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A Tornado of Freedom

What can we expect from our meetings?

To learn not to expect. Not expecting is a great art. When you no longer live in expectation, you live in a new dimension. You are free. Your mind is free. Your body is free. To understand intellectually that we are not a psycho-physical entity in the process of becoming is a necessary first step, but this understanding is not sufficient. The fact that we are not the body must become an actual experience that penetrates and liberates our muscles, our internal organs and even our cells. An intellectual understanding that corresponds to a sudden, fleeting recognition of our true nature brings us a flash of pure joy, but when we have full knowledge that we are not the body, we are that joy.

How can I perceive in a sensorial fashion that I am not the body?

We all experience moments of happiness which are accompanied by a perception of expansion and relaxation. Before this body perception, we were in a state of timelessness, an unadulterated, causeless joy of which the physical sensation is simply the ultimate consequence. This joy perceives itself. At that moment, we were not a limited body in space, not a person. We knew ourselves in the immediacy of the moment. We all know this felicity without cause. When we explore deeply what we call our body, we discover that its very substance is this joy. So we no longer have the need or the taste or even the possibility of finding happiness in external objects.

How is this deep exploration accomplished?

Do not reject the body sensations and emotions that present themselves to you. Let them blossom fully in your awareness without any goal or any interference from the will. Progressively, the potential energy imprisoned in muscular tensions liberates itself, the dynamism of the psychosomatic structure exhausts itself, and the return toward fundamental stability takes place. This purification of body sensation is a great art. It requires patience, determination and courage. It finds its expression at the level of sensation through a gradual expansion of the body into the surrounding space and a simultaneous penetration of the somatic structure by that space. That space is not experienced as a simple absence of objects. When the attention frees itself from perceptions that hold it in thrall, it discovers itself as that self-luminous space which is the true substance of the body. At this moment, the duality between body and space is abolished. The body is expanded to the size of the universe and contains all things tangible and intangible in its heart. Nothing is external to it. We all have this body of joy, this awakened body, this body of universal welcoming. We are all complete, with no missing parts. Only explore your kingdom and take possession of it knowingly. Do not live any longer in that wretched shack of a limited body.

I have brief glimpses of this realm in moments of stillness, then I go to work and find myself in an environment which is neither royal nor peaceful and my serenity immediately disappears. How can I keep my equanimity permanently?

Everything that appears in awareness is nothing other than awareness, your co-workers, clients, superiors, absolutely everything, including the premises, the furniture and the equipment. First understand this intellectually, then verify that this is so. There comes a moment where this feeling of intimacy, this benevolent space around you no longer goes away; you find yourself at home everywhere, even in the packed waiting room of a train station. You only go out of it when you go into the past or the future. Do not stay in that hovel. This immensity awaits you right here, at this very moment. Already being acquainted with its presence and once having tasted the harmony underlying appearances, let the perceptions of the external world and your body sensations unfold freely in your welcoming awareness until the moment that the background of plenitude reveals itself spontaneously.

This reversal of perspective is analogous to that which allows the sudden recognition of an angelic face in a tree in one of those early twentieth century prints that so delight children. At first we only see the tree, then informed by a caption under the picture that an angel is hiding there, we begin a meticulous examination of the foliage until we finally see the angel which had always been right there before our eyes. What is important is to know that there is an angel, where it is hiding and to have once experienced the process by which the tree progressively loses its form to the point where the lines of which appearance is composed begin to appear as such and then recombine to confide the secret of the image to us. Once the way is paved, subsequent reversals of perspective are easier and easier until we see the angel and the tree simultaneously, so to speak. In the same way, once our true nature has been recognized, the remaining distinctions between ignorance and awakening become progressively blurred and yield to the fundamental suchness of being.

I am beginning to realize that I am all gummed up in my body, my sensations and my impression of being a separate individual.

How does this gummed up feeling manifest?

I feel as if I were hypnotized, both by my pride, my emotions, especially my anger, and by the agitation in my body.

Right. As soon as you become aware that you are hypnotized, the hypnosis ceases.

How is that? This point is unclear to me.

Ask yourself who is hypnotized. Inquire deeply. Who is it? Where is it? You will find that it is not possible to find such an entity. If you explore your mind and your body, you will find a few concepts that you identify with like "I am a woman", "I am a human being", "I am a lawyer", etc.. You can also find certain sensations in your body, certain areas that are more opaque, more solid, that you identify with as well. But when you look more closely, it becomes obvious that you are not this sensation in your chest, nor this thought of being a woman, since feelings and thoughts come and go and what you really are is permanent.

At this very moment, the hypnosis ends. The occurrence of these thoughts and feelings is less of a problem than your identification with them. As soon as you become aware of them, you distance yourself. You are free. In this freedom, you do not locate yourself anywhere. It is important to stay in this non-localization, as we have the tendency to hasten to take hold of a new identification as soon as we have let go of the previous one, like a monkey who doesn't let go of a branch before latching onto another.

You will see how wonderful it is to live in the air in this way, without hanging on, unattached. In the beginning, it seems a bit strange, although your new attitude doesn't constitute an obstacle to anything. You can always fulfill your functions as a mother or as a lawyer, feel your body and so forth. In fact, to be nothing, in the air, no where, is very practical. It simplifies life a great deal. Do not be content merely to understand. Put your understanding into practice. Try being nobody. Let go of the branches.

Isn't it hard after that to come back into your body and live daily life?

You were never in your body, so the question of coming back into it doesn't come up. Your body is in you. You are not in it. Your body appears to you as a series of sensory perceptions and concepts. It is in this way that you know you have a body, when you feel it or when you think of it. These perceptions and these thoughts appear in you, pure conscious attention. You do not appear in them, contrary to what your parents, your teachers and nearly the whole of the society you live in has taught you. In flagrant contradiction to your actual experience, they have taught you that you are in your body as consciousness, that consciousness is a function emerging from the brain, an organ of your body. I suggest that you do not give undue credence to this second-hand knowledge and that you inquire into the raw data of your own experience. Remember the recipes for happiness that were given to you by these same people when you were a child, study hard, get a good job, marry the right man, etc.? These recipes don't work, otherwise you wouldn't be here asking these questions. They don't work because they are based on a false perspective of reality, a perspective that I am suggesting that you put into question.

See for yourself, then, whether you appear in your body or your mind, or whether, on the contrary, they appear in you. It's a reversal of perspective analogous to the discovery of the angel in the tree. Even though this change seems minimal at first, it is a revolution with unimaginable and infinite consequences. If you honestly accept the possibility that the tree might in fact be an angel, the angel will reveal itself to you and your life will become magic.

Can you speak to us about the practice of living intuitively from the heart?

Do not be a person, do not be anything. Having understood that you are no one, you live the truth according to this knowledge. When the idea or sensation of being a person no longer bothers you, whether you are thinking or not, whether you are acting or not, you live the truth from the fullness of the heart.

At this point, am I in right relationship with myself and with the world?

Oh, yes. You are in right relationship which is that of inclusion. The world as well as your body and your mind are included in your true self. Love is inclusion. Understanding is an intermediate step, but the final destination, the true center, is the heart.

Is the heart the place between this branch and the next, to use the analogy of the monkey?

If you agree to let go of the branch you are clinging to without catching hold of another, you fall into the heart. You have to accept dying, letting everything you know slip away, everything you have been taught, everything you possess, including your life or at least everything that you think at this stage is your life. This requires daring. It's a kind of suicide.

Is it really like that? For example, do you remember the moments that preceded your recognition?

Yes.

Was it like that?

Yes.

Thank you. Before that did you have any idea what was going to happen?

Yes and no. Yes, because I felt the invitation. No, because up until that point, I had only known relative happiness, relative truth, relative knowledge, and I could not have imagined the absolute, the ineffable. The self is beyond all concept, all projection. It is why we cannot steer ourselves to it under our own steam and must wait for it to solicit us. But when it invites us, we must say yes joyfully, without hesitation. The decision belongs to us, the only decision in which we truly have a free choice.

One of the reasons I postpone and do not make myself available to the invitation is my fear that my life will be radically changed.

Oh, yes. It will be.

My family, as well?

Your family, too. Everything will be changed.

I am afraid that some people will leave me and be replaced by others.

I can assure you that you will regret nothing.

Is it possible to have received the invitation and to have refused it?

Yes, you are free.

Will I be invited again?

Yes. Be ready. Be available. You are available when you understand that there is nothing that you can do on your own to get to the King. When you acknowledge your total powerlessness, you become an empty room. As soon as you become an empty room, you are a sanctuary. So the King can enter, take the throne and grace you with immortal presence.

Francis Answers - 2

Is there any DVD on yoga, or a book explaining it?

There is no DVD or book on the yoga of non-duality.

Here is what I suggest to you: Be acutely aware of the actual experience of your body. It is made of body sensations floating in the space of your awareness. Surrender, offer these sensations to the presence, to that space in which they appear. Don't interfere with them by trying to suppress them, keep them, or change them. Do that first during moments of availability in your life, for instance during these periods set apart for meditation or yoga. Start sitting as comfortably as possible, then add yoga postures and other exercises from the hatha yoga paraphernalia, always being gentle with your body, without inflicting pain or discomfort. Then gradually incorporate this awareness and surrender of your body to other situations in your life, sitting at your desk or in the dentist's chair, etc..

Also, when thoughts about the Truth, the path, your true nature appear to you, don't avoid them. Welcome them. Let them guide you to the conscious presence to which they refer, to that in you which perceives and understands, in sharp contrast with the thoughts of ignorance, the thoughts of fear and desire, which always refer to a separate "Me". If such thoughts appear, investigate the nature of this "Me", and whether it is separate or not.

Finally, there are external sense perceptions through which the so-called physical world appears to you. They too point to the presence in which they appear. Proceed with these in the same manner as with your body sensations, offering them to that presence, to your pure consciousness.

Francis Answers - 3

1. Isn't enlightenment or awaking a way of looking to the world through the right lobe of the brain (Holistic seeing, the heaven!, only seeing), in contrast to the left lobe that works with details (Mathematical seeing, the hell!, calculating situation)? And more isn't the whole spiritual practice a change of our attitudes (views) towards Life? (E.g. it is a kind of psychotherapy).

Enlightenment is understanding based on experience. If we consider that understanding is also a form of experience, then enlightenment is only experience.

Ignorance is delusion, the belief that we experience something which we in fact don't have the experience of. And that which we don't have the experience of is a separate, or limited, or body dependent consciousness (by "consciousness" I mean that, whatever that is, which is reading these words right now and understands them).

To put it differently, enlightenment is the sudden recognition that there is only one reality. Once that has been recognized, it doesn't matter which name you use to designate this Reality: God, Truth, Reality, Being, our real Self, the ultimate reality of the physical universe, the ultimate reality of our mind, our Presence, etc. . . . Then there is only one Reality, only one God, only HE. Then the Sufi saying "Wherever the eye falls is the face of God" becomes knowingly your every day experience.

Most of the time, psychology deals only with the content of consciousness, not with consciousness itself, which it assumes to be, without any shred of scientific evidence to back it up, an "emergent function of the brain".

2. Our body/brain recognizes itself as a separate entity (as soon as eighteen months old). Furthermore, our immune system recognizes the foreign structures (non-self, microbes, transplantation. . .), and eliminates them. Then how ignoring Self (image) could match with these physiological processes?

I agree that, to a certain extent, and for practical purposes (survival of the body and survival of the species), we recognize the body to be separate from the surrounding universe. I said to a certain extent because if it was completely separate from it, it couldn't possibly interact with it or be dependent from it (food, water, oxygen, etc). In fact, from the vantage point of modern science, of Quantum Mechanics, the universe is a non-local whole, every particle in our galaxy being deeply entangled with every other particle, even with the ones located in the most distant galaxy. From this point of view, every local event observed in the universe (such as my raising my right arm or the result of my measuring the polarization of a photon) cannot be considered to be produced locally. This implies that radical separation is an illusion.

Similarly, the minds are separate, to a certain extent. My mind doesn't know

your thoughts, unless you communicate them to me via email. They are not completely separate however, since they communicate.

The real question is: is consciousness, which is the reality of our human experience, separate and personal, or could it be universal (or divine)?

Whether or not it is separate doesn't preclude the bodies and the minds to be separate to the extent we have defined above.

Francis Answers - 4

1. Does Advaita = Yoga?

No. Advaita is a fact, the fact that there is only one reality. Yoga is the process of re-uniting the alleged separate individual self with the universal Self. This process ends with the recognition of advaita also known as enlightenment: since there is only one reality, this reality must be the reality of the universal Self and of the individual self. They are one as that reality, just as the space inside a bottle is the same space that contains the bottle. The bottle seems to create a separation that doesn't exist in the space as such.

2. In either, who is the seer - the body or the mind or the self or the awareness? If the answer is awareness, what exactly does it see?

The seer is the self and the awareness. They are one and the same. It sees the body as body sensations (pain, pleasure, thirst, cold, etc), the world as sense perceptions (sounds, smells, etc), the intellect as thoughts and imaginations.

3. Why did Buddha walk away from the source of Advaita?

I am not familiar with this event. My answer would be: because, having already drunk from it, he was no longer thirsty. That's a Zen koan. :)

Francis Answers - 5

Dear Francis

What steps can be taken to reduce conflict in life especially when you watch your own son involved in a conflict with a person who is acting totally on past conditioning and repeating egoic patterns. Someone who believes they are right and corrects everyone?

Thank you

Dear Aesh,

Do your best from your side to resolve the conflict, It is much easier to change your attitude in a given situation than to try to change others. Don't expect anything from your son or his wife. See my answer on expectation posted on the Advaita Channel on my website. "Doing your best" in this case means to try to place yourself in the position of a fair and loving judge who has no bias towards or against any of the three parties involved in the conflict: you, your son, his wife. What advice would such a judge give to you in that case? What would he say? Make your best effort to find your answer to this question. Don't make any final decision without getting it.

Remember that your son and his wife have to live their life and are entitled to making their mistakes, just as you have made yours. After all, in hindsight, you have benefited from your errors, and have become more interested in Truth because of them. Understand also that younger people have been exposed to a different culture and don't necessarily share our values.

Finally, remember Yajnavalkaya's words in the Bradaryanaka Upanishad: "It is not for the sake of the son that the son is loved, but for the sake of the Self", and, of course, the same can be said about the daughter-in-law and anybody else in her family.

Most affectionately,

Francis

Francis Answers - 6

In speaking of No Expectation What does that look like ..seeing that there is no separate entity yet in this plane where there is body activity ..Do we not expect to get paid when going to work , or the car to stop when I put on the breaks , to be satisfied of hunger when I eat etc tks gary.

Dear Gary,

There is a distinction to be made between personal and impersonal expectation. In the case of personal expectation, the belief in separate personal entities is involved, and their happiness is at stake: you expect something, good or bad, for yourself as a separate person or from others as separate persons. In the case of impersonal expectation, nobody is involved: “If an object is released from a certain height on the surface of the earth, it will fall to the ground” is an impersonal expectation. This distinction is sometimes not obvious. Example:

“I expect my hunger to disappear if I eat enough” is an impersonal expectation, “I” refers in that case to the body, not to consciousness.

“I expect to be happy if I eat enough” is a personal expectation. The second “I” refers to the body, the first “I” to consciousness. As you can see, ignorance is in this case the result of a lack of discrimination between the true self, consciousness, and an object, the body.

This second type of expectation disappears automatically when the belief in a separate consciousness, on which it depends, disappears. The term “no expectation” used by some sages refers to that disappearance.

My teacher, Jean Klein, once told me: “Don’t expect anything (for yourself or from others) and you will get everything”. These words had a great impact on me, and their truth has kept revealing itself since.

Most affectionately,

Francis

Meister Eckhart: The Poor Man

Beati pauperes spiritu, quia ipsorum est regnum coelorum.

Ultimate bliss speaking in its wisdom, said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mathew 5,3). All angels, all saints, and all creatures that have been born, must be silent when this eternal wisdom of the Father speaks, because all the wisdom of the angels and all creatures is as pure nothing when compared to the limitless wisdom of God. This wisdom has said that the poor are blessed.

Now, there are two kinds of poverty. The first is an external poverty and it is good and very much to be praised in one who accepts such poverty willingly, out of love for our Lord Jesus Christ, because He, likewise, was poor on earth. I will not speak of this poverty any further. Then, there is yet another poverty, an internal poverty, which underlies each word of our Lord when He says “Blessed are the poor in spirit”.

Now I beg you to be likewise so that you can understand his words; for I tell you by the eternal truth: if you are not identical with this truth about which we will now speak you cannot possibly understand me.

Some people have asked me what poverty is in itself, and what a poor man would be. We will now answer them.

Bishop Albert says: “A poor man is a man for whom all things that God ever created are not sufficient”, and that is well said. But we say even better and take poverty in a higher way: A poor man is one who wants nothing and knows nothing and has nothing. I will speak on each of these three points and I beg you for the love of God to understand this truth, if you can. However, if you do not understand, do not worry on that account because I am going to speak of a truth such that only a few good people will understand.

