, that is utterly up to you. No one will stop you.

If you want to work out how exactly two plus two equals four for the rest of your life, you are also free to do that. But you won't come up with any new answers to the problem or become some sort of expert at adding the number two to itself. You won't find anything the last time you add those numbers together that you didn't find the first time you added them together. The same goes for thought watching. If you want to analyze your thoughts or their patterns, you might learn something, but watching them go by to learn that they go by, that can be ascertained pretty quickly.

And don't lose sleep over stabilizing your mind. Don't let it become another construction that you suffer over. If concentration had to be learned in such an artificial and trying manner, then organized life would not exist. If you have ever seen a predator hunt, chase, and take down its prey, or an animal build its shelter, you understand. Even the act of sexual reproduction requires concentration, but few people have to force themselves to focus on that.

Since the death of the Buddha over two thousand years ago, humanity has been trying to realize enlightenment by the method of focused meditation. We haven't had very many success stories. A lot has changed in those years. Through the pursuit of science, we have been lucky enough to be raised, for two generations now, with the knowledge that early seekers had to figure out for themselves. We do not have to rely on belief; we can rely on our own reason. As more and more of these discoveries make it into our common knowledge, you will find that the path to enlightenment becomes less of a long arduous trek with discipline and obedience and more a brisk walk with common sense.

Over the millennia, another thing that has changed is our attention span. We are provided with more and more information that we are expected to process with greater speed and accuracy. From driving a vehicle at high velocities to keeping up with technological advances, the human mind is adapting in order to survive. Unfortunately this adaptation is carrying us further and further from the methods believed to us to achieve enlightenment.

What's more, it's getting more and more difficult to convince the world that it should devote a large amount of time solely to realizing enlightenment, when no one has seen this rare bird in hundreds of years. Enlightenment is a very real understanding, like knowing the earth as round and revolves around the sun. However, after years of disuse this insight is slipping into the realm of metaphor and mythology. Why would you dedicate years to realizing enlightenment any more than you would spend years looking for the legendary goldmines of El Dorado or Blackbeard's pirate treasure? The goals have been made to seem equally unattainable. A few people might be interested, but for the most part, everyone has something better to do than to chase a myth.

Populations are rising. This means the few who will achieve enlightenment through using calm abiding are proportionately lower than ever before. We have got to try something different, or the whole concept of enlightenment will go from being a rare bird to an extinct one. With humanity in the position to wipe itself out entirely with sophisticated weapons or environmental disaster, now more than ever, we cannot afford to lose the ability to see the world as it is. We need enlightened leaders, teachers, scientists and artist to move us through this difficult time. We can't afford to wait around until everyone can sit still for four hours at a time.

You might not be inclined to focus on a random object for four hours. This might be because there is no very good reason to drive yourself to this sort of persistence and focus. Like all difficult things, it is unnatural. But when you do something you enjoy, does anyone have to remind you to keep doing it? Does maintaining that focus require any special effort? Most people have at least one thing—working on cars, gardening, painting, reading, even playing computer games—that they do with the kind of concentration and single-pointed focus that even the most accomplished meditation master would envy, if he or she were inclined to those kinds of feelings.

Some people will argue that there is no existence of thought or conceptualization in the realization of enlightenment, so they spend their time sitting still, trying to empty their heads of thoughts. If this were the best use for a human being, then we wouldn't have bodies at all, never mind such fragile ones that can be injured so easily. If the best use for the human mind is to figure out how to cause ourselves to stop thinking, why are our brains so large? If those people argued, instead, that the best use for a tortoise was to sit still and not think, it might be easier to believe them.

To realize enlightenment, you must be able to proceed beyond your conceptual and constructed understanding to an understanding so pure that language cannot reach it; this is true. But in order to proceed beyond something, you must first reach it. If a child is never exposed to language, and grows up unable to communicate verbally, that child is not beyond language, that child is ignorant of language. You cannot go beyond a conceptual understanding of the way the world works until you have a conceptual understanding of the way the world works.

Don't become one of the casualties who never have significant realizations in their lives because, in their rush to get to ultimate reality, they abandon all consideration of their bodies and minds and give up thinking too soon. On their road trip to the land of the non-conceptual, these people abandon the car a thousand miles outside of town. And it's a long walk when you refuse to understand signs, directions, or any other logical cue. They spend eternity walking in circles, watching their thoughts pass them by.