First, we say that a poor man is one who wants nothing. Many people fail to understand this statement correctly; they are the ones who cling to their selfish “I” in their spiritual practices and in their external good actions, which they take to be great accomplishments. God have mercy on such people who know so little of the divine truth! These men are called holy on the basis of external appearance, but internally they are asses, because they do not comprehend the deep meaning of the divine truth. To be sure, these men too say that a poor man is one who wants nothing. However, they mean by that that a man should live in such a way that he no longer fulfill his own will in anything, but that he tries to fulfill the very dear will of God. In doing so, these men are good, because they mean well; for that we will praise them. May God in his mercy give them the Kingdom of Heaven. But I say by the divine truth that these men are not poor and are not even like poor men. They are seen to be great only in the eyes of those who do not know any better. But I say that they are asses who understand nothing of the divine truth. Because of their good intentions

may they reach the Kingdom of Heaven; but they know nothing of the poverty about which I will now speak.

If someone were to ask me now what a poor man is who wants nothing, I would answer by saying that as long as a man still somehow has the will to fulfill the very dear will of God, that man does not have the poverty we are talking about; for this man still wills to satisfy God's will, and this is not true poverty. For, if a man has true poverty, then he must be as free of his own will now, as a creature, as he was before he was created. For I am telling you by the eternal truth, as long as you have the will to fulfill God's will and are longing for eternity and for God, you are not truly poor. For only one who wills nothing and desires nothing is a poor man.

When I stood in my original source, I had no God, and I was the origin of my own self. There, I willed and desired nothing, because I was pure being and self knowing, pure enjoyment of the truth. There I willed my self and nothing else; what I willed, I was, and what I was, I willed, and I stood empty of God and all created things. However, as I went out, of my own free will, and received my created being, then I had a God; for before the creatures existed, God was not God; rather, He was that He was. When the creatures came into existence and acquired their created being, then God was not God in Himself but he was God in them.

Now, we say that God, as such, is not the highest aim of creatures. For the smallest creature has as high a rank in being as God has. And, if a fly were to have reason, and, using this reason, were to look for the eternal abyss of divine being from which it came, we would say that God, with all that He as "God" is, could never bring about the fulfillment and the satisfaction sought by this fly. We pray to God that we become empty of "God" and that we comprehend and forever enjoy the truth that prevails there, where the highest angels, the flies and the soul are identical, in that place where I stood and willed what I was, and was what I willed. Thus we say, if a man is to be truly poor in will, he must will and desire as little as he willed and desired before he was created. And it is in this way that a man is poor who wills nothing.

Secondly, he is a poor man who knows nothing. We have said on occasion that a man should live in such a way that he would not live for himself, the truth, or God. Now, however, we say it differently and we say further that a man who is to have this poverty must live so that he does not know that he does not live for himself, the truth, or God. Rather, he must be so free from all that he has learned that he would not know or recognize or feel that God lives in him; even more, he should be empty of all knowing. For, when that man stood in God's eternal essence, nothing else lived in him; what lived there was he himself. For that reason, we say that a man must be as empty of all knowing as he was before he was created and he must let God accomplish His work in him as He wills, and himself stand empty.

All that emanates from God has is in constant activity. The activity assigned to

man is to love and to know. Now, there is a controversy over which of these is the primary abode of bliss. Some masters have said it is love; others have said it is both knowledge and love, and they are somewhat nearer the mark. But we say that it is neither knowledge nor love; rather there is a deep background beyond the mind from which knowledge and love both flow; that background itself neither knows nor loves as the energies of the mind do. He who knows himself to be this background knows bliss. For him, there is no past and no future; nothing can be added to him, for he can neither gain nor lose. Therefore, he is also deprived of the knowledge that God works in him; rather, he enjoys himself in himself in the way that God does.

I say also that a man must stand so rid and empty of everything that he does not know or feel that God acts in him, and only so can that man possess true poverty.

The masters say that God is an intelligent being who knows all things. But I say that God is neither a being, nor an intelligent being, nor one who knows this or that. Hence, God is empty of all things and, moreover, is all things.

Now, whoever is to be poor in spirit must be poor in all his own knowing so that he knows nothing of God, nothing of any created object, and nothing of himself. Hence, it is necessary that this man desire to not know or feel anything of the action of God in him. In this way he can be poor in his own knowing.

Thirdly, a poor man is one who has nothing. Many people have said that to have no material possessions is perfection, and what they say is true if the lack is intentional. But this is not the meaning I have in mind.

I have said first that a poor man is one who does not want to fulfill God's will, who furthermore lives in such a way that he is as empty of his own will and of God's will as he was before he came into existence. We say that this is the highest poverty. We have said secondly that a poor man is one who does not know anything of God's work in him. If one is empty of knowing and feeling in this way, that is a most pure poverty. The third poverty, however, of which I am about to speak is the most supreme; it is the one in which a man has nothing.

Now pay close attention! I have often said and so have great masters, that a man should be so empty of all things and all actions, internal and external, that he could be a proper place for God in which He could work. But now we say otherwise: if a man stands empty of all things, of all creatures, of himself and of God, but God still can find a place in him in which He can work, then we say that man is not poor in the purest sense, as long as that is so. For God is not longing for a man in which there is a place where He can work; on the contrary, a man is truly poor in spirit only if he stands so empty of God and of all His works that, if God willed to work in that man's soul, God Himself should be the very place in which He wants to work; and He would gladly do so. For, if God were to find a man so poor in spirit, He would carry out His own work in such a man, and this man would do no more than welcome God. God Himself being

the place for His own work, this man in his poverty reaches the eternal being that he was, is, and always will be.

Saint Paul has said: "All that I am, I am through God's grace". But what we are saying now seems to go beyond grace and beyond being, beyond knowledge, will, and desire. How then can Saint Paul's saying be true? Our answer is that his saying is indeed true. The presence of grace in him was necessary, because it was God's grace working in him that brought what was potential in him to its ultimate fulfillment. When grace ended, having accomplished its work, Paul remained as that which he had always been.

Therefore we say that a man should be so poor that he neither is nor has a place in which God could accomplish his work. If this man still holds such a place within him, then he still clings to duality. I pray to God that he rids me of God; for my essential being is above God insofar as we comprehend God to be the origin of all creatures. In that divine background of which we speak, where God is above all beings and all duality, there I was myself, I willed myself and I knew myself, in order to create my present human form. And therefore I am my own source according to my timeless being, but not according to my becoming which is temporal. Therefore, I am unborn, and, in the same way as I have never been born, I shall never die. What I am according to my birth will die and be annihilated; since it is mortal it must decompose in time. In my eternal birth all things were born and I was the source of myself and of all things; and if I had so willed there would be neither I nor any things; but if I were not, then God would not be, for I am the cause of God's existence; if I were not, God would not be God. However, it is not necessary to know that.

A great master says that there is more nobility in his breakthrough than in his outpouring and that is true. _ As I flowed out of God all things were saying "God is". But this cannot possibly make me happy because in this I recognize myself as a creature. In my breakthrough, however, wherein I stand empty of my own will, of God, of God's will, and of all His works and of God Himself, there I am above all creatures, I am neither God nor creature, rather I am that I was and will remain, now and forever. There I receive an impetus which carries me above all angels. In this impetus I receive such overwhelming riches that God, with all that he as God is, together with all his divine works, could never fulfill me; for in this breakthrough it is imparted to me that I and God are one. There I am what I was and I neither increase nor decrease, for there I am the motionless cause which makes all things move. Then God no longer finds a place in such a man, for a man with such poverty conquers what he always has been and forever will remain. Then God and the spirit are one, and this is the purest poverty that one can find.

Whoever does not understand what I say should not be disheartened by that. For as long as a man is not one with this truth he will not understand my words. For this truth is not veiled and comes directly from the heart of God.

May God help us to live forever in this truth. Amen.

Francis Answers - 7

First of all thank you for your talks. I seem to understand what you say, but to me, all of this is just an interesting concept. How to go beyond concepts? For example, "I" exist only when I am awake. In deep sleep, there is no mind, hence there is no "I". This implies this "I" is a construct of the mind. But all of this is only a concept, which my mind finds it amusing. Please clarify my confusion or lack of understanding.

Thank you and Regards R.K.

Dear R. K.,

Your confusion originates from your belief that "I" or consciousness is a concept. Consciousness is that which is aware of these words right here, right now. That which is aware of the thoughts is also aware of the body sensations and of the external sense perceptions. It is not a thought. A thought cannot be aware of other thoughts, because there is at the most one thought present in the mind at any given time. Therefore consciousness is not a concept but a fact, an experience.

When you make the statement: "in deep sleep, there is no I", (no consciousness), do you make this statement from experience or from conceptual inference? Obviously not from experience, since this would require the presence of a consciousness monitoring the absence of "I" which you are asserting. Therefore your statement is not of a fact, but of a concept.

Thank you for your question.

Looking forward to seeing you some day.

Affectionately,

Francis

Francis Answers - 8

This question concerns the objects and situations perceived by the body/mind.

I see my daughter. She is an object of consciousness. As a human being she is known as a continuous entity. This the toddler becomes a girl who becomes a woman. I know her. She knows me. We have a relationship.

From the perspective of nonduality, am I experiencing “my” consciousness appearing as her? Or does she possess distinct attributes that are, by necessity, separate from my own consciousness? Like all intimate and long term relationships, this one seems to possess unique and predictable qualities. I am asking you about the nature of perceived “reality”.

Thank you so much for your time.

Eric

Dear Eric,

Who is your daughter? Is she the human body that underwent changes from toddler to girl, from girl to woman? Or is she rather the consciousness that perceives and acts through that changing body? And is that consciousness that perceives the ever changing perceptions itself subject to change? Look within yourself at your own consciousness to answer these questions. By “consciousness” I mean that which is perceiving these words right now. What is true of your own consciousness is likely to be true of her’s. Does your own consciousness have attributes that you can perceive such as color, shape, limits, beginning, end, etc? Does it change? Does it go on and off? Where does your consciousness end and hers begin?

When you say “I know her” you mean in fact two different modes of knowing, two values attached to the pronoun “her”:

1. Her=her body, her habits, memories, her past history, etc -all perceived objects, attributes. In that case you and she are different. But even “you” are different from yourself from moment to moment, since this “you” is ever changing.
2. Her= the consciousness, that which perceives, knows, understands, loves, lives. In that case, is there a difference you can perceive between her consciousness and yours? And if there is no difference you can perceive, what leads you to believe they are different?

To answer your question in a nutshell: the attributes in each of you are different and not real, the consciousness, beingness, reality, love and eternity is the same in both of you. Your daughter and you are one in this Love, as this Love.

Warmest regards,
Francis

Francis Answers - 9

... what real aspirants experienced after a whole life's intense effort in the Vedic age, is made attainable in the present age in a comparatively short period of time by a more direct application of the higher reason in man. Such was the method adopted by Shri Atmananda. (Introduction to 'Notes...' by Nitya Tripta). Quite a different view was held by others fifty or sixty years ago (René Guénon, A. Coomaraswamy and F. Schuon among others) concerning contemporary man, the conclusion being that there has been a decline of the contemplative intellect after the Middle Ages in Europe (and likely also in the East). Coomaraswamy used the term: *dégringolade*, to refer to this phenomenon. Can there be, or, is there a coexistence of these two unequal and opposing currents in the modern world? The question is an empirical one, but it may be worth asking. A. M.

Dear Alberto,

Your question is intelligent and beautifully crafted. Unfortunately, as you already noticed, it is also a somehow intellectual and phenomenal question, to which the real, profound answer is: "Who knows?"

On a more mundane level, it could perhaps be said that, as the contemplative drive in modern societies declined, the tools available to the seekers became more and more efficient. For instance, the extraordinary awakening and development of the scientific method since the 18th century has led on the one hand to modern technology and to the subsequent worldwide expansion of a materialistic, gadget-oriented culture. On the other hand however, this very same paradigm shift has eliminated ancient religious and cultural taboos and inhibitions that made it impossible to present and communicate the simple, naked advaitic truth. Remember the persecutions suffered by Jesus, Meister Eckhart, St John of the cross, Hallaj, Madame Guyon among others. As Atmananda noticed, we are enjoying a spiritual window of opportunity that is absolutely unprecedented in history. We could consider the simultaneous decline of spiritual values and sharpening of the tools of awakening as a beautiful balancing act of the Absolute. There is no incompatibility between Atmananda's and Guénon's views.

A word of caution however about the confusion that prevails in some pseudo Advaita circles between awakening and self-realization or, as Atmananda would perhaps put it, between *nirvikalpa* and *sahaja samadhi*. As long as one believes to be a doer, there is still a lot to do in terms of self-inquiry and meditation. And even after a first glimpse of truth, unshakable peace will prevail in most cases only after a subsequent process of higher reasoning, higher sensing and contemplation.

The ubiquitous availability of the tools of awakening in the modern West doesn't imply the ubiquitous presence of realized beings, and it may well be that the percentage of sages was higher in other civilizations.

Truly yours,
Francis

Francis Answers - 10

I have a problem in that my consciousness seems to be not only centered in and around, but imprisoned in this body-mind complex. I would like to experience, not just believe - and at times doubt - that awareness exists independent of the brain. My experience of myself as being conscious is hitherto in form of a perception and therefore by the mind. All my perceptions are derived from the senses of this body and from thoughts and feelings that could be the results of chemical processes in the body. It is only by experiencing awareness beyond the constraints of the body that I can really know myself to be more than matter magically come alive. Don't misunderstand me. I've been brought up in an advaitic family, and I'm not trying to make a statement here. But as long as I'm caught in this limited state it is all a beautiful bunch of concepts, no doubt supported by glimpses, and by the many who say they ARE that, and who proof by their life that they are beyond the normal human condition. There are times when the intellect does not or not want to doubt, because from inside there is that beauty that takes hold of me, and I just go with it. But is it just because the mind searches its comfort in that state? I can't say. It varies from time to time. When there is inner certainty the doubts go to sleep, then they return with all force. Intellect says, if your awareness is not a product of the brain, but is universal, then you have to be able to brake the shackles of this hypnosis and experience yourself in all the forms and bodies, ego's thoughts and feelings, just the way you do in this one. That in itself is of course not more desirable than the relationship with this body and could lead to identification with all bodies, their senses, thoughts and feelings as I. But it would once and for all resolve the question. And it is, as I heard you once say, the thorn with which to remove the thorn. I'm not after experiences, lightshows and fireworks. But I need my doubts to be destroyed in the fire of undoubtable experience. Can you help me? Om Vishvarupa

Dear Vishvarupa,

Let us assume that for a few seconds your mind has access to at least one other mind, in some kind of telepathic experience, and returns thereafter to its ordinary state. Previous beliefs in a totally separate consciousness would certainly be challenged by such an experience, but would the doubts you are referring to be destroyed as a result? Or would you begin to have new doubts regarding the experience you just had, now reduced to a mere recollecting thought? And let's assume that instead of having access to one more mind, your mind would have access to a larger number of minds, nay, to all the minds. What difference would a larger quantity of those make?

An experience of this kind, although it may have some value in unsettling some

ignorance related belief systems, couldn't possibly bring about the unshakable certainty you seek. The reason for this is that such an experience remains within the walls of objectivity, of a mind, even if it is an expanded one. You are already partially aware of this in your question, when you say "That in itself is of course not more desirable than the relationship with this body and could lead to identification with all bodies, their senses, thoughts and feelings as I".

Everything that appears in the mind is doubtable, because it could be a dreamlike event, an illusion, a delusion. Right now, all the objects appearing to you could be elements of a dream you are creating, since while dreaming you are not aware that you are dreaming. How could something doubtable ever destroy your doubts? Therefore, only that part of your experience which is undoubtable may have the power to destroy your doubts.

If we look at our experience the only part of it which is undoubtable is the awareness or consciousness part. Even if everything else is an illusion, I am still absolutely certain that there is awareness. Therefore, the only side where you can find the doubt liberating experience you seek is the consciousness side, the "I am" side, not the mind side, the body side or the world side.

You could object that so far we have achieved very little in terms of a positive experience, and you would be right. The only problem is that nothing undoubtable can be achieved through positive experience, through mind experience. To recognize this fact, to be absolutely convinced of its truth is already a great achievement, it is in fact the highest achievement the mind can have access to, and the sole prerequisite for the true liberating experience. Your question shows that this conviction was not complete in your case. I hope my answer will contribute to its completion, which is a spontaneous letting go of all effort to obtain what you are longing for within the realm of objects, gross or subtle.

Grace will take you naturally beyond this threshold, as gently and naturally as you breathe, and your longing for this is already grace.

Most affectionately,

Francis

Francis Answers - 11

I always wondered if the so called 'enlighted' people are letting emotions or feelings express themselves as they will, and be cautious to not act on certain ones.

If we are conditioned to feel and behave in a certain way, do we let emotions just be and not act on them? Is it natural to live under the hypnosis of societal conditioning? If not, is it natural to repress feelings of love and sexual attraction towards opposite sex if they occur during a social contract called marriage?

Just sharing thoughts can you share 'yours' in this matter??

As a separate person, we don't choose our thoughts, our emotions, our actions. We don't choose to let them be or to act on them. We don't have the option to repress feelings of love and sexual attraction. To see that clearly is the result of enlightenment. We regain our freedom the moment we cease to believe and to feel that we are such a separate person. The action, thought, feeling, attraction, that arises in the absence of such a belief or feeling is in harmony with the cosmos. All emotions and feelings express themselves as they will, as they always do, but they are in that case naturally beautiful, loving and intelligent.

Marriage as a social contract is a tool designed by society to protect its fabric, make sure that children and older people are taken care of by their parents and spouses. It creates mutual rights and obligations between the two parties. It may be a good thing, similar to criminal law that protects the innocent from the thieves and murderers. However real marriage doesn't require a piece of paper. It is pretty simple: in love you are married, in ignorance you are divorced. That applies to everything, not just to relationships between men and women.

Francis Answers - 12

You teach that awareness, the subjective reality that we know to exist, is whatever is hearing these words in this moment. I believe that without doubt. However, there is doubt as to whether that awareness is a boundless, infinite presence, or whether perhaps the brain is a sophisticated enough organ so that, out of the “soup” of brain cells, arises this sense of the “perceiver”. A “black box”, that creates the perceiver and that is specific to each body-mind. I am fully willing to accept that there is no evidence within science to answer the question of whether awareness is limitless, boundless eternity vs. “the black box”. I also see the wisdom of the suggestion to “check it out” and see. It seems, though, that perhaps it is not possible to truly and successfully check it out and see the truth through experience, without being 100% intellectually certain that consciousness is not limited to the body. The “black box” theory holds me back from completely accepting this truth intellectually. There is doubt. I wonder if I must disabuse myself intellectually of the possibility of the “black box” before properly seeing. If so, how might I best do that?

Regards, Jonathan.

Let's deal with the “black box” theory. Remember that we are investigating the **reality** of consciousness, not the appearance of it. The question is : “What is the **real** entity that perceives these words right now, that which **really** perceives, **the reality** which perceives?” Is the black box the answer? Let's assume that, in accordance with this theory, electro-chemical reactions occur in the nervous system that create thoughts and other perceptions, and the consciousness of those (a far fetched assumption). Can it be said that the black box creates these reactions? What we have in this case is a bunch of particles or wave packets dancing together according to the laws of Quantum Mechanics. But what is the reality of this show? Is it local and limited by the surface of the skin of a specific body? Even if that body could be considered to be a local, insulated and independent physical system (a very rough approximation, especially in the light of Aspect's experiments on the EPR paradox), it is subjected to the very same laws as the other bodies in the neighborhood, which shows that it is not really independent - it is perhaps independent from the other bodies, but not from the laws of physical reality. Therefore it must be part of a larger Reality that dictates these laws. It follows that if there is a black box that **really** manufactures thoughts, perceptions and consciousness, it must be universal and non local. Even under this materialistic assumption the **real** perceiver has to be universal and non local.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 13

Can the mechanism of birth and death be understood?

What do you mean by “understand”? Do you mean to have an adequate concept of it or to have the experience of it? And why do you want to understand it? In most cases, we want to know what remains after death or whether anything remains, which is often the sign of our fear of a total letting go of the known, of the world of objects.

Jean Klein calls death “the great forgetting”, similar to the temporary forgetting of deep sleep, but with a difference: there is no return.

The only thing which remains for certain is the reality of all things, which is also the reality of you, your real self, your presence, the timeless source of everything found in time. However make sure not to turn these words into a belief. Reflect upon them until they become your unshakable truth.

In its freedom, this presence can create or recreate any object or event it desires.

Regarding the experience of death itself, see clearly the impossibility of it. Who or what could experience death? If there is such an experience, there is still life, consciousness, not death. You are life, and as such you cannot experience death.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 14

Dear Francis, I have visited with you only once, at your home in Temecula. At that time, I asked you a question about my partner who has Alzheimers, but unfortunately because of the acoustics, I was unable to hear the answer. I just remember you mentioned something about your father having the same disorder before he died. My question is whether someone with Alzheimers is capable of realizing their true nature, and thus fulfilling their life's purpose before they die. I believe it to be so for my partner, but I would like to hear from you once again. Many Thanks!

That which realizes its true nature is not a body or a mind, an object. It is awareness itself, unaffected by the impermanent states of the body-mind.

You seem to attach a great importance to this realization, which is a beautiful thing when and if it happens. But the most marvelous thing is the fact that there is something rather than nothing, that there is being and consciousness, and this is already happening here and now!

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 15

After closing eye's visualising and feeling body parts in a sequence,at times unseen images (every time new) appears, stays for some moments and then vanishes gradually like wind is blowing particles of sand, then I am reminded that I am to complete visulisation of remaing parts of my body.Initially it was quite disturbing,Now It is not, but I have to wait to continue further.What it is? and why it happens?

Dear Chandram,

You are asking a question about a spiritual practice which I haven't recommended. You should ask the teacher who has prescribed it to you.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 16

Francis, we are taught that the truth of who we are is the awareness right here right now which is aware of these words, this page. Clearly, awareness or the sense of existence, or the sense that I am – whatever words we use– is present because it is felt directly: I am and I know that I am. However, that doesn't help me much. I still don't feel free. How may I free myself from the sense of being an individual, suffering "I am"?

In your question, you are referring to two distinct "I"s

1. "the awareness right here right now which is aware of these words,...awareness or the sense of existence, or the sense that I am"
2. "an individual, suffering"I am"

You also mention that Nr 1 "is felt directly". By whom? By Nr 1 or by Nr 2? The use of the word "directly" seems to indicate that it is felt by Nr 1.

And, more generally, which one perceives, and which one is perceived? Which one of those two is you?

If you say Nr 2 you loose, if you say Nr 1 you win - big time. What say you?

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 17

Francis, I've been noticing a very subtle veil, a kind of a blankness, that seems like a mind-produced obscuration of "what is." As I've only just figured out what it might be, I'm also just starting to notice its tendency to show up, and the fact that it's probably been here a lot more than I realized, part of the seduction of the world, I suppose. Now that I see it, it brings about frustration in me, which probably is the point of it—allows the mind to still hold sway, or something? Do you recommend just noticing it? Just welcoming it?

I would look at it and ascertain its nature. Is it a bodily sensation, an external sense perception or a thought? Where is it localized? Does it come and go, or change? To that end, you need to welcome it completely, without dwelling on it longer than necessary. And, finally, the \$10000000000000000 question: Is it perceived, or does it perceive?

See you soon,

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 18

What is the container of memories? It cannot be the body as there seems to be evidence that some kind of container of memories remains cohesive between incarnations. Also there are claims that non-physical bodies is one mode of life through which that container of memories manifests – “spirits”, for short.

The real question is “What is the container of all containers?” The investigation of this or that phenomenon belongs to the realm of science. At that level, the question “What is this?” can never be answered, science can only answer the question “How?” The question “What?”, the question about the reality of a phenomenon cannot find its answer at the phenomenal level.

The real container of memories must be the place where they appear, where they unfold, where they disappear. We know this place, we call it awareness, pure consciousness or “I”. We mistakenly believe that things in general, and memories as a case in point, continue to exist in the same form before we begin and after we cease to perceive them. Where is the evidence to support this view? We tend to attribute any cohesiveness or consistency between two perceptions to an object that would have continued existence during the intermediary absence of perceptions, forgetting that such an object by design can never be experienced and that our hypothesis will always remain only that, an uncheckable hypothesis. This cohesiveness can be attributed instead to a Reality that is not bound to be a phenomenon, a Reality which can be and must be the reality of both the external world and our subjective experience of thoughts and perceptions. Besides, this Reality is not an assumption but an experience, the direct experience from which we derive the certainty that there is being, that there is something rather than nothing, that there is consciousness.

It is this Reality that dynamically creates, sustains and annihilates all things, including memories, from moment to moment.

Just as this Reality creates the appearance that physical objects have continued existence between perceptions, it can create the appearance that “some kind of container of memories remains cohesive between incarnations”. It can also create the appearance of non-physical bodies manifesting as thought-like perceptions. In fact, in its absolute freedom, it can manifest anything it chooses.

Francis Answers - 19

Is the mind not the same as Maya? Both are mysterious powers of the Self that may be seen as either a veil or a distorting mirror, at the same time showing or reflecting Reality and hiding or distorting it. Thus the one Self appears as many, starting with the triad of God, the soul and the world. All divisions, time and becoming residing also in the mind. In a way the mind seems to be all, the locus of ignorance and also, in it or through it, of illumination. If so, the mind is a tool to be used to the maximum of its capacity in the way to knowledge, to the Truth. Is that not the first requirement if it ever is going to be transcended? (I am leaving aside the virtues and faith, not to speak of Grace).

The human mind is not the same as Maya, since Maya is universal and the mind is personal: under normal circumstances, your human mind doesn't have access to other minds. Maya is the power of the Self that creates the world and the individual minds. It cannot be said either that Maya distorts Reality any more than it can be said that the movie distorts the screen onto which it is projected. The objects in the movie are many, one single screen supports them.

The mind can be said to be the locus of ignorance since ignorance is the identification of the Self with the limited body-mind. As a result of this identification, the mind, a simple tool, becomes the slave of ignorance and its powers are used to build up layers of belief systems and feeling systems consistent with this identification. At some point, as a result of grace, of an action of the sovereign freedom of the Self, the desire for liberation takes birth. The mind becomes from that moment on the servant of this liberation, using its powers to deconstruct the belief and feeling structures generated by ignorance.

The mind is not the locus of enlightenment, which is the direct experience of the Self, by the Self, through the Self, without any intermediary agent such as thoughts, body sensations or external sense perceptions. However, your statement "the mind is a tool to be used to the maximum of its capacity in the way to knowledge" is correct as shown in the previous paragraph.

In Truth and Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 20

Dear Francis,

1. Experience is that there appears there is only an approximate locality for this 'I' that I used to be called 'me'. This 'I' exists as a spaciousness that appears as both empty and full - I can't find 'me' anymore. Can you elaborate on this empty/full dichotomy?
2. This loss seems like a very welcome relief/release yet since this occurrence experience is also that of a profound vulnerability that can at times highlight certain features of my remaining character. This helplessness appears strange at times. I feel like one of those cartoon characters who runs off a cliff and remain in the air still running despite the knowledge that there is no ground beneath them. . . . I guess I felt that this loss of a 'me' would magic the manifestation of 'this life' into a more obviously 'blissful' and balanced state? I guess this continues to develop. . . any clues from yourself?

Warmest regards,

Michael

Dear Michael,

1. If you describe it as a vastness, or as a fullness, or as an emptiness, you are still superimposing objective qualities onto that which is not an object. The guru may use for instance such qualifying words and images in his teachings, but they are never final. Their purpose is the removal of other preexisting superimpositions, the word "fullness" being used, for example, to remove the disciple's preexisting objectification of the Self as "emptiness". It is therefore only normal that you encounter such apparent "dichotomy" as you try to describe to yourself or to others the reality of your experience.
2. How can you say that you have lost your "me", since your "me" is very present in this moment, aware of these words you are reading? If you are saying that there were two "me"s, the "I" that perceives and the "me" that used to be perceived and has been lost, you are obviously the former, since the latter has disappeared and is therefore no longer a valid candidate to be "you". The problem is that there are at any time many other potential candidates to be you (all perceived objects). What would be interesting would be, not to lose your "me", but to find it in a way that forever invalidates any of the other potential candidates and, having found it, to get firmly established in it, in the knowing of it, in the loving of it, and in the perceiving of it in all the forms, gross and subtle. Only in the finding of your true Self and your subsequent establishment in it can you find the peace and happiness you seek, not in the losing of one of your false identities.

Love,
Francis

Francis Answers - 21

my childhood was gifted with spiritual light and experiences and even out of body observing. With no external cultivation or just someone to relate this to, it melted into the background. At 18 I was poisoned and had a near death experience that allowed me to view myself again and to experience the darkness as an entity full of action and from the midst of a magnificent orb of light to know all, be all, completely fulfilling, only now presence. This to was put to the back of my existence as I proceeded to live my physical existence. To know, live and share the truth has always been at the center of my heart though and over the last 3 years there has been time for me to begin pursuing and experiencing the gifts of attention and surrender, but I have not experienced the ability to observe myself again or be in the beautiful light of all-knowing. If you would have anything to add, I would be very grateful.

Peace, Diane

Dear Diane,

This Presence you knew to be during the experience you had at 18, has it ceased to be you? Or is it this very same Presence which is perceiving these words right now? Are there two “you”s, the one that perceives and the one that is perceived? During that revelation two things were experienced, one that was impermanent, and has since vanished, leaving you with the desire to be again in that state, and one that is eternal, always true, and was the real gift made to you in this revelation. It was a pure and transparent diamond that came in a beautiful, but fragile box, the objective circumstances accompanying this experience. And now, like a child still holding the diamond in her hands, not understanding its value, you cry for the loss of the valueless box. Find the diamond.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 22

You often speak of the Truth as resonating with the body/mind in the form of beauty, intelligence, humor, and happiness. But doesn't that preclude the Truth resonating as ugliness, stupidity, and misery, potentially leading to a misunderstanding, such as, if I am "happy", I understand the truth, whereas if I am "miserable", I don't understand the truth; if I witness "beauty" I see the Truth in it, whereas if I witness "ugliness" I don't?

Beauty, intelligence, humor, and happiness cannot be found in objects, gross or subtle. They are "divine" qualities that belong exclusively to the Self. "Beautiful", "intelligent", "funny", "happy" are adjectives that apply to objects which by design point towards these divine qualities. There are objects which don't point by design towards the divine realm. These objects can be rightfully called "not beautiful", "not intelligent", etc.

Let's assume we are in the space in orbit around a distant star. There are other celestial bodies in orbit, some closer to this star, others further out in space. If our attention is caught by a planet located in the close vicinity of this star, it will be likely, easy and natural for us to notice the star, because the angular distance between this planet and the star will be small. We can say that such a planet "points" to the star or "reveals" the star, just as the presence of Venus (also called "the Morning Star") often precedes and announces the rising sun.

By contrast, if our attention is directed towards a distant planet, it will in most cases shine against the background of deep space, revealing only its darkness. However both of these planets, the one that reveals the sun and the one that conceals it, shine by reflecting the light of the star. In this metaphor the star corresponds to the Self, the revealing celestial body to a "beautiful object", and the concealing body to a "not beautiful" object. It can be noticed that both bodies reveal the presence of the star by the light that emanates from them, just as any object, beautiful or ugly, reveals the presence of consciousness through its mere being perceived.

The Self "resonates" as beauty because beauty is the direct light the Self, just as the light of the rising sun "resonates" around the Morning Star. The "ugliness" of an object is simply the absence of this "resonance" around it. Therefore it cannot be said that the Self "resonates" as ugliness.

It follows that if I am happy, it means that I am looking in the direction of the Self and experiencing its light, this experience being that which we usually call happiness. If I am unhappy, it means that I am looking away from the Self.

Love,

Francis

Francis answers - 24

Does the desire to know indicate that one is ready and capable of knowing or Is it necessary to prepare the mind to receive the teachings of liberation?

Dear Dede,

Yes, the desire to know our true Self is the single most important prerequisite for the realization of the Absolute. Whatever transforming preparatory steps the mind needs to go through will appear spontaneously in the course of a sadhana which is driven by a burning desire for the Truth. These steps may include the serendipitous encounters with sacred texts or with a guru, the elimination of belief systems through understanding, the release of tensions in the body, and many other events occurring in the world around us.

Love, Francis

Francis Answers - 25

I've had a string of wonderful transcendent experiences, but the most brilliant gem in this necklace was a day when I woke up to find that abstract thought had stopped. It was so startling, I thought the electricity had gone out. really really quiet up there. It lasted one day only. Best day ever! without thought everything naturally falls into place. This was a long time ago & ever since I've been feeling bereft & also confused. Jean Klein is the only one who has ever mentioned the cessation of thought. Every other teacher says thought keeps coming, only you are no longer attached to it. But my experience was one of thought not coming anymore. what is thought anyway? I know it's not personal or original & has no power of its own. We attach it to a sensation & call this emotion. Yet we are unable to stop this endless chatter by our own efforts. Is there truly nothing to be done?

Thank you, Irene

Dear Irene,

Jean Klein and I have spend many months together over the years of our friendship, living in the same house in a family setting and I can assure you that he had all kinds of thoughts, practical, beautiful, loving and intelligent thoughts.

The difference in the case of a sage is the absence of those thoughts that are a result of ignorance, of the belief to be an individual, a separate consciousness.

The absence of thoughts is an exceptional and temporary state of the mind which has a beginning in time and an end in time. External sense perceptions may be present during this state, in which case they seem extremely vivid. Because the manufacturing of a pseudo subject by the thought factory has been temporarily suspended, the sense of separation between a me and the world may seem to be temporarily abolished, and some of the bliss which is inherent to our true nature may be temporarily experienced. However, due to the fact that the melting of ignorance in the Self was not complete, the production of ignorant thoughts resumes when thinking resumes.

This state may be followed in certain cases by an experience in which consciousness, letting go of all the objects to which it was attached, experiences itself in its own glory, beyond the mind, beyond anything created, knowing itself as immortality, perfect intelligence, absolute splendor, and unconditioned love. In such an experience ignorance comes to an end like a river merging with the ocean.

That which can be done is to investigate, to ask questions from others (as you did asking this questions), from texts you are reading and most importantly from yourself, from your own experience. The most important question and the most direct one is "Is consciousness, this presence I know I am, a creation of the

body-mind or is the body-mind a creation of consciousness?”