If we think of the Six Perfections as a bridge to enlightened realization, be very aware that there are two more steps to take before you reach the other side: This realization of being, and in the next chapter, the realization of unity. Don't dive off the side of the bridge into an abyss because of some cooked-up notion you have about what it means to have perfect concentration. These are the Six Perfections, not the Four-and-a-half Perfections. After understanding so much, it would be a shame to lose you here.

Ask yourself, how will focusing on breath help you to feel like you know where you are when you are lost? How will focusing on a single object without considering the rest of your life help you to feel less scattered or disorganized? If you will not think about concepts, how can you be any less confused about what to do? If you are a thrill-seeker, perhaps meditation will help you to stop taking unnecessary risks, but only because it's hard to live dangerously when you spend most of your time sitting on a pillow. If you have an attention disorder, is fighting your mind to keep it on one object a real solution or even a possibility? If you have a problem finishing what you start, how will sitting down and not thinking help anything? If you feel guilt and regret about your actions, how will concentrating on your breathing help you to do anything except not think about the bad feelings for a few minutes?

Analytical and stabilizing meditation are actions, a source of positive feelings, but it is not an understanding that will help resolve the source of those problems, the second part of the suffering of ignorance. You can't sit there forever. As soon as you leave your meditative state, ignorance will be

there, waiting for you. We need to ask ourselves, does the suffering of ignorance arise from not studying our breath, failing to imagine pictures vividly in our minds, or not managing to sit still long enough? It simply does not. So what does it arise from?

After you realize the perfection of courage and proceed beyond the construction of fear to decide to uncover the root of the suffering of ignorance, you must thoroughly proceed beyond the rest of your constructions, too. They might be useful in your day-to-day life but you will always be their prisoner if you are unable to see beyond them. For the most part, our most basic constructions add another dimension to our awareness, but they don't really compromise our ability to understand the world. The amazing construction of language is an example of this. We don't need the word "green" to experience the color green, nor does the word itself limit our direct experience of green, even if it does enable one to over-generalize.

But not all basic constructions are so benign. There are three exceptions where basic constructions, while supremely useful in communication, organization, and survival, directly impede our realization of enlightenment by contributing to the suffering of ignorance. The first is fear, which we spoke of in the perfection of courage. While fear helps us to survive, it also is the first obstacle you will encounter in your quest to overcome ignorance. Once you move beyond fear and realize you have the courage to see the world as it is, you must finally confront your notions about two of the most basic aspects of reality that you have relied upon as constants from the beginning of your memory: time and space. Our mistaken ideas about time and space undercut our happiness and contribute to the suffering of ignorance in ways so insidious and pervading, the suffering they create is hardly recognized. We take for granted that the way we commonly think that we exist in time and space are accurate, but we just aren't looking closely enough.

In the two remaining perfections, we will realize the world without these constructions. In the perfection of being, we will realize the world without our common ideas about time. In the perfection of unity, we will realize the world without our common understanding about space. It's not as tricky as it sounds. These are not mystical, magical, or even religious realizations. Understanding them is a lot easier than sitting perfectly still for hours, and they make a lot more sense.

To eliminate the suffering of ignorance, we don't need to escape time and space and live at the center of a black hole, we just need to see beyond the illusion that our ideas about time and space form. When we can use these constructions to function efficiently in the world, and yet see beyond them to the world as it is without them, that's enlightenment.

The first half of the forked root of the suffering of ignorance is our misconception about time, and we can clear it right up by realizing the perfection of being.

What is being? What does it mean, to be? To be is to exist, to have life, or reality. Sometimes, people like to get philosophical and wonder if they do exist. And the idea is worth a few minutes of thought. What if you don't really exist? Maybe the world is just an illusion, all smoke and mirrors, and in fact, none of this—the world, your life—is real. What then? That doubt stems from a sneaking suspicion that the world is not actually as it appears to be, that there is more to the story than meets the eye. Doubt is a sign that you are using your mind. It is this intelligence and this tendency to cross-examine the universe that makes humankind what it is. When in doubt, don't just believe, keep doubting. Continue to doubt until you work out an answer that you are comfortable with.