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 26

Does Awareness/Consciousness exist prior to I Am? I mean does the Untouchable Source live in purity never ever being born (but at the same time being born) and is the I Am (a sense of self but not as a separate self come next and then the me or me as an object come after that? I am trying to figure out a question I have had for a while, regarding Aloneness (all one ness) versus a horrible scary sense of being the only one who is real and that I am alone in darkness. Some one once said to me that Aloneness = all one ness. But I am wondering if the True Self/ Consciousness exists prior to any knowledge/description of itself. Even the knowledge of self, even the knowledge of existence even the knowledge the I AM? Does this mean that my/our true nature is unborn? Forever unknowable (but in a good way?) Any help would be lovely, thanks Patricia

Dear Patricia,

In this moment, you are reading my words. That which is aware of these words, whatever that is, is consciousness or awareness. It is also that which we call "I", since you can legitimately make the claim "I am reading these words". It is also that which we call "I am", since the claim "I am, reading these words" is also legitimate. Therefore the words "awareness", "consciousness", "I" and "I am" refer to the same reality/experience. In order to avoid any confusion, we have to remember that in the process of naming a thing, the thing (the referent) is prior to the thought of the thing (the concept), which is itself prior to the word that names the thing (the name). In that sense, the **reality/experience** "Awareness-consciousness-I-I am" is prior to any of the **thoughts** "awareness", "consciousness", "I" or "I am".

In ignorance, the reality "I", the real "I" is forgotten, we are hypnotized by the attributes of the "I", as in the sentence "I am **reading these words**". The world is real, the words are real, the body and its reading are real, the "I" is out of sight or vaguely replaced by an impersonating object such as a concept or a body sensation. In knowledge, the reality of the "I am" experience is fully recognized, as in the sentence "**I am**, reading these words". Whether the words, the reading, the body and the world are real or not (as in a dream), the reality of the "I am" experience is irrefutable.

Just as the **reality/experience** "Awareness-consciousness-I-I am" is prior to any of the ****thoughts** "**awareness**", "**consciousness**", "**I**" or "**I am**", **it is also prior to any other perception (thought, sensation or external sense perception) that appears to it or in it. Therefore no perception (no phenomenal experience) can tell us anything about the reality/experience**** Awareness-consciousness-I-I am". Two consequences follow from this:

1. Since the scope of science is currently limited to phenomenal experience

that can be verified by multiple independent observers, science can tell us exactly nothing about the **reality/experience** “Awareness-consciousness-I-I am”.

2. Neither phenomenal experience, nor science can establish that consciousness is limited, personal, conditioned by time and/or space and therefore mortal. As a result, the widely spread belief among some scientists that “consciousness is an emergent property of the brain” is just that, the “credo” of an exotic form of religion devoid of any scientific foundation.

Going back to the last part of your question, your true nature is forever unknowable objectively, but forever knowable subjectively, through a direct mode of knowledge. In this apperception, it reveals itself as timeless, unborn and eternal Presence.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 27

Dear Francis, In your last post, you wrote: (quote)“...your true nature is forever unknowable objectively, but forever knowable subjectively, through a direct mode of knowledge. In this apperception, it reveals itself as timeless, unborn and eternal Presence.”(unquote) Some, like Wei Wu Wei defined apperception as a perception without a perceiver. Is that the meaning you give it? If not, Could you define the term “apperception” and its relation to “perception”, within the advaitic terminology? Thanks in Advance, Mouna

Dear Mouna,

“Perception” refers to the experience of an object (phenomenon, that which appears, thought, body sensation or external sense perception), whereas “apperception” refers to the experience of the subject (noumenon, that to which that which appears appears). The human mind is the experience of perceptions, but apperception takes place beyond the mind. There are many different perceptions, however there is only one apperception (there are many objects, but only one subject). Perceptions take place in time, apperception is timeless. The mind has no access to apperception, but apperception has the power to transform the mind. The mind moves within the known, apperception is ever new. Apperception is the experience of consciousness by consciousness. Atmananda Krishna Menon uses the word “visualization”, Jean Klein and I often use the word “glimpse” as synonyms of “apperception”.

Although apperception is timeless (out of time), there can be apperception without and with perceptions The former case is referred to in some Sanskrit texts as nirvikalpa samadhi. Uninterrupted apperception both in the absence and in the presence of perceptions is also known as sahaja samadhi.

We can now understand the definition of Wei Wu Wei, “a perception without a perceiver”, for the cessation of the superimposition of a personal perceiver onto consciousness is the necessary and sufficient condition for the apperception to take place.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 28

Thank you so much for all that you offer and say to me. In your video clip on “The Peace that passeth understanding,” you talk of that deep peace/stillness as something that is beyond the mind. And I understand this as being “beyond form.” But if all is one, then isn’t this just a metaphor and perhaps in part misleading, because does not the peace you refer to also undergird, embrace, encompass (these, too, of course, being metaphors) form/mind. If all is one (emptiness is form, form emptiness) then that peace is not separate from our everyday experiences and the story of our life. Is this accurate, or would you say it differently or with another emphasis?

Dear Stephen,

You are right when you say ” that peace is not separate from our everyday experiences and the story of our life” and that ” the peace you refer to does also undergird, embrace, encompass (these, too, of course, being metaphors) form/mind”. The mind appears in it and is made of it. For that reason it is correct to say that it is beyond the mind, for all minds appear in it and everything, including the universe, is made of it. It is beyond the mind just as the mirror is beyond the reflected images that appear in it. The reality of the images is the mirror, but the reality of the mirror is not an image. The mirror exists independently from any of the reflected images. In other words, this Presence is both immanent in the perceptions and transcendent in their absence. The belief that it is only immanent is ignorance, the experience that it transcends the mind is enlightenment, and the actual continuous experience of both its transcendence and its immanence is self-realization.

The denial of the transcendence of Atman was a major heresy of Buddhism. Also known as nihilism or as the Anatman doctrine, it was a subject of controversy between buddhists and advaitins in Shankara’s days. However this denial is not found in the original teachings of the Buddha or in those of the Chan and Zen masters. Atman is what they refer to as “our Buddha nature”, “our true nature”, “our original face”. This heresy is still fairly common in contemporary Buddhism. It originates from a misunderstanding of the saying “Form is emptiness and emptiness is form”. To understand this saying correctly, let us take the metaphor of a white page with a red apple painted on it. The red apple is the form, the remaining white portion of the page is the emptiness. But we can look at it differently, the white portion of the page being the form, the red portion being the emptiness (= absence of white). It follows that “Form is emptiness and emptiness is form”. The transcendence, the Atman, The Brahman, “our Buddha nature”, “our true nature”, “our original face”, is the piece of paper, the support of the red and of its absence. The saying “Form is emptiness and emptiness is form” is used as a warning about a state of mind reached by practitioners during meditation in which an absence of thoughts, an emptiness is experienced. The disciple is simply reminded that this absence of form is still a form, and that

enlightenment has not been experienced at that stage, because the transcendence, our Buddha nature has not been revealed yet.

Paradoxically, a form of ignorance similar to nihilism is often found in contemporary Advaita teachings. These paths in both cases lead to a “second class” type of enlightenment which is no enlightenment at all. The teacher has ended his/her quest too early, based on a purely intellectual understanding that “form is emptiness and emptiness is form”. Since he had no revelation of Transcendence, his teachings lack the poetry, the love, the supreme intelligence and the sense of awe that we find in Rumi, Buddha, Jesus, Ramana Maharshi, Jean Klein, Krishna Menon and other truly enlightened beings. Because he is not awakened to his own Presence, his presence doesn’t awake the Presence in the student. The final truth there seems to be “there is nothing to do, your current condition is already that of a realized being”. It is only normal for an ignorant who believes to be realized to tell his students that they are already realized, for he knows no better. This instant form of enlightenment is trendy in our culture of instant gratification. However it doesn’t correspond to the sudden enlightenment the Chan masters spoke of. To them “sudden” didn’t mean “right away”. The only problem with this “enlightenment on sale” is that it falls short from bringing about the peace and the happiness we seek. In some cases it may create in the student a form of resignation, the belief that there is nothing to find. Most disciples will remain stuck with their pseudo enlightenment; others, disenchanted with the whole “truth business”, will revert for a while to their previous life style; the most eager ones will continue the search and find a true teacher whose silence, words, demeanor and actions will take them to the apperception of their true nature and who will guide them on the path until they are established in unshakable peace.

This leads me to a final remark. That which matters is not what is said about the Truth, but where that which is said comes from. If it comes from ignorance, no matter how advaitically correct it seems to be, it will never have the incendiary power of a single line of a Rumi poem. And that which is said is marginal compared to the silent transmission that takes place in the guru’s presence, the highest form of teaching according to Buddha (remember the episode of the flower and of the Buddha’s smile), Ramana Maharshi, Atmananda, Jean Klein, etc. . . And yet this silent teaching is carefully ignored by many contemporary teachers, both buddhists and advaitins, because they cannot speak of an experience which is not theirs, even so they claim to teach the same non dual realization as these illustrious teachers. Ultimately, the truth has to be heard “from the lips of the guru” according to Atmananda’s formula, for it’s apperception to occur. Mere conversations over the internet won’t get the job done. They can at best convey a “sample” of the causeless joy of our true nature, which will resonate in the heart of those who have “eyes to see and ears to hear” the Truth that cannot be uttered.

Love,

Francis

Where does the need to create this illusion come from? - Francis Answers - 29

It has become completely clear that our life is only an illusion and is devoid of any solid reality. Here is the question: where does the need to create this illusion come from?

Let's assume that I am dreaming and that the question arises: "why am I creating this dream?" The moment this question appears, dreaming stops. The question refers now to a past event, the dream. Clearly, the real answer to this question cannot be found among the elements of the dream, for they are not real. For instance, the answer: "I was creating this dream to seduce the beautiful women who was appearing in it" is obviously absurd.

Let's now go back to your question which I reformulate as follows: "Given that all phenomena are illusory, what is the real cause for their creation?" Obviously, this real cause cannot be an illusory phenomenon. The only non phenomenal element of our experience is our awareness, our presence, which is therefore the only remaining candidate for "cause of" or "origin of the need for" the creation of illusion. Our awareness is therefore the answer to the question. However this question in fact doesn't arise: when we are knowingly the answer, all questions vanish.

Friendly yours,

Francis

Only the absolute understanding of what we are allows for relaxing to take place. Francis Answers - 30

Your site has been so nice to drop in on. Thank you.

I've been laying awake pondering, and it just occurred to me if I can never fully understand my true nature with mind, I can never understand events of the world and it's peoples, whys and hows, since the world and mind and I are my true nature. It's just one thing and nothing can be outside of it to understand. Would that be correct? Relaxing can take place?

All the best to you all.

It is correct as far as relative understanding is concerned.

There are two kinds of understanding: referred or relative understanding and absolute understanding. Referred understanding requires something outside that which is understood, whys and hows for instance, or an "understander". This understanding is never complete, never fully satisfying. It addresses the question "how?" but leaves the questions "why?" and "what?" unanswered. It remains purely intellectual. An example of this type of understanding is: an object falls because there is a gravitational force between the mass of the earth and the mass of this object. This understanding is not trivial, because it enables us to calculate with precision the trajectories of falling objects. However the initial question (Why do objects fall?) has not been fully answered. It has simply been replaced by a new question: Why is there gravity?

Absolute understanding stands on its own, pristine, unshakable. For example the understanding that I am conscious is absolute. Absolute understanding is understanding in identity, for when it takes place, I am both that which understands and that which is understood, I am understanding itself. To put it in a nutshell, experience is its own meaning.

Only the absolute understanding of what we are allows for relaxing to take place.

Love,

Francis

How is it possible to experience consciousness without objects? - Francis Answers -23

Dear Francis, I heard you say in one of your videos that freedom was the recognition of the independence of consciousness from the objects. Although it is clear that consciousness is prior to the manifestation, since the objects appear and disappear in it, it is hard for me to grasp how it would be possible to experience consciousness without objects. Up until now, I thought that non-duality was precisely the union of consciousness and the manifested world. I understand that consciousness could exist without forms, but it seems to me that a form is needed for consciousness to be aware of itself, a form in which it can see a reflection of itself. Could you please clarify this point for me?

Sincerely, Steven

Dear Steven,

Let's investigate the nature of the experience from which we derive the certainty that there is consciousness. We generally believe that this certainty originates from objective experience (thoughts, bodily sensations, and external sense perceptions). However, upon closer scrutiny, we realize that it is not so, for the objective experience, the experience of thoughts for instance, doesn't logically lead to the conclusion that there is consciousness, but simply to the conclusion that there are objects, for example thoughts. If we didn't have a real experiential knowledge of consciousness, we wouldn't have this absolute certainty of its existence. Such a certainty must be rooted in a direct experience of that which we are certain of, not derived from an inference which always leaves a margin of uncertainty. The existence of an external world in the absence of perception is such an inference which, although widely accepted as common sense, leaves us with a residual doubt about the continuity of the world: since during our dreams we are not aware that we are dreaming, the world around us could be an illusion similar to the world that appears in our dreams, similarly devoid of existence when not perceived.

We must therefore reach the conclusion that the certainty of consciousness has its roots in a non objective experience that corresponds to a different mode of knowledge, in a subjective "apperception" instead of an objective perception. In this apperception consciousness knows itself by itself directly. This apperception is timeless and takes place beyond the mind. Seen from the vantage point of the mind, it appears as an instantaneous comprehension, a glimpse of reality, an absolute evidence that changes the mind, a mind which has no direct knowledge of the agent of its own transformation.

Consciousness doesn't need a form to see itself, but without the mirror of consciousness forms couldn't possibly appear:

“The beings have their roots in Me, but I don’t have my roots in them.”

(Baghavad Gita).

The duality form-consciousness is only an illusion similar to the duality reflection-mirror.

Warmest regards,

Francis

How to change others - Francis Answers -33

I have been shown the truth of existence through a huge awakening, but it feels like this world “the dream”, is difficult to live. or shall I say my life I have created. I have been trying to wake up my partner but it is difficult. Any advice. Thanks

Dear Luke,

Don't try. If they don't ask about the truth, don't tell. That should be your attitude towards anybody, and especially towards your partner. That which really matters is:

1. what you know you are
2. what you feel
3. what you think
4. what you do

and not what you say.

If you are knowingly infinite consciousness, or even if you are simply open to the possibility that you are unlimited, it will have a deep impact on how you feel, think, and act. Only that has the power, in due time, to change others.

Most affectionately,

Francis

Why does awareness cease during sleep? - Francis Answers - 34

Dear Francis, . . . recently my philosophical mind has left me vexing over two quandaries related to the nondual nature of reality.

1. If our true nature is pure impersonal Awareness merely watching the drama of the mind, and our mistake in this life is our awareness identifying too closely with the mind-body organism, then it should stand to reason that during sleep, pure awareness remains while the brain, with all its thoughts and emotions and sensory perceptions, takes a vacation. But that's not what we observe. We lose consciousness during sleep, exactly what mainstream science would predict if our consciousness was nothing but a byproduct of neurons and a sophisticated soup of brain chemical reactions. My question is, why does awareness, which is our endless nature, cease during the brain's sleep (apart from dreaming)? Why do we not remember a state of pure, relaxed awareness upon waking in the morning to the dull grind of the Illusionary world? Why the "gap" in awareness?
2. If our origin is the pure, unmanifest ocean of consciousness, then how did this pure consciousness ever "decide" to create the physical world, the "world of the relative?" Pure awareness just Is, It doesn't think or feel—only the physical brain does that (which is what we are NOT). But this Awareness must have had the thought, the idea, to divide itself, to create the world of the relative from the world of the absolute. How is it possible that it had an "idea" or a "thought?" Second of all, Consciousness is complete and perfectly loving in and of itself. Any idea to create something different implies a want, and want implies a lack of something. This, too, doesn't make sense. Sure, one could argue that Awareness wanted to view itself through the eyes of duality so it could experience some concept of itself as more than One, but how did this thought take shape without a brain?

Thank you for your time and God bless. Nate

1. You say "If our true nature is pure impersonal Awareness . . . , then it should stand to reason that during sleep, pure awareness remains while the brain, . . . , takes a vacation." Yes, absolutely. Then you add: "But that's not what we observe." What do you mean? Do you mean that the brain doesn't take a vacation and that you keep observing brain activity? Or do you mean that awareness doesn't remain and that you observe the absence of awareness? In both cases awareness remains, observing mind activity in the former case, and the absence of awareness in the latter. It is

impossible to “observe” the absence of awareness during deep sleep, since this “observation” would require the presence of awareness. Therefore, that which we observe is either residual perceptions that don’t leave traces in memory, or the absence of perceptions, which is itself a perception, or awareness itself. Bottom line, when you say that awareness ceases, it is not true since awareness is your ceaseless experience. That which ceases is awareness of objects, not because awareness ceases, but because the objects come and go.

We don’t remember a state of pure, relaxed awareness upon waking up in the morning because we can memorize only objects - thoughts, body sensations and sense perceptions. Awareness cannot be memorized. If we look for its memory within the realm of perceptions, we don’t find it because we are seeking it in the wrong direction. However if, upon waking up, instead of getting immediately hypnotized by the objects of the waking state that seem all of sudden to assault you from all sides, you welcome them with benevolent indifference, you will notice that a residue of the peace that prevailed during deep sleep is still there, in and as the background of your perceptions.

It follows that the gap in awareness you speak of exists only in your imagination, that is in your awareness, not in your experience. And since you are the only one who could experience it, it simply doesn’t exist.

2. My definition of awareness is: that which is aware. You say: “Pure awareness just is, it doesn’t think or feel—only the physical brain does that (which is what we are NOT)” In my case, I am that awareness which is aware of my thoughts, feelings and perceptions. If you are implying that the awareness you talk about is not that which is aware of your thoughts and perceptions, then you and I are using this word with two different meanings, and I have no idea of what you mean by awareness, or of the experience you have of it. My experience is comprised of thoughts, sensations, sense perceptions, and the awareness I talk about. Period. Nothing more, nothing less. To which of those four categories does the awareness you talk about belong?

When you say that the brain thinks and feels, what do you mean? Is that your experience? Or is that the experience of some scientist who correlates electrical signals in the brain (of the brain “braining”) with concomitant thoughts and feelings (of the mind thinking) reported by the patients subjected to that experiment? The fact that there is a correlation between braining and thinking doesn’t imply that the brain thinks anymore that it implies that the mind “brains”. The “braining” and the thinking could have a common cause, which would explain the correlations we observe between brain and mind. Even if we make the claim that the brain thinks, to regard the brain as a local, isolated physical system is a hypothesis which doesn’t have four legs to stand on from the vantage point of Physics. We are led to the conclusion that it is the whole universe, or at least the entire solar

system that thinks, since the weather for instance has an influence on our thoughts.

You ask: "How is it possible for awareness to have an idea or thought?"
Well, this question itself is a thought of awareness which proves that it has the ability to think by simply thinking.

You say: "any idea to create implies a lack of something".

What about creative celebration? You are happy, and as a result you want to sing or play music. Celebratory artistic creation doesn't come from a sense of lack, but of fulness. It is overflowing joy.

Warmest regards,

Francis

**You said in your Advaita Channel answer no. 19
“Maya is the power of the Self that creates the
world and the individual minds.” How do we know
that? - Francis Answers - 36**

Hi Francis You said in your Advaita Channel answer no.19 “Maya is the power of the Self that creates the world and the individual minds.” How do we know that? Do intersubjective agreements help in this regard? Infinite Gratitude Maher

As the self sees itself in its own glory, it knows that consciousness is all there is. As a result, everything else, including the world and the individual minds, can only be an appearance in the mirror of Presence. Intersubjective agreements help in creating this illusion, not in getting rid of it.

What is the mind? - Francis Answers - 37

From the standpoint of Consciousness what is the mind? Does Consciousness witness it? It is said to be the source of all-so did the mind spring forth from it?

Dear Anand,

First, let's be clear about the words we use. I call consciousness, or awareness that, whatever that is, which is perceiving these words right now and understands them. To me, that is precisely the Anand I am speaking to.

The mind is made of whatever appears in consciousness objectively, that is of whatever appears in consciousness except consciousness itself.

It follows from this definition that consciousness is the witness of the mind.

Upon close scrutiny you will find out that consciousness exists both during the presence of the mind (as its witness) and in its absence (as the continuous background of all perceptions). The mind cannot exist without consciousness, but consciousness exists with and without the mind. It follows that consciousness is the reality of the experience we call "mind". In other words, the mind springs forth from it.

It is obvious that consciousness is the **reality** and the substance of all your perceptions. Does that mean that it is the **reality** and the substance of all? Let's investigate this: if it isn't, it means that there is a greater **reality** which, being the **reality** of all, must also be the **reality** of consciousness. In that case, it means that consciousness is not the **real** perceiver or witness of the mind which contradicts our own experience, for our own experience tells us that I, consciousness, awareness, am **really** the one who perceives my thoughts, feelings and sense perceptions.

Warmest regards,

Francis

What feels the sense " I AM" if there is no me? - Francis Answers - 39

Francis, I feel the sense of "I am" very strongly, and even though I dont feel as lost or confused as I used to, I feel there is something still unresolved, a sort of confusion, in that I dont know if I am being tricked, other Advaita teachers say there is no me! so what feels the sense " I AM" if there is no me? and if there is no me, as the Advaita teachers claim, then why do they respond to their name?

Thank you so much for this great means of asking you a question!! wonderful!! LLOYD

Dear Lloyd,

When you say "I feel the sense of "I am" very strongly" there is on the one hand the "I" who feels the sense of "I am", and on the other hand the sense of "I am" which is being felt. Which one are you? Obviously you are the former, the perceiver, not the latter which is simply something perceived. When some Advaita teachers say there is no "me", they mean that the perceived "me" is not the real "me", the perceiver. It may also be the case that some so-called Advaita teachers don't speak from the experience of their true Self, in which case it is useless to try to figure out what they mean!

Now, because the real "me" is the perceiver and. as such, is never perceived as an object, any belief or feeling we have that it is some how limited, personal, mortal is not based on our experience and therefore has no value. As a result of this understanding, we are open to the possibility that our real "I" is unlimited and eternal. This makes possible the discovery of our true nature, which can be sometimes expressed by the sentence "there is no (limited, personal, mortal)"me".

Warmest regards,

Francis

P.S. I was forgetting: "If there is no me, as the Advaita teachers claim, then why do they respond to their name?"

They know they are not their body, or their mind. They know or ascertain what the caller means as he/she calls their name, whether he/she means their body, their mind or consciousness, and they respond accordingly. Very simple. The argument according to which their answering their name would establish their ignorance of their true nature simply comes from a misunderstanding of the condition of a realized being. Ramana Maharshi, Atmananda and Jean Klein would answer their name. Not to do it would be quite rude and unloving.

**Why am I not aware of sensations/thoughts in other body minds if there is only one awareness?
- Francis Answers -40**

I can see/know/realize that I am not this body/sensations/thoughts, but that the body/mind/thoughts rather show up in the awareness that I am.

1. However, since I can only experience sensations and thoughts that arise in this body/mind, doesn't that imply that awareness is localized?
2. Why am I not aware of sensations/thoughts in other body minds if there is only one Self/awareness?

Thanks

1. As a matter of fact, the sensations and thoughts that you experience arise in your awareness, not in your body/mind. The body/mind itself arises in awareness in the form of sensations and thoughts. That which arises within awareness cannot give you any valid information on the awareness to which it appears, just as the images of the moon appearing through a telescope cannot give us any information on the gender or the age of the astronomer who observes them.
2. The fact that you don't recollect being aware of other sensations and thoughts doesn't imply that you weren't aware of them. Do you remember what you were doing 10 years ago, on the same day, at the same time? I guess not. Does that imply you weren't aware of anything then?

Warmest regards,

Francis

Does the mind create? - Francis Answers - 42

The notion of creation appears frequently in discussions and Q&As (e.g. Nos.18, 19, 25, 29, 36), whether it is ascribed to, powered by Maya or by Reality itself. For example, in the answer to Q. 18 it is stated: "It is this Reality that dynamically creates, sustains and annihilates all things, including memories, from moment to moment". Is this notion and its use, related to that of causation, not a misleading one from the perspective of Advaita (whether traditional or modern), which in the final analysis denies both? One can understand their value as a stratagem (upadhi) or intermediate stage in the way to a full understanding (paramarthika), and this seems to have been the clear intention of Ramana Maharshi in its employment. This intermediate teaching, traditionally called drishti srishti-vada (Perception is Creation), suggests that the world is a product of the (individual?) perceiving mind (or of intellect?), and is meant to be sublated by the final teaching, ajativada, the doctrine of No-creation. Is the former thus simply a device, even though one is necessarily led to think or to infer that Atman-Brahman has something to do with (Its own) Manifestation? Evidently, you give a pointer to the solution of the problem in Q&A 36: "Consciousness is all there is. . . everything else. . . can only be an appearance in the mirror of Presence". Any further comments on creation and the individual mind in particular? Much appreciated, Alberto

Dear Alberto,

You say that Advaita denies both the notion of creation and that of causation. It would be more precise to say that it denies the notions of objective creation and causation (of a phenomenon by another phenomenon) and upholds the notions of subjective creation and causation (of a phenomenon by the noumenon). Of course, the substance of the phenomenon is the noumenon, the phenomenon being therefore devoid of independent existence. There is only one reality, and it is the noumenon.

Regarding the individual mind, it is obvious that the perception of a mind event (thought, sensation or sense perception) and its creation are one and the same, since you cannot have one without the other. Perception is creation. However the false assumption here is that a limited individual mind perceives and therefore creates. Where is the evidence that the awareness that perceives is mind-based or limited? Under this false or at least unverified assumption we would have objective creation and objective perception (as if a thought could think, or a feeling feel). Understanding that this is an impossibility, we move to the next step, ajativada: there is no (objective) creation, no creation of a phenomenon by another phenomenon. All creation, causation and perception is noumenal and universal, awareness is the cause (material, informal, final, and efficient) of all phenomena:

Material: it is the substance all phenomena are made out of

Informal: being itself formless, it creates all forms, it “in-forms”

Final: it is the ultimate goal and purpose of all phenomena. The manifestation reveals and celebrates the Unmanifested

Efficient: It is the creator of all created things and the doer of all deeds.

Love,

Francis

There is nothing you can do to awaken so just go to the movies or something - Francis Answers - 43

Hello and thank you for your time. Which of the following statements reflect the truth and would you please explain why or why not? Statement 1. No person gets enlightened or there is no one to become enlightened. Statement 2. Enlightenment is an event that occurs in the human mind when the belief that they are a separate individual with choice and control is questioned and drops away. Statement 3: There is nothing you can do to awaken so just go to the movies or something. This last statement seems to imply that there is no correlation between seeking enlightenment via teachers, teachings, self-inquiry,etc and waking up. Your reflections on these topics would be appreciated. Thanks again.

Dear Regina,

Statement 1. is true,

Statement 2. has to be amended as follows: Enlightenment is a non objective experience that occurs in consciousness as a result of which the belief that we are a separate individual with choice and control is questioned and drops away.

Statement 3. is misleading and lacks clarity. It is true if the “you” in it is the false “you”, it is false if the “you” in it is the true “you”. How could the false “you” seek its ending? How could it really do anything, since it is not the real doer? That which seeks the Truth is therefore the real “you” and every step it takes to seek enlightenment is efficient. Teachers upholding statement 3. are really telling you “my teachings are useless” and they are right on that point. Follow their advice: stay away from them.

Love,

Francis

Do you address this issue of working “on” the gross body in parallel with the understanding in the intellect? - Francis Answers - 44

Dear Francis, We know that the intellectual realization or understanding of the knowledge of our essential nature is the first step (a big one indeed) towards Full Understanding (usually called Self-Realization or Liberation), that will necessarily include the “assimilation” of the mentioned knowledge, totally and fully. In my understanding (please correct me if wrong), some of the habits or embedded tendencies created by our conditioning in our life (or past lifetimes if we adhere to the hindu concept) had already passed the status of simple “mental tendencies” and became imprinted in our nervous systems (or cellular memory) and may cloud or slow down the very same process of assimilation (of the knowledge). (I am talking of normal people, not clinic cases of neurosis, schizophrenia, etc..) It may appear that the simple fact that we “know” that “I am not the body” intellectually, doesn’t have the necessary strength, in many cases, to dissolve, in itself, those physical” obstacles to the process of assimilation.

1. Do you address this issue of working “on” the gross body in parallel with the understanding in the intellect?
2. If yes, how?

Thanks in advance, Peace, Mouna

Dear Mouna,

The answer to 1. is yes.

The answer to 2. as been outlined in “Francis Answers - 2”:

Here is what I suggest to you: Be acutely aware of the actual experience of your body. It is made of body sensations floating in the space of your awareness. Surrender, offer these sensations to the presence, to that space in which they appear. Don’t interfere with them by trying to suppress them, keep them, or change them. Do that first during moments of availability in your life, for instance during these periods set apart for meditation or yoga. Start sitting as comfortably as possible, then add yoga postures and other exercises from the hatha yoga paraphernalia, always being gentle with your body, without inflicting pain or discomfort. Then gradually incorporate this awareness and surrender of your body to other situations in your life, sitting at your desk or in the dentist’s chair, etc..

Also, when thoughts about the Truth, the path, your true nature appear to you, don’t avoid them. Welcome them. Let them guide you to the conscious presence to which they refer, to that in you which perceives and understands, in sharp contrast with the thoughts of ignorance, the thoughts of fear and desire, which

always refer to a separate “Me”. If such thoughts appear, investigate the nature of this “Me”, and whether it is separate or not.

Finally, there are external sense perceptions through which the so-called physical world appears to you. They too point to the presence in which they appear. Proceed with these in the same manner as with your body sensations, offering them to that presence, to your pure consciousness.

There are limitations however to that which can be transmitted over the internet. There is something special about being in the physical presence of your guru that cannot be experienced without a direct contact.

Love,

Francis

I have been having the experience of being separate from my thoughts during meditation - Francis Answers - 45

Dear Francis, I have been enjoying your DVDs for a while now and would like to ask a question about witnessing during meditation. Increasingly, both in frequency and duration, I have been having the experience of being separate from my thoughts during meditation. On one two week occasion, I also had this experience outside of meditation, during activity, most noticeably during routine activities such as washing dishes, taking a shower, etc. This experience outside of meditation was liberating and wonderful. I am wondering whether I can encourage this experience in any way, or do I just leave it alone to develop at its own pace? Or, is it relevant at all? All the texts I read (Yoga Sutras, Tibetan Yoga, etc.) describe this experience very clearly, so this leads me to think it is significant and encouraging. Thank you, Joan

Dear Joan,

The experience you describe as “being separate from my thoughts” is one in which you are knowingly the presence in which your thoughts appear. Happiness or peace is the experience of awareness knowing itself, which explains why this experience is “liberating and wonderful”. You will notice that this experience seems in the beginning to occur when circumstances are fairly neutral: while meditating, washing dishes, taking a shower, etc. . . This is due to the fact that when the “objective landscape” doesn’t generate reactions of attraction/repulsion (neutral circumstances) it stops hypnotizing our attention. Awareness “falls back” onto itself and our primeval peace is experienced.

You can be open to this experience by welcoming with benevolent indifference the flow of perceptions, feelings and thoughts, which is the essence of meditation. However, you cannot trigger it: if you don’t call it, it will call you. This experience is a good sign, but never forget that the ultimate goal is the Self, not the peace that surrounds it. You want the diamond, not the box that contains it, no matter how fancy it looks. Addiction to this experience may become an obstacle on the path. The goal is not a state that comes and goes. As the Buddhists say: As long as there is still a distinction between nirvana and samsara, it is still samsara.

Love,

Francis

Is enlightenment always brutal and full of fear? - Francis Answers - 46

Dear Francis, Recently after a fierce internal conflict a question entered my mind suddenly which was ‘‘How can I check right now if I am my body or mind or whatever?’’ I haven’t found any way to check what or who I am. Therefore I concluded that what I am is not an object. And at that very second I felt an absolute dread. I thought I would go insane or something like that. It was anything but bliss experienced in watching your thoughts or a beautiful landscape. That nothingness that I glimpsed for a second is not that sweet blissful eternity I was dreaming of. I was so scared that I immediately reconvinced myself that I am this body and personality. It felt more safe. But the only thing I want is the Truth, so my question is ‘‘How can I overcome that absolute fear?’’ And is enlightenment always so brutal and full of fear?

Dear Nick,

What a beautiful question!

That which veils the sweet blissful eternity that we are is our identification with objects, in other words with concepts, bodily sensations and sense perceptions. During the experience you are describing, you reached the clear rational conclusion that that which you are is not an object. At that very moment, you stood free from identification with any concepts, free from all beliefs. However only half of the veil was removed, and the remaining half, mostly feelings with which we identify, the core of which is raw existential fear, fear of absolute disappearance, rushed to the rescue as your identification with bodily sensations was being threatened by your investigation. The investigation into the nature of Self proceeds along two main lines of inquiry:

1. What am I at the level of thoughts?
2. What am I at the feeling level?

The first kind of questioning is made of rational thoughts which correspond to the deconstruction of the belief systems associated with ignorance. The second kind is comprised of sensations in the body (sometimes associated with sense perceptions and irrational images in the mind) which correspond to the dissolution of feeling systems the purpose of which was to simulate the presence of a separate entity. You went back to it and it felt more safe, but there is no real safety there, as a body, as a separate person. Only the Truth can give you the peace you are longing for.

This leads to your last questions:

1. ‘‘How can I overcome that absolute fear?’’

By welcoming this nothingness with determination and courage, preferably with the help of an instructor abiding in the fearlessness of Infinite Presence.

2. “Is enlightenment always so brutal and full of fear?”

What you described is not enlightenment, but the roaring of the lions who keep the gate on your way to it. They are there just to test your love for the Truth. If you show courage and burning desire for the Absolute, they will open the gate for you with a sweet smile and all heaven will break loose.

Love,

Francis

What can be done? - Francis Answers - 47

In answer to number 43 on your website, “There is nothing you can do to awaken so just go to the movies or something” you replied, “It is true if the “you” in it is the false “you”, it is false if the “you” in it is the true “you”. How could the false “you” seek its ending? How could it really do anything, since it is not the real doer? That which seeks the Truth is therefore the real “you” and every step it takes to seek enlightenment is efficient. Teachers upholding this [statement 3.] are really telling you “my teachings are useless” and they are right on that point.” I understand what you are saying but it still doesn’t answer the question of what can be done (instead of going to the movies) to promote the necessary understanding. Can you clarify what can be done instead of going to the movies? Also, it would be wonderful to be in the presence of my guru, as you have suggested elsewhere, as I am given to understand that some of this can happen through transmission, but what if he/she has not yet shown up? What do you do then? I suffer as one who has had an extended taste of the peace that can be experienced when thinking falls away, and it shows up periodically on its own from time to time, but most of the time I suffer and I do not know how to get back. Is it a choice? My exact predicament was recently described in an article that I read on the Stillness Speaks website about a follower of Jean Klein which provided these same questions. What can be done besides just waiting? Anything?