So let's look at that particular doubt. What if the world as we know it is just an illusion? There is plenty of evidence that the world is not how it appears to be. The world appears flat. The sun appears to revolve around the earth. Appearances are deceiving. You know this. The more we learn, the more we find out that we don't know. Is there any evidence that supports the fact the world has to be exactly the way we think it is? That we are incapable of misperception and misinterpretation? Nope. We are fallible. To err is human. Chances are, not only is the world not as we think it is, but it will never be the way we think it is. We will probably never get it 100 percent right in our limited minds.

So what if none of this is real? What is real? If by real you mean possessing a physical, material existence, then you can relax, sort of. There is definitely matter involved with the existence of our world. Our bodies and the earth are made of matter, just not as much as you might think.

And what if this is all a dream? Then if it is, eventually, we will wake up. But there is no point in suffering unnecessarily, or creating unnecessary suffering either in a dream or in a waking state. Right here and now, suffering is our obstacle, so we do what we can to overcome it. If we awaken to a completely different reality, we will deal with the obstacles that we will encounter when we get there.

How we exist isn't as important as that we exist. If we are solid, semisolid, dreaming or awake, if things are as they appear to be or our minds are playing tricks on us really doesn't matter that much. Would you view your existence differently if you found humanity had copper-based rather than iron-based blood? Or if you found that we are not made of carbon at all, but some other element? Would you even care? Would it make your life more enjoyable? Or make you suffer more? What is important is that we know that at some level, in some way, we exist. And we know this because we are conscious. Even if we can't prove that we are anything more, at the very least we can see we are consciousness, and that is something.

We don't need to do anything special to exist, and it is not some skill that we need to develop. Being is not a mental construction; it is the most fundamental state attainable. The perfection of being is not the addition of anything extra to this state, but rather realizing this state as purely as possible. And to do that, you must remove from being the construction that we invariably affix to it, our concept of time.

To overcome the suffering of ignorance, having the courage to seek wisdom isn't enough; you also must have the time. Luckily, we have all the time in the world. We have the endless present moment. Commonly people think that concentration is fixing your mind on object through time, but the perfection of concentration is the realization that you exist in the present moment every moment.

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This basic realization, that you exist in a present moment, is the most difficult to comprehend. Being is so fundamental that it is easy to take it for granted, like the virtuous effort of your beating heart. Through the course of your life, you probably will not spend more than a few minutes thinking about your heart beating. But you will become instantly convinced of its importance when it stops.

Our consciousness is tied to the present moment. Our awareness can't outrun time, and it can't anchor itself and stay behind while time goes on ahead without it. We march on with time, hand in hand. But it doesn't seem that way, does it? Time seems to slip from the future right into the past, barely even grazing the present as it zips by. We always spend so long looking forward to something,

but once it arrives, it passes by quickly, and then we spend ages remembering it. Our consciousness seems to spend more time in the past and the future than in the present. How is this possible?

It's not possible at all. Unless you have some sort of time machine that no one knows about, you cannot be in the past, future, or any tense but the present. And yet we allow our minds to wander into delusions—fictitious pasts and futures—that do not exist. The past does not exist as we remember it; we only retain the interpretation of our perception. As time goes by, we often add a good dose of wishful-thinking or storytelling, until we transform that interpretation into complete fiction. The future does not exist as we imagine it; our imaginings are only projections, again, fiction.

Your mind would like to persuade you that the past and future are so important that they deserve all of your attention. You spend time remembering something that is colored by your thoughts, or projecting a future that is the complete fabrication of your mind, when all the while, you are robbing yourself of the only time that does exist, the present.

Oddly enough, our perception/interpretation response is tethered slightly behind the present moment. By the time we realize that we have seen a bear, the bear has already moved. The action that caused the thunder we hear happened seconds ago. It takes time for information to reach us, and then for us to interpret the data. We only sense things after they happen, and then after we understand them. Our minds can be quick to interpret stimuli, but can never interpret them simultaneously as they occur.

Our perception only ever delivers to us information about what is now old news. When you sit in a field and listen to the birds chirping, you hear only echoes from the past of other locations. We are always a step behind. If we want to respond to the world with any degree of efficiency, we must do more than simply react to what we perceive, we must grasp the trend of the stimuli and anticipate the path it will take in the immediate future.

For example, if you intend to pass a soccer ball to a running teammate, you must aim the ball to where you anticipate your teammate will be in the time it will take for the ball to travel the distance between you. You must kick the ball with enough force to move it, not to where he is now, but to where he will be in the time it takes for the ball to reach him. If you aim the ball to where he is when you kick it, you will never complete the pass. By the time the ball reaches the spot you aimed for, your teammate will be long gone.

The same is true for driving. When you decide to change lanes on a freeway, you take into consideration that you and the other cars are moving at different speeds. You must base your decision of where you will aim to place your car on where you anticipate the cars around you will be by the time you arrive in your destination lane. If we misjudge and anticipate incorrectly, we will create an accident or a good scare.

These are extreme examples, but we encounter this phenomenon whenever we use our senses. If we simply react, we will always be too slow. This means that whenever we interpret our senses, we rely on information from the past to predict the future. Well, what about the present? Our senses can tell us what they perceive, but we cannot know the state or location of the sources of those stimuli at the present moment from the information we gathered. The air around you might smell like apple pie, but that doesn't mean that you can know that there is definitely an apple pie in the immediate vicinity. We can perceive that light is hitting our eyes, but by the time we register that, it is possible that the source has moved elsewhere. We can feel that a sound wave has hit our eardrum, but we cannot know

anything about the source or location of that sound in that instant.

Your senses can tell you about your present state in your immediate location, but not the present state of the stimuli in their locations. This means that if we really want to fully experience the present moment, even for an instant, we must recognize the input from our senses as echoes from the past. You don't have to shut your senses off or ignore them. You don't have to stop doing or stop reacting. Remember, there is no point in trying to stop or slow your life. But when realizing the perfection of being, don't be deceived by your senses, and imagine they can give you current information about anything except what is going on in your eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin.

Most of the time you don't perceive things accurately anyway. Look around in the room you are in. Do you really see it as it is? Do you see the wear in the items there? The dust that might have collected on them? To save time or effort, we memorize things, and often see what we expect to see instead of what is there. When you see a family photograph, do you see paper and colored ink or do you see an image of a loved one? We attach special meaning to objects that veil our perception. Look at that picture again. Look at the shape of the body or bodies in that picture. Is that shape consistent with how you would perceive them if they stood before you? Our brains regularly fill in missing or distorted details in our perception to form recognizable images. If you watch an old 8mm film, you will focus on creating a continuous image in your mind rather than focusing on the jumps and flecks that distract from the image. After awhile, you might not even notice the imperfections and will see only the meaning, but what has changed, the quality of the tape or your mind?

Our eyes and ears are the biggest offenders because we use them to interpret language and visual cues that might have constructed meaning assigned to them. We are accustomed to filling in the blanks or construing meaning from approximations. Think of handwriting. Everyone has different handwriting, but unless it is really terrible or in a language you don't read, you will most likely be able to decipher it. When we listen to each other speak the same language, we allow for a broad range of accents before we are unable to interpret meaning from speech.

Our senses such as taste and touch are more literal. We rely on these two senses to keep us from danger, and we don't mess around too much with interpretation. When we feel pain, we react or move immediately. We don't wait around trying to establish what it might mean or decide if it poses a real threat or not. The same goes for taste. If something tastes terrible, we spit it out, trusting that our bodies have developed this response to substances that are dangerous to our health. We can unlearn this response, of course. A child's taste response to an alcoholic drink will usually be more violent than an adult's response. And then, through our constructions, we learn to dull our senses further.

A great deal of the suffering of ignorance arises with our mind's frustration with its inability to capture the present moment. The mind is accustomed to using the extensive network of the nervous system to reach out to the world, but no matter how hard it tries, it is not possible to use it to gain current information about the state of anything but itself. Further, if it cannot grasp the present moment—the time in which it exists—how can it be certain that it does exist at all? In its frustration, it becomes obsessed with the past and the future, trying to create its own reality where it has all the time in the world to prove its own existence and draw conclusions about anything and everything, in other words, to be omniscient. But the mind cannot undo what has been done, or control every element in an event that will happen in the future. Its creation is nothing more than a delusion.