Dear Pam,

It is very true that when you are at peace and happy there is nothing to do: if it is not broken, don’t try to fix it. But let’s face it: when you suffer, you are in ignorance, no matter how revealing and peaceful these fleeting moments of clarity were, these moments you don’t know how to go back to. When in ignorance, you believe to be a personal thinker and a personal doer, and as such you may as well try to think the right thoughts and to do the right deeds: investigate and meditate, seek the Truth through all means at your disposal. Imagine a detective who would not investigate a difficult case, or who would drastically narrow the scope of his investigation, neglecting for instance to interrogate witnesses, because they may not be reliable, or to read a forensic report, because he finds it too intellectual. What would be his chances to solve the case? And yet many people suffering from ignorance behave like this detective: either they stop seeking because they have heard somewhere that they are not a doer, although they in fact still very much believe to be one, a belief which is at the root of their suffering; or they resist visiting teachers because they fear they may not be trustworthy and may mislead them; or they reject using their reason to liberate themselves from fallacious belief systems because they have the misconception that thought is the enemy of Truth.

What can be done besides just waiting? The answer is: everything possible. Investigate, meditate, seek the support and the company of a teacher who speaks to your heart and to your intelligence. Make your search for the Truth the first priority of your life. Seek it everywhere and at every moment. Try to live in accordance with it. Try to live in beauty: surround yourself with beautiful people, read beautiful books, listen to beautiful music. Follow your sense of happiness within yourself and within others. You are asking what to do as if you couldn't see anything that could be done, and I see so many things that I don't know where to start. When you are madly in love, you don't spend too much time hesitating over the cheapest way to visit your beloved. Fall in love, deeper.

Love,

Francis

We are that which is its own cause - Francis Answers - 49

Francis, Based on your answer to question 12, I am right to say that we can not prove that consciousness is not the product of the brain? All we can prove is that the brain is subject to the laws of physical reality which are universal and non local. Therefore, I am still left with the possibility that consciousness is the product of the brain. Thank you

Dear Aziz,

The answer you are referring to must lack clarity. First I define consciousness as that, whatever that is, which is aware of my words in this very moment. The correct and full statement would be: based on phenomenal (scientific) evidence, we cannot prove or disprove that consciousness is brain dependent. We cannot even design any thought experiment that would prove or disprove this. If you think you can, I am very interested to hear about it.

You are attached to the theory of consciousness being the product of the brain, of something non physical being caused by a physical object.

How could something which is real (consciousness) be the product of something which is not real (a limited object)? I obviously failed to convince you of two facts:

Fact 1. Consciousness is absolutely real, beyond any doubts, and is in fact the only reality we could be absolutely certain of.

Fact 2. The reality of any seemingly limited physical object (such as a brain) is non local. It follows that even if we make the far fetched assumption that the brain “creates” consciousness - whatever that means-, the brain is not the ultimate reality of consciousness, which must be non-local. The reality of consciousness, the real “I” can therefore only be universal.

Let’s consider it again from a slightly different angle: let’s assume again that consciousness is the product of the brain. What then? The brain obviously is not the product of itself, therefore consciousness is the product of whatever it is that produces the brain. We are led to the conclusion that in reality consciousness can only be the product of something which is the product of itself. I am comfortable with this, because on the one hand I am comfortable with consciousness being its own cause, and because on the other hand it is obvious to me as it is to you, and you agree with me on this, that there is exactly zero evidence, scientific, phenomenal, or otherwise, proving that consciousness is the product of the brain. And if we assume that consciousness is not its own cause, it follows that the reality of consciousness, the real I, can only be that which is its own cause, and I am absolutely comfortable with that: we are really that which is its own cause.

Thank you for your interest in this question.

Sincerely,

Francis

One Truth, many ways - Francis Answers - 50

Hello Francis, teachers have been saying that self inquiry is a way the separate self strengthens itself, they also claim meditation does the same and that enlightenment is an energetic shift, in other words the self inquiry hasn't got the power to release the tension of being a separate person, do you feel there is a way to release the physical tension of feeling like a separate person?

Yes, there are many ways.

One of them is called Advaita, the old fashioned way, the way of the Rishis, of Ashtavakra, Janaka, Gaudapada, Shankara, Ramana Maharshi, Atmananda Krishna Menon, Ramakrishna, Jean Klein, Robert Adams, Robert Linssen, Wolter Keers, among many others: listening to the Truth from the lips of the teacher, investigating along the lines that have been suggested (self inquiry, higher reasoning, discrimination between the real and the unreal, between the seer and the seen, etc), meditating. It is during this third stage that the residues of ignorance stored in the body in the form of postural attitudes and dynamic patterns get released. The investigation leads to glimpses of Truth; we are left every time in a state of openness which allows for the release of the chronic and semi-conscious tensions that perpetuate the illusion of being a separate entity.

Another way is the path of the Buddha, the direct path of the School of Sudden Awakening of Northern China, the path of Bodhidharma, Hui Neng, Huang Po, Hui Hai, Lin Tsi, Wei Wu Wei and many others: listening to the Dharma from the lips of the teacher, meditating and living with the teaching until the first glimpse of "our original face", a samadhi which will be followed by many others, "as many as there are grains of sand on the banks of the Ganga river" (Huei Neng). Each of these instantaneous recognitions of our Buddha nature leaves the disciple in a state of openness that allows for the release of the physical tensions tied to ignorance, until all distinctions between self and non-self are abolished.

Another way is the path of Jesus: "I am" is the way, the Truth, and the Life. Nobody can have access to the Father (the Absolute) except through this "I am" This is the Christian version of self inquiry which leads to the "peace that passeth the mind", a peace in which one "is still and knows this" "I am" ". In this peace, all the tensions of the body get released, the body becomes a "glorious body", a body baptized or "christed" (ointed in ancient Greek) with the shine of Presence.

Another way is the path of the Sufi, the path of Hallaj, of Rumi, Hafiz, Ibn Arabi, Sheikh Abd el Kader and many others: there is nothing but God. Allowing for the body to dissolve in His Presence like the darkness at sunrise, the truthlover is addicted to the perfume of his own vanishing.

There are many more ways.

The keyword is Love.

Francis

Let's face it: we have to face our fear - Francis Answers - 51

Dear Francis, First of all, a great big THANK YOU for all that Consciousness is doing through the dear form we know as Francis Lucille! Your work is such a blessing! I have been on a 'spiritual' path most of my adult life and seriously so some 10 years now. A good friend of mine, Mary Scott (who published 'The Kundalini Concept') introduced me to some really helpful books by J Krishnamurti and Maurice Nicoll. Maurice Nicoll led me to Ramana Maharshi. I then 'discovered' Joel Goldsmith and Eckhart Tolle, whose work finally led me to non-duality sites through the internet. All these authors and teachers seemed to lead me further along the pathless path. Non-duality 'clicked' within the deepest of myself and seemed what I had been looking for, although I had always been cognisant of the fact that I was being 'led' and that I should not strive to 'achieve'. It has been a long, lone journey, not in a way of feeling lonely because the Self has always been my companion, just lonely in the sense that I have not had a physically present human teacher. However, now that I am 'on the threshold of eternity' (I realise that is not possible because there is no going in and out of It, we are always in It) and know intellectually that I am that limitless Consciousness, I have suddenly been very badly attacked by extremely negative feelings and it is really difficult to just let them appear without getting totally usurped by them. I know I should not castigate myself for experiencing those feelings but the ego is clever and is trying its hardest to plunge me into some sort of depression by constantly telling me about my shortcomings. I just wanted to ask you if this is a normal part of the 'process' of the Infinite finding itself. It is difficult to explain all this in words, but I am sure you will understand what I am trying to express. Thank you for your help.

Dear Lucia,

I apologize for the delay in answering your note.

Regarding your question, I would say that depression "is a normal part of the 'process' of the Infinite NOT finding itself". When the understanding is firm that all, including "our" decisions and "mistakes" is the play of the Absolute, there is no room left for beating oneself up for one's own shortcomings, nor for having regrets or fear. As you get more and more firmly established in this experience-understanding, the symptoms related to the misidentification with a human body will gradually vanish. Don't try to control the negative feelings. Let them do whatever they want to do, you are the openness in which they appear. Let's face it: we have to face our fear sooner or later, and better sooner than later. Be interested in understanding it, since it has been your main problem for so many years. That requires welcoming it, which will lead you to its source,

the I image desperately fighting for its impossible eternity.

But don't misunderstand me: don't focus on your fear, don't invite it if it leaves you alone. Only deal with it (fearlessly :) whenever it shows up. The rest of the time, let your fear starve in isolation in its cell. Don't visit it. Enjoy your peace and your freedom. Celebrate your eternal Presence by all means available to you. Understand and experience that thinking about it and seeking it is already part of this celebration. Live with the perfume that emanates from your love for it.

Love,

Francis

Is Consciousness conscious of itself prior to the birth of the body and after its death? - Francis Answers - 53

Hello, Mr. Lucille: My question refers to the self-conscious or unconscious nature of the Unmanifest, our True Nature, and if this Awareness needs “form” (for example a human body) to be aware of itself: While Ramana and others (I think Jean Klein too) considered that Self-Consciousness is one of the characteristics of the Absolute, with or without relying on manifest material form, Nisargadatta, on the other hand, says Awareness and Consciousness are not the same concept. He teaches Awareness is That which is aware of Consciousness, and Consciousness is That which allows Awareness to be self-conscious. In this equation, Consciousness would be like a light which illuminates Awareness, but that Consciousness needs a form to exist (a human body would be the most perfect example) , that is, Awareness needs a form to be aware of That which allows Awareness itself to be Self-Conscious .In the words of a spanish master, the feeling of being is like the bitter taste that reveals the existence of a sense of taste. That bitter taste is not the sense of taste, and this sense is not touched by the bitter taste, but it needs that bitter taste(which depends on form) to know Its existence. But, would it not lead us to the conclusion that the Eternal Formless Awareness =eternal stupor and Pure Being= Pure Oblivion?. So, resuming: 1. Is Consciousness conscious of itself prior to the birth of the body and after its death? 2. Does Awareness need a form in order to be conscious of itself? Thank you very much in advance

Dear Rogelio,

Before answering your two questions, I would like to make sure that you understand clearly my use of the words consciousness and awareness: what I mean by consciousness is that, whatever that is, which is **really** conscious of these words right now, and awareness is that which is **really** aware of these words right now. It should be pretty obvious that in that case these two words are synonyms. Whatever use other teachers or their translators, other sages or ignorants, have made of these words is not our problem here. And whatever I say in my answer doesn't refer to what other teachers, including mine, other friends of mine or even myself may have said in the past about those matters, but solely to my experience. Let's now consider your two questions:

1. Is consciousness conscious of itself prior to the birth of the body and after its death?

There is only consciousness, so whatever consciousness is conscious of can only be itself. However consciousness can be aware of itself in two modes: 1. as itself and 2. as other than itself. Mode 1 is knowledge (jnana), mode 2 is ignorance (avidya

or ajnana). Mode 2 requires the projection of some object that can impersonate an “other than itself”, therefore mode 2 requires at least a mind, or a body-mind, since the body experiences are a subset of the mind experiences (this follows from the fact that every experience of the body is made of perceptions (mind), but not every experience of the mind is made of bodily perceptions -for instance thoughts).

Therefore, if the meaning of your question is: Is consciousness conscious of itself prior to the birth of the body and after its death? The answer is yes, consciousness is always conscious of itself. But if the meaning of your question is: Is Consciousness conscious of itself **as itself** prior to the birth of the body and after its death? the answer is: the presence of the body makes ignorance possible, but not necessary, and the absence of the body (before and after death) leaves ignorance possible, but not necessary. The total absence of perceptions, including the perception of the absence of perceptions, makes ignorance impossible, and is therefore the experience of awareness aware of itself **as itself** in the absence of objects (nirvikalpa samadhi). There is still one possibility left, which is awareness aware of itself **as itself** both in the presence and in the absence of objects (sahaja samadhi).

2. Does awareness need a form in order to be conscious of itself?

The answer to this question is pretty straightforward following the previous remarks.

If the question is: does awareness need a form in order to be conscious of itself?, the answer is: no, because consciousness is always aware of itself (there is nothing that is not awareness, whatever it is we are aware of is therefore always awareness).

If the question is: does awareness need a form to be conscious of itself **as itself**?, the answer is no, because awareness always knows itself **as itself** in the absence of forms.

Final remarks:

1. The experience of awareness being aware of itself as itself is the experience we refer to as happiness, stillness, peace, love, beauty, intelligence, God, eternity, and the experience of awareness being aware of itself as other than itself is the one we refer to as misery, fear, desire, sense of lack, of incompleteness, psychological suffering.
2. The core of my experience, consistent with the accounts of awareness by some of the teachers you are referring to and others (Jean Klein, Ramana Maharshi, Atmananda Krishna Menon, Robert Adams, Ma Ananda Mai, Gaudapada, Shankara, Buddha, Rumi, Meister Eckhart, Parmenides, Huang Po, Lao Tse, etc), is precisely that the (seemingly) ordinary Presence which is aware of these words right now is universal, immortal and divine. And we are not talking here about oblivion or eternal stupor, but truly about eternal awareness. It seems that accounts of awareness by some are

not consistent with this experience, which would indicate that they are not sharing it, and visualize the absence of perceptions as a “nothingness”. This core of my experience is precisely the “good news”, the centrality of the teaching. If there is no such a good news to be shared, the teaching becomes much ado about “nothing”.

Love,
Francis

I cannot grasp the concept that the mind is contained within me - Francis Answers - 54

Francis, Chris pointed me in your direction, and suggested I ask some of my questions to you. I honestly don't know what, or how, to ask because I have heard, and learned so much about Advaita that I already know what the answers will be. It's unfortunate, I know, and I'm extremely frustrated with it. I've looked within, and asked repeatedly, "Who, or what am I?", and it stops within my mind, meaning that, as far back as I can trace myself, I seem to be in the mind... looking outward. I cannot grasp the concept that the mind is contained within me, not the other way around. I understand what is said, but cannot move past this obstacle of self-limitation. Honestly, I feel trapped, and I want there to be something I can do to get out, but everywhere I look, I'm told there is nowhere to go and nothing to do. Any advice you have would be immensely appreciated. Thank you, Mike

Dear Mike,

Forget whatever you have been told. Let's take a fresh start.

The core of your question is: "I cannot grasp the concept that the mind is contained within me." We need to clarify the meaning of two words you are using: "me" and "mind".

1. "me": let's define "I", or "me", or "consciousness", or "awareness" as that, whatever that is, which is seeing these words right now and understands them.
2. "mind": let's define "mind" as the set of all of your perceptions: thoughts, memories, dreams, sensations in the body, feelings, external sense perceptions your "human experience" is made of.

It follows from these definitions that the reality of mind is the experience of perceptions of all kinds, "mentations" appearing in awareness. These mentations have no other place to exist in than the consciousness in which they appear. We are absolutely certain that there is an element of reality attached to them, since we experience them. However each of these mentations could in and by itself be an illusion, as evidenced in the case of our dreams which reveal their illusory quality as we wake up. Since each of them taken separately could be an illusion, their reality must be the awareness in which they appear. The mind is contained within me as awareness, and I am the ultimate reality of the mind.

A few additional remarks for the philosophically enclined:

1. A clear distinction has to be made between mind and brain. Brain is an organ belonging to the physical universe, made of particles dancing together the refined choreography of this human body. Mind is an experience. It

doesn't belong to the physical universe, therefore it doesn't belong to the body or to the brain, although there is a correlation between mind and brain. This correlation which is established by numerous experiments in neuroscience is incompatible with the dualistic, Cartesian view which sees mind and matter as two separate realities. The materialist view according to which mind and consciousness would "emerge" from the brain, and therefore from matter on the one hand denies reality to the experience of consciousness -an experience the reality of which we are certain of beyond the shadow of a doubt, and on the other hand leaves open the question of the reality of matter. The idealist view according to which world, body and brain would be mere thoughts appearing in a human mind is childishly anthropocentric and solipsistic if it denies the reality of other minds and, if it doesn't, leaves open the question of the ultimate reality that encompasses all the minds and connects them. The nondualist view is flawless: if there is only one reality, the reality of our experience, consciousness, must be this reality, and therefore be universal, infinite and beyond space and time. If we investigate whether it is possible for consciousness to be universal rather than personal, we will be surprised to discover that there is in fact not a single piece of evidence that precludes this possibility.

2. At that stage we are left with a view of the world, mind and consciousness which is simple and free from paradoxes, doesn't conflict with modern science, and which is in accordance with the totality of our experience. Does this make it true? Certainly not. This view is also at odds with the dualist belief systems currently prevalent in most cultures, religions and philosophies. Does this make it false? Certainly not, for Truthland is not a democracy where truth gets decided in the voting booths. What then? How do we decide the truth of non-duality? What can we do? It may seem at that stage that we have run out of resources and that our investigation cannot go any further. And that is true of the intellectual, theoretical aspect of it: we have reached the end of that street. However there is a new, infinitely rich and promising direction our investigation can take, the experimental path. If it is true that consciousness is the reality of the universe, which restores love, intelligence and beauty at the core of it, there must be numerous implications, many of which can be experimentally tested. The outcome of these tests may not be phenomenal in nature, or, if it is, it may be subject to several divergent interpretations or it may not meet the scientific thresholds of repeatability or of verification by independent observers. However, it may have an absolute convincing power similar in that sense to the inner experience of being conscious, an experience which cannot be in anyway scientifically validated and has nevertheless absolute convincing strength. Let's take as an example our social interactions. It may make a difference whether, in our relations with a fellow human being:

1. we believe to be a separate consciousness interacting with another equally separate consciousness, or

2. we are truly open to the possibility that we are universal presence interacting with itself, talking to itself, listening to itself, understanding itself.

We may as a result observe different outcomes, both at the phenomenal and at the non-phenomenal levels, depending on the stand we take (1 or 2). We may notice that in order to conduct this type of experiment there is a prerequisite: we must be genuinely convinced of the possibility of the non dual hypothesis. Many other similar experiments can be designed regarding our connexion with the world and its events, with the body and its sensations, the decisions we take, the way we think, feel perceive, etc. . . . In fact every moment of our life can be envisioned as such an experiment. Just as the physicist, by conducting experiments, establishes a dialogue with nature, asking questions and awaiting outcomes (nature's answers), we may open a similar dialogue with absolute Reality itself, provided we are open to that possibility. Reality is waiting.

Best regards,

Francis

How can thinking approach Truth? - Francis Answers - 55

These last months I have been walking in a circling path. Apparently, the landscape across the path seems to change, as it happens with the circumstances in life. But the path, the land I am stepping on, is always exactly the same. It is a path of understanding and oblivion . Understanding and then forgetting which only brings a great despair and a strong longing. How is it possible to have seen/experienced the falsehood of a belief and that some time afterwards this belief rises again as something true and identification comes back? This is absurd! Is this happening because of the strength of habit? Is this happening because there really was not any understanding? Why..? I feel lost. Now it looks as if I see that there is a claiming of the understanding and that which claims is that which is desperate and it now rises as a victim of oblivion. And understanding is not in the nature of this little "I". And in this path of inquiry, how thinking can approach Truth? How can that which is limited access to that which is unlimited? There is something pretentious and arrogant in this. Thanks for your words. Patri

Dear Patri,

You asked:

1. How is it possible to have seen/experienced the falsehood of a belief and that some time afterwards this belief rises again as something true and identification comes back?

It is not possible, if the falsehood of a belief has been fully seen. It is possible, if it has been fleetingly, incompletely seen. You need to firmly establish our understanding/experiencing of what you are through the investigation/meditation process until thoughts, feelings and sense perceptions loose the power to disturb your peace.

2. How can thinking approach Truth? How can that which is limited have access to that which is unlimited?

The only thinking that can approach Truth is the thinking that originates directly from Truth. Thought cannot have access to Truth, but a thought can dissolve in its understanding (litterally that which "stands under" it) which is the experience of Truth. That which is limited, the thought, cannot comprehend that which is unlimited and embraces all things, the universal awareness. That which is pretentious and arrogant is to believe to be a limited thinker, a limited decider, a limited doer and fail to see that only the Absolute truly exists, thinks, decides and does. That's why it is called the Creator, because it creates all things, (not only some things), including thoughts, decisions and deeds.

Love,

Francis

The “I AM” that is felt so easily and effortlessly, is that what the seeker is looking for? - Francis Answers - 56

Francis, The “I AM” that is felt so easily and effortlessly,

1. is that what the seeker is looking for? Or is there something beyond the “I AM” that is operating?
2. Also when the “I AM” is felt, is it the person that feels it, or is it the being, there is some confusion around this point in advaita circles,
3. I know of masters who say it is impossible for the person to sense the “I AM”, if this is so, then who senses the “I AM”?
4. Is there a conscious choice for the person to turn the attention to the “I AM” or is it not possible to choose the ” I am”, its a very confusing concept for me,

thank you so much

lloyd

Dear Lloyd,

1. The seeker is looking for absolute peace and happiness, eternity, absolute intelligence, love and beauty. If the “I AM” that is felt so easily and effortlessly meets these criteria, then it is what the seeker is looking for.
2. Only consciousness can know consciousness. That which is known by consciousness as an object cannot know consciousness. A thought doesn't think, a perception doesn't perceive, a feeling doesn't feel.
3. It is impossible for a limited person to perceive consciousness because a limited person is devoid of consciousness; it is a perceived object. Only consciousness perceives, therefore only consciousness can perceive consciousness.
4. A limited person doesn't create its own thoughts, therefore a limited person has no freedom, no choice. It simply has the illusory appearance of a limited freedom. Therefore the limited person doesn't have the choice to focus on the “I am”, or on anything else for that matter. When this happens, it is always a decision of universal consciousness itself. The bad news is that the person cannot turn the attention to the “I am”. The good news is that you are not a person. Simply know that whenever you are turning the attention to the Self, it is in fact the Self which is turning its attention to you, to itself.

Love,

Francis

Can we change the waking dream? - Francis Answers - 57

Hello Francis I heard Tony Parsons saying that while asleep & dreaming you cannot change your dream. The same in this dream life (the second dream) you cannot change it. So what is your opinion?
Regards Victor

Dear Victor,

It all depends on what you mean by “you” in your question. If this pronoun refers to consciousness, which is the creator of all dreams, then the “you” which creates a dream can change it as it creates it.

But if it refers to a non-existent limited entity, itself an illusion within the dream, this “you” which is dreamt cannot change the dream to which it belongs, just as a character within a movie cannot change the ending of the movie.

**Does the universal consciousness bear any of the marks that we think of as the illusory, egoic self?
- Francis Answers - 58**

In your reply to the Sept. 3 post, “Can We Change the Waking Dream?,” you replied, “If the pronoun [you] refers to consciousness, which is the creator of all dreams, then the “you” which creates a dream can change it as it creates it.” But I find this slightly wry, inasmuch as the “you” is hardly discrete or an agent in the way in which we think of action-requiring-agency. Does the “you” in this sense bear any of the marks that we think of as the illusory (egoic) “you”?

Dear Stephen,

The answer is yes, the “you” in this sense does bear many of the marks that we think of as the illusory (egoic) “you”. Here are a few of these marks: It is that which perceives the night dreams and the waking dreams. It is that which is aware of being conscious. It is that which thinks, both in the sense that it creates the thoughts and that it perceives them. It is that which loves. It is that which understands. I have opened the list for you, there are more marks. It is up to you to find them as an exercise.

Love,

Francis

Is the mind an obstacle to liberation? - Francis Answers - 59

You said: “You are available when you understand that there is nothing that you can do on your own to get to the King. When you acknowledge your total powerlessness, you become an empty room. As soon as you become an empty room, you are a sanctuary. So the King can enter, take the throne and grace you with immortal presence.” – Francis Lucille Does what I say below agree with the above, and is it true? – This is receptivity with no interference with what is received, and therefore no opportunity for mind to arise and create a game or contest or struggle between its viewpoint and what is received. In fact, it is receptivity with no receiver. It is the mind that creates the polarity or contrast with what arises, and so makes way for a mental struggle. When one is an “empty room” there is no “one” there to see the room or its emptiness, or place him or herself in contrast with it. What there is then, is completeness and fullness. Nothing is ever complete within the universe of finite duality multiplicity... and “self identity”. It is a poor analogy, but one could say that if the TV is turned off and removed from the room... there is no one there to see the picture. Awareness arises as a single located viewpoint only when there is something to be aware of. To be an “empty room” awareness must be unowned. – Thanks Stuart

Dear Stuart,

Your statement is true, provided you replace in it the word “mind” with the word “ignorance”, which leads in fact to a different statement. The mind is not the problem; ignorance (our identification with the body-mind) is the problem. Of course, it follows from this that in the total absence of mind, identification with it is impossible. The vanishing of the mind triggers the recognition of our real nature, a non-objective experience sometimes described as “enlightenment”. However, although the total absence of mind is a sufficient condition for this recognition, it is not a necessary condition for it. In other terms, we can be an empty room in the presence of mind (thoughts, sense perceptions, feelings). We are an empty room the moment we are **truly** open to the possibility that we (awareness) are not an objet (something perceived). This openness can be arrived at effortlessly and joyfully through investigation and understanding. Another line of approach is the yogic path in which the mind is kept focused onto its source. The assistance of a qualified instructor is almost always necessary and supplied by grace in both cases. In the latter case, the goal is the vanishing of the mind which triggers the samadhi (state) without objects. Without proper supervision, the yogin may remain stuck in a state of absence of objects, in which the absence itself is still an object, a “blank” object that veils the revelation of Presence. Such a state may bring about a temporary relief from the usual agitation of the mind, but, due the lack of the sweetness of Presence, the seeking

sooner or later resumes.

The reason I am bringing this up is because of the use of the word “mind” in your question, as if the mind were an obstacle: “it is the mind that creates the polarity”. This misunderstanding is sometimes found in Advaitic and Buddhist teachings. In fact, it is ignorance, not the mind that creates duality. The mind is simply the tool used for its creation, the same tool which, at the service of supreme intelligence, is used for its abolition. If we deny ourselves the use of the mind, in the form of higher reasoning, as an instrument of liberation, we are like a prisoner who, although he is in possession of the key to its jail cell, refuses to use it because it is the instrument that was used to lock him in.

Regarding the end of your statement:

“When one is an “empty room” there is no “one” there to see the room or its emptiness, or place him or herself in contrast with it.”, it should be completed as follows: “When one is an “empty room” there is no “one” there **objectively** to see the room or its emptiness, or place him or herself in contrast with it.” In other words, the absence of ignorance or identification with a pseudo subject doesn’t imply the absence of ordinary subjective awareness.

Love,

Francis

P.S. For the sake of clarity, and for the comfort of our friends reading these answers, I would prefer direct questions, one question at a time, rather than multiple questions or questions asking for comments on statements made by you or by others.

Is there awareness in the absence of perceptions? - Francis Answers - 60

Francis You say: "Upon close scrutiny you will find out that consciousness exists both during the presence of the mind (as its witness) and in its absence (as the continuous background of all perceptions)." Are you defining mind and perceptions as different experiences or different levels of experience? When you say mind do you mean thought only? It appears to me that there is never 'not witnessing' in the waking hours. There is never 'not-objects' in the waking hours. The waking hours is equal to the appearance of objects and experiences and their witnessing, or is that not necessarily so? If witnessing and objects can cease completely in the waking hours that would mean that we would be absolutely unconscious of the world at times. Is that the case? The only time when mind or perception appear to be absent is in deep sleep. There seems to be no witnessing in deep sleep. But there is awareness in the absence of experience. Or is the 'absence of experience' in deep sleep, in itself an experience that is witnessed? Am I missing something and complicating something simple? Thank you for any input you may offer, Francis. Felipe

Dear Felipe,

All of your questions hinge upon the experience of pure consciousness without objects. I define mind as that which is objectively perceived in human experience: thoughts, dreams, body sensations, feelings, external sense perceptions. In fact mind is a concept, an inference; we don't experience it directly, we experience only perceptions, "mentations". You are correct when you say that the waking state implies the appearance of objects and experiences (mentations) and their witnessing. However, this doesn't preclude the possibility of the experience of consciousness without objects. If there is such an apperception, it must simply be external to the waking state. In fact it must take place out of space and out of time. Since there are no perceptions during this apperception, and since the mind can only memorize perceptions (memories are perceptions), there will be no objective recollection of it. Seen from the vantage point of the mind, such an experience will appear as a "gap" with no duration, just as, upon waking up from anesthesia, it seems that the entire medical procedure has lasted only for a fraction of a second, nay, zero second. There is no duration during such an experience. The sense of duration requires the presence of evolving objects and their memories. We tend to negate the reality of an instantaneous experience of this kind.

Do we experience such instantaneous apperceptions? Let's consider the following scenario: we think of a pink elephant (thought 1) and then the thought arises: what a strange thought that was, thinking of a pink elephant! (thought 2). Thought 2 is not the continuation of thought 1. Something has happened between thoughts 1 and 2, an event that we could formulate by saying "I

suddenly became aware that I was thinking of a pink elephant”. When did that “becoming aware” take place? Obviously not during thought 1, for we were then aware of a pink elephant, not yet of being aware of a pink elephant. Not during thought 2, for the “becoming aware” had to occur prior to the thought that describes it. We have to conclude that neither thought 1 nor thought 2 were present when this recognition occurred. This discontinuity in our perceptive experience is more than a simple gap during which nothing occurs, the thought that was provisionally suspended resuming without significant change at the end of the gap, but a real shift during which some important transformation has occurred in the mind.

What was then present during this absence of the mind? Obviously I, awareness, was present; during this “becoming” aware we became aware of our witnessing of the thought. The discontinuity of the perceived establishes the continuity of the perceiving awareness. This objective emptiness was subjective fullness. We didn’t change identity during this shift. The witnessing of the object dissolved in the witnessing of the witness. You will realize that these shifts are in fact extremely frequent in our ordinary experience. We don’t notice because they don’t leave traces in our memory. Let’s take a few more examples for you to consider: the understanding of a joke or of a complex line of reasoning, the sudden ending of a night dream upon waking up, our being suddenly moved to tears by an act of compassion we are the witness of or by the beauty of a piece of music.

However, as we return to ordinary objective perception, we believe that the shift occurred in the mind, whereas the mind was in fact absent during the apperception, and could not have been a witness of it. The mind is in this case a pretender and a false witness which has a hard time picturing its own absence. This belief of the mind falsely relocates this apperception in time and confines it to a limited mind. This is the root of ignorance.

If, relying on our own experience, we follow that line of reasoning and understand it, we will be open to the possibility that awareness has its abode beyond the mind, beyond space and time, and that it is therefore real and eternal. Our attention will be drawn again and again to this glimpse until we abide knowingly in infinite awareness both in the presence and in the absence of mentations.

Love,
Francis

How do we get the superimposition of the personal perceiver to cease? - Francis Answers - 61

Francis, In your answer to question 27, you said that the cessation of the superimposition of the personal perceiver onto consciousness is necessary for apperception to take place. My question then is, how do we get the superimposition of the personal perceiver to cease?

Dear Violet,

It is you, who, exercising your sovereign freedom, choose to superimpose the belief in a personal, objective and limited perceiver upon the infinite and eternal awareness that you are. The short answer to your question is: the superimposition stops when you are open to stopping it. That means the ending of our personal pet project. Liberation is the death of the personal entity. There is however a problem: everybody wants liberation, but nobody wants to die.

A longer answer is: by investigating the question “how do I know that awareness is limited to and by a specific body-mind? What is my evidence of it?” This investigation has to explore only first hand, experiential evidence, and to do so thoroughly, both at the level of thoughts and at the level of sensations.

Love,

Francis

Seeing seeing seeing. Guided meditation-1

Don't separate yourself from your experience.

Welcome the totality of it, the sensations in your body, the sound of my voice and the birds, your thoughts. All of that is at a zero distance from you. All of that is in you.

Even if you create the thought that there is someone who is separate from that as the observer or the perceiver, this thought itself is one more appearance from which you are not separate.

Recognize the immediacy of all appearances as a fact. The separation comes after the fact, as an interpretation of the fact. Separation can exist only between two perceived objects, between a chair and a table, for instance. But how can we talk about separation between something that we perceive and something that we don't perceive? Between something that is perceived and that which perceives? In order to see, to establish such a separation, we should be able to perceive the perceiver, to see it as separate from the perceived. And that is not possible.

Ask yourself, "In my experience, do I stand separate from that which I perceive?" Your experience is the only point of reference in deciding this question. We are not talking about philosophy here but about perception, how we perceive the body and the world, our life itself. It may sound theoretical but it isn't. It is only practical. Practicality demands that we eliminate anything that has no purpose, no meaning and which is a waste of energy. Any activity, thought or feeling based upon the illusion of separation is such an unnecessary burden. And that is especially true of the way we perceive the body and of the way we perceive the world.

We can perceive the body and the world free from any psychological interference, free from the superimposition of a 'me,' from fear and desire, from like and dislike. See just the facts, the facts of the world, of the body, of the mind as they arise.

See also the tendency of fixation of the attention either in some form of thought running in circles or some form of bodily sensation, a localization of the body. The mind always wants to have something, some object to chew on. The restlessness of the mind has to be completely seen.

That which triggers this activism is often a sense of lack, a compulsion. We have to welcome it completely at the feeling level. The way to welcome it is to give it the space and the time it needs to unload its psychological content. We can meet those fixations in the body with total indifference. The last thing we want to do is to try to eliminate them, to work on them, to interfere with them.

The peace of our true being doesn't get revealed by the elimination of objects, but rather through our overlooking of the objects, through this dispassionate

welcoming. The object being contemplated with this indifference liberates the awareness, makes it available to itself.

That which is perceived is part of the mind and we don't share it with others. That which we share is not perceived. It is the perfume.

It is the perfume of the seer knowing itself, of seeing knowing seeing, of seeing seeing seeing. When we are among truth lovers and when seeing seeing seeing—in other words, seeing that sees itself—takes place, we all feel pulled inside by this seeing in which there is nothing to be seen.

It is very mysterious how this silence propagates. It comes from the inside.

Transcript of a guided meditation by Francis Lucille

Tampa, Florida, 2002 retreat

My basic experience of life seems to differ from that implicit in the typical nondual understanding of things - Francis Answers - 62

My basic experience of life seems to differ from that implicit in the typical nondual understanding of things. I'm seeking any clarifying comments you might have. Here's my take: The core of the experience of separation seems to exist as a deeply embodied state for me. A kind of reaction to, or objectification of, a state of panic. It seems utterly physical. A likely neurological explanation is that one region of the brain gets overstimulated to such an extent that it's output begins to compromise the stability of the whole organ, it becomes detached from the wholistic modeling of the brain and becomes a static tape loop kind of thrumming of energy. I wonder even if it has something to do with limiting seizures. Anyway, the isolation of this 'too hot' region is only partial. The now static output from this organ of perceiving becomes itself an object perceived by the rest of the body/mind (the output of the brain). The objectification of this energetic state pushes it to the background, or better said creates a background of it. This background seems to be the (typically) unexamined 'self'. There is plenty of experimental evidence that supports the notion that the mind's function is to unquestioningly model a gestalt of reality with whatever material is present to it. As such, a separate self (this background) gets written in to this interpretive framework of ongoing experience. This explanation of the prevalence of the experience of separation, alienation etc. seems a better fit than the usual notion that we all have this state inculcated in us by social conditioning. So it seems to me that self inquiry, if it's anything at all, has to be the being present to this primal panic: The reintegration of these regions of fear. I've found this energetic stasis in very rare moments to dissipate when I've been somehow open to the background that is typically roped off in an existential taboo (there be dragons). What I'm momentarily left with could be described as a state wherein my mind and bodily experience seem as much external to me as... this table is. It's indescribable vitality! But it occurs in relatively short flashes... Anyway, I can not understand 'self enquiry' as anything other than being open to the background thrum of 'static' energy that is taken to be the separate and objectified self. I've tried to describe my take. What would you add? What would you toss? What would you modify? Many thanks. Love, Dave

Dear Dave,

We will never be able to explain the subject in terms of objects, no matter how sophisticated they are, or to explain consciousness through the mind. It is

also a waste of time and energy to try to explain ignorance using a body-mind based model, because there is at the core of ignorance an element of freedom which cannot be reduced to a body-mind mechanism. Ignorance is a choice of consciousness.

If we understand self-inquiry as “being open to the background thrum of ‘static’ energy that is taken to be the separate and objectified self”, we are likely to be stuck in this contemplation up until our death by boredom. A lively interest, a joyful eagerness should be the engine driving our investigation into the true nature of awareness. Make no mistake about it, ignorance is not the person of interest in this investigation, but rather awareness itself. Meditation is a mix of benevolent indifference with regard to the objects and of passionate interest for the presence in which they appear and out of which they are made. This indifference and this interest are like two sides of a same coin. The greater the latter, the greater the former. Whatever is done out of this interest is true meditation. That may include thinking about the truth, investigating the body experience, or sitting quietly without any goal in mind.

Warmest regards,

Francis

How do we get the superimposition of the personal perceiver to cease? - Francis Answers - 63

Francis, In your answer to question 27, you said that the cessation of the superimposition of the personal perceiver onto consciousness is necessary for apperception to take place. My question then is, how do we get the superimposition of the personal perceiver to cease?

Dear Violet,

It is you, who, exercising your sovereign freedom, choose to superimpose the belief in a personal, objective and limited perceiver upon the infinite and eternal awareness that you are. The short answer to your question is: the superimposition stops when you are open to stopping it. That means the ending of our personal pet project. Liberation is the death of the personal entity. There is however a problem: everybody wants liberation, but nobody wants to die.

A longer answer is: by investigating the question “how do I know that awareness is limited to and by a specific body-mind? What is my evidence of it?” This investigation has to explore only first hand, experiential evidence, and to do so thoroughly, both at the level of thoughts and at the level of sensations.

Love,

Francis

**While paying a visit to the King, don't cut corners.
Travel first class! - Francis Answers - 64**

As my desire to know myself as consciousness grows, my other motivations have decreased. I no longer feel ambitious with regard to career; I no longer believe I must get married in order to be fulfilled; I no longer feel driven to create; I no longer believe that I am here to accomplish anything other than to know more intimately the truth of who I am. Yet I do not yet know freedom. I have a beloved teacher, and I spend time in Satsang, and alone in silence, and with other lovers of Truth. There is happiness in these simple activities when they are available, and clearly there is no turning back and resuming a life of materialistic striving. Yet there is a fear that I will live out my life as a perpetual seeker, at home neither in Presence nor in the world. Yes, I can shift my attention and notice the vastness in which this little drama takes place, but perhaps my cognition is just intellectual, a blurry noticing only at the fringes. There's no joy in the noticing; I don't know that vastness as myself. I long for the peace and freedom that others have described. Please help.

Dear Flavia,

You have to ask your teacher for help. You have to ask for help from the best source available to you as far as you know, and that would be your teacher. To do so is to honor Truth. While paying a visit to the King, don't cut corners. Travel first class!

Your letter tells me that you are a serious truth lover, and this love in you will eventually take you to the peace and freedom you are longing for. Enjoy the journey to the place where there is no voyager and where you have arrived at every moment.

Love,

Francis

The open secret - Francis Answers - 65

You have said “in order to see, to establish such a separation (between the perceived and the perceiver), we should be able to perceive the perceiver, to see it as separate from the perceived. And that is not possible.”

Is the understanding from this end correct that this is all meant within the obvious context of guiding into Oneness, beyond the illusion of separation, but not yet Ultimate Truth?

That it isn't possible to perceive the perceiver not because the perceiver is our real Self, but rather that it's not possible because the perceiver itself at no time has real existence, hence also no perceptions stemming from that illusory perceiver, both mind/dream/consciousness, really never happened, just reviewed mentally as a faint echo, and can be seen within Oneness and with love/acceptance rather than suffered from through separation and belief in a separate identity and also split between perceiver and perception which are one and the same?

Yet that beyond all that, by going to the source of the next thought arising, prior to and beyond any thoughts/perceptions/dream/mind, only Silence that doesn't know of any of this is our real Identity, since anything other than Silence is -while uncaused, really and cannot be- only ever perceived because of seeming ignorance of Truth, now hidden seemingly under many layers. . .

and that all seeing can only ever seemingly take place because it borrows its seeming presence from Silence?

That is what has been unfolding here and a verification would be immensely helpful.

Thank you so much, whenever some time arises, dearest Francis, no rush.

Dear Maren,

This question is a very important one, both for you and for other truth seekers who have been misguided either by their own misunderstanding of the teachings, or by teachers who didn't have a first hand experience of their true nature and were teaching their own intellectual model of reality rather than their experience of it.

Before we begin looking into the heart of your question, let's clarify what I call “the perceiver”. In this moment, these words are being perceived on the screen, the thoughts that they evoke in you are also being perceived. The perceiver is that, whatever that is, that **really perceives these words and these thoughts**. There is an undeniable element of reality attached to this

perception. That which is perceived could be an illusion, but the fact that there is consciousness perceiving this potential illusion is absolutely certain: even if the perceived is an illusion, this illusion itself reveals the reality of the perceiver, which is our real self, our "I". If that were not the case, we would be saying that we are not the perceiver of our perceptions, that another entity than our real "I" is doing the perceiving, which would be absurd.

It follows from this that our real self is the perceiver that really perceives our perceptions, and that this perceiver is real, for an illusory entity cannot really perceive. The real perceiver is that which really perceives, it is the reality that perceives. In fact it is the ultimate reality that perceives, for a penultimate reality that perceives would still be an illusion compared to this ultimate reality, and we are only interested in our real "I", not in a relative and illusory identity. For instance if we ask whether our identity survives the death of the body, we want to know whether our real "I" survives, and we don't care whether our illusory "I" doesn't, anymore than we care upon waking up whether one of the characters of our night dreams, including our own, dies.

Then, if there is only one reality, as our deepest intuition suggests, the reality that perceives, our self, our "I", the Oneness, the ultimate Truth, and the Silence you speak of must be the same. If they are different from the reality that perceives, they must be illusions.

If there are more than one realities, one of these realities must be the ultimate reality of all, and must also be the ultimate reality of the perceiver, the ultimately real perceiver, the only one that matters.

What I am saying here is in fact very simple: our seemingly ordinary consciousness, the one that perceives the events of our daily life, is in fact extraordinary, universal, eternal and divine. It is the Ultimate reality of all things and of ourselves, the Absolute. This is the open secret, for all to see, known only by one.

Love,

Francis

I have been doing self-inquiry but I am not free - Francis Answers - 66

I have been doing Vichara - or asking myself the question "Who am I" - for some years now - sometimes more intensely, over a period of time, and in a focused way, at other times I experience periods of forgetfulness and do not do it for a while. I have been to Satsang a lot for some years and then I have been away but never lost an inner thread connecting me to either Vichara or the Satsang or the inner Truth shining through all this. I am aware of who I am - on some level - and have experienced flashes of the deeper Truth of being - not sure how to put this in words I suppose... But I am not free nor enlightened nor at peace... Or rather should I say - I have not on a deeper, more authentic level reached the state where knowing the real self would become freeing, pervasive, stronger, and overpower/overshadow/enlighten/reveal/move me beyond the cycle I keep repeating - that of suffering on many levels of my earthly existence. I realize that pushing and striving is not necessarily the answer. I realize that Guru's presence is not necessarily going to push me through to the "other" side... (I guess I always hope it is, and I have met many beautiful Beings) I realize there is no other side to be pushed to... So the question for me is: how do I realize the Truth on a deeper level? so it sinks in? So the awareness is full and never leaves me? so the cycle of suffering although still here but loses its grip enough not to overshadow the Truth of being?

Dear Maya,

What you seem to be telling me is: in my case, self-inquiry doesn't work, listening to the Truth in satsang doesn't work, surrendering to the Presence of the guru doesn't work. How do I get established in peace and happiness?

What I am telling you is: Self inquiry seems not to work because you are not really interested enough in discovering what you are, at whatever cost, listening to the Truth seems not to work because you don't trust your understanding enough yet to apply it to daily life situations, and surrendering to the Presence of the guru doesn't work because your surrender is not total. Any of these paths could get the job done.

My advice to you: investigate deeply whether or not consciousness is limited, based on your own experience, and do this when and only when you feel naturally inclined to; listen to the truth only from the purest sources (your own heart will tell you which ones, there are not too many these days -too many half truths from half teachers not having integrated the Truth), reflect upon the teachings and try to live your daily life in accordance with your understanding; surrender to the Presence of the guru at every moment.

This could get the job done faster. You are a real truth seeker. Don't quit.

Love,
Francis

Why do we have negative thoughts about others? - Francis Answers - 68

Dear Francis thank you once again for your kind and prompt responses, I have questions about thought.

1. Neo advaita teachers are these days teaching that thought is not a problem, but in my work place I notice a lot of negative thoughts about certain people, its hard to stay uninvolved and sometimes guilt arises because of this, if we dont choose our thoughts, then what is the purpose of these thoughts, they can be very sticky and painful.

There are two kinds of thoughts, thoughts that hinge upon the belief and/or the feeling that we are a separate person, and thoughts that don't. Only the first kind is problematic. Negative thoughts about others would be an example of such personal thoughts. If we wouldn't believe to be a separate entity, we wouldn't really think of others as separate entities either; in our thoughts, we would stay connected, more deeply even than with family members.

2. why does thought tend to attack others so cold heartedly and how does one block the guilt or even impersonalize these thoughts?

As long as we believe to be the personal doer of our deeds, there will be guilt about those of our past actions that originated from ignorance, and any effort to block such a sense of guilt is doomed to failure unless we address its root cause, separation. We cannot impersonalize personal thoughts, we can only become aware of them, of their personal color.

3. is it the "I" that thinks these thoughts, and why do they tend to be negative?

It is the "I" that thinks these thoughts, for there is only one thinker and only one doer. However they are distorted by ignorance. The "I" first chooses ignorance and as a result creates ignorant thoughts and feelings. They are negative because they arise out of frustration. Ignorance is the most basic of all frustrations: it frustrates us from what we are.

4. I have used processes like Byron Katies work, but the thoughts seem to reinvent or recycle and still speak negatively about others, is there an end to this? Is there anything I can do to stop or lessen the grip of these thoughts if inquiry has not worked? it has worked to some extent but not fully.

There will be an end to this negativity when its root cause is finally addressed, and the inquiry that works is the one that asks this question: what is the evidence, both on the intellectual and on the experiential levels, that that which in me is aware of my perceptions is a limited, separate, mortal entity?

5. The judging that goes on in the mind, is this a direct result of thought which is running automatically, and why in this consciousness is there such a volume of these type of thoughts, the condition of the world today is an example of this. thank you again Francis.

That which runs automatically is the belief in/feeling of separation. We allow it to run automatically because we are not aware of its danger. We become aware of its consequences: in your case, for example, you become first aware of the pain of not being loved by others; then you become aware of your aggressiveness, then of your negative thoughts about others, then of your negative thoughts about yourself, then, finally, you see that all of this was generated by your sense of being a separate consciousness, at which point the inquiry can begin. The fact that you are aware of the volume and of the danger of these thoughts is a good sign already. Take your investigation one step further, to the pet belief in a separate "I".

Love,

Francis

How do I get through the times in my day when I have to deal with insensitive & completely ignorant people? - Francis Answers - 69

Namaste Francis, I am very happy to find that you will answer questions of the truthseekers. Thank you! My question is this: How do I get through the times in my day when I have to deal with insensitive & completely ignorant people? So critical and hard-hearted most of the time. I am one of the few young people there, but even the other young people can be hard to get through to. Sometimes, I get very frustrated with my co-workers and I don't want to be around them. Then I start to think, there is no other place I am supposed to be except where I am. But, I still have feelings of frustration quite often. What am I to do? Thank you for your time and help with my question. Tiffany

Dear Tiffany,

Well, you have to take into consideration the totality of the situation. If I was in this situation, I would ask myself the question: Do I truly have to put up with that? and the answer would depend on many factors. How easy is it to find a job with a more dignified atmosphere, how difficult is it to have to tolerate this insensitivity and this stupidity, etc. . . ? It may well be that, investigating the job offers in other areas, you find a more interesting opportunity. Finally, if I would reach the conclusion that I have to stay, as a last option, I would take these frustrating episodes as yoga exercises in equanimity. Why should the stupid behavior of your coworkers deprive you of your peace? Do what feels right without caring about their judging you. Why should their behavior, their problem, become your problem? Only because you want them to love you? Find your love within, and without in the company of truly loving people. Here is a saying from Arabic wisdom: the dogs bark, the caravan keeps passing by. Let the dogs bark, be that caravan.

Love,

Francis

If I am aware of consciousness, doesn't that make it an object? - Francis Answers - 71

First, is there any difference between awareness and consciousness? Second, there appears to be an experiencing here of "Consciousness." If so, would that not make Consciousness an object? However, I know that there is no one to be aware of it, but am I aware of Consciousness as a concept, or as a direct experience? Could it be more accurate to say that actually Consciousness is aware of this illusion called Bob?

Dear Bob,

1. I use awareness and consciousness as synonyms. In French, as in other latin languages, we only have the latin word "conscience". My guess is that if there was a marked difference, we would have two words too.
2. That would make consciousness an object only if the only mode of knowledge of consciousness was knowledge of objects. You have to be open to the possibility of different mode of knowledge, noumenal knowledge, through which consciousness knows itself. It is a direct, instantaneous apperception that transcends time. Unlike objective experience which leaves always a margin of doubt, noumenal knowledge gives us absolute certainty. We are absolutely certain to be conscious. This knowledge is acquired through direct experience, because only direct experience can give us such a certainty. You are certainly the one who is aware of this experience, and the seemingly limited body-mind called Bob appears in it. However, if what you call Bob is this consciousness, everything appears in it, including the body-mind you used to call Bob and which most other people keep calling Bob.

Love,

Francis

Spiritual Commuters - Guided Meditation - 2

Spiritual Commuters

Presence if effortless.

Effort always originates from the belief that we are a fragment, a fragment that wants to become the totality, which is impossible for a fragment to achieve: no end in view for the efforting entity.

Effort is noticeably different from an action we accomplish out of interest, love, or celebration. Such a deed stemming out of interest may be taxing for the body or the mind, but it is accompanied by joy and perfume. Whatever we do on the spiritual path should be effortless. Our meditation, our investigation should arise out of an invitation from the Ultimate—out of interest and love for the truth. In this way it is never mechanical, but always new, always different.

If at any moment we feel that we have fallen into the “efforting” trap, that our investigation has become a practice, automatic and therefore meaningless, we should clearly become aware of it and stop it. Practice always originates from the belief in a separate entity who wants to achieve something, personal happiness.

There is always a personal goal attached to the practice I am talking about. This very practice towards happiness separates us from the happiness of welcoming, of effortlessness. The divine way of living, the way of living in the company of the divine is a big vacation. It is the real retirement. Forget about thinking that you have to spend time and sweat in order to retire spiritually in the future. Retire now.

There is nothing to do, nothing to be done in the future and, moreover, there is nothing we can do because as a person we can do nothing. Our doing as a person is only an illusion, a mock doing.

When we understand this, everything changes. What we do for a living becomes creative. We don't need to change anything, or at least right away. We can allow for things to change. Everything will realign itself with this new perspective. Everything will fall into place as we are ready for a new direction. The change comes from inside out, like a ripple. The origin of the ripple remains forever unknown in the blinding light of Consciousness.

At home when you meditate, don't make a duty out of it. Wait until you want to do it, until you are interested. Make it part of the vacation, part of the retirement. Wait for the invitation and if it loses its perfume, stop immediately. In this way you preserve the quality of the enthusiasm for the search and you will be invited again.

As it is the case with children, that which matters here is quality time. Give yourself quality time in your meditation. Be good to yourself. Hold yourself in high regard because yourself is really your Self and our Self.

We have to understand that no matter how smart the mind is, in the end it cannot understand Presence. Only Presence feels Presence. Having gathered here, we have this extraordinary opportunity of Presence feeling Presence in each of us, as each of us, as all of us. What we do or don't do while holding Presence in our minds and in our hearts doesn't matter. It will always find its way to perfection. The brightest