But attempting to locate and cling to the present tense is like trying to find your eyeglasses when

they are on your face. No matter what you think about—past, present or future—and no matter if you follow your senses' cues to your body or ignore them and sit in meditation, you are living in the present tense. This isn't because you are especially skilled or lucky; it is because the present tense is the only one available to things that exist. And if you're reading this, that means you. Abandoning this struggle and realizing that you exist in the present moment is the next step to overcoming the obstacle of ignorance.

When you realize the perfection of being, you will see that guilt and regret are symptoms of living in the past. Your mind's frustration with its inability to anticipate and respond to stimuli in time to gain a favorable result lead it to attempt to relive the situation over and over again until it creates the perfect fantasy result. Understand that the time for that particular action has come and gone. If you want to have any chance at all at avoiding regret in the future, instead of spending all your time fantasizing about what you might have done, start paying attention to the situation at hand. You might not be able to respond exactly to the present moment, but you'll be most effective if you respond as quickly as possible to the newest information you have available. Being obsessed with a dream world will not help you to be more aware of current events and stimuli.

Do you take unnecessary risks? Are you a thrill seeker? Thrill seeking is just an extreme way to find the present moment. When you focus on danger or your life is at risk, all else seems to disappear and there is only the present moment and the task at hand. Once you realize the perfection of being, you will realize these truths exist whether you are mowing the lawn or skydiving. Then you can begin to go skydiving because it's fun, not because you feel compelled to prove something to yourself.

Not finishing what you start, indecision, and attention disorders are symptoms of trying to live in the future. No matter what you are doing, you imagine that there is something better, something more rewarding, just around the corner, and you don't want to miss a thing. You dart from this thing to that, hoping to get to sample it all. It's like the behavior of a man who buys a ticket to a multiplex movie theater and spends his two hours sneaking into every movie that's playing. As soon as he settles into one movie, he wonders what he is missing in the next theater, so he runs over and checks. At the end of his two hours, he has seen bits and pieces of everything, but not a single story. Do you want your life to be a collage of images and superficial experience, or a story with depth and meaning? To give up something that you enjoy just because you imagine that you will enjoy something else more is trading experience for fantasy. If you experience these issues, you might have a lot more practice at making dreams than results. Don't forget to practice getting results every once in awhile, too.

Realizing the perfection of being is the antidote for confusion. There's no point in being confused about what happened because it's over. There's no point in being confused about what to do in the future because that preoccupation will only distract you when the time does come for action. Let go of all the daydreams and thoughts that are busy with nothing and, instead, focus on sharpening your awareness of what is going on within you and around you. Then, when the time comes for action, you will know what to do.

Do you ever feel lonely? Why is that? It probably has less to do with missing the company of others and more to do with disliking being alone with your thoughts. The realization of the perfection of being assuages this discomfort by putting your ideas about what happened in the past and your fears about the future into perspective. They are only your own constructions and fantasies. They have little to do with the way things were, will be, and most importantly, are right now. And right now is the only time you can do anything about.

Realizing the perfection of being is understanding that you exist, and you don't need to prove it to yourself or anyone else. Your understanding of past and future are only ideas, constructions. Any action or realization must always occur in the present moment.

A thirsty man will drink at the first opportunity. When he finally has the opportunity, he does not wonder if his thirst is only his imagination, or if the water is a mirage. He does not come to a spring and suddenly decide to wait to drink until he has another opportunity to find water. He will not wander away regretting his hesitation and fantasizing about the next time he has the opportunity to drink. Keep in mind, if you are to achieve the realization of wisdom, the only place you may realize it is in the present moment. Thinking about others' past success attaining enlightenment, or fantasizing about your own attainment of enlightenment some time in the future is not a substitute for realizing it yourself. Like anything else we do, think, or realize, enlightenment always occurs now.

The realization of the perfection of being will eradicate the suffering of ignorance that stems from our misconception that the past and future, as we understand them, are anything other than our own constructions. Indecision, confusion, dullness and distraction, overexcitement, and mania stem from this fallacy because they are symptoms of being held hostage by your mind in a made-up version of the past or future instead of being free to experience life. When you realize that you do exist—maybe not exactly the way you think you do—but only right now, this is perfect concentration. Abandon your delusion about time being fractured into tenses and here, in the present, you will see that there remains only the clear mind that perceives wisdom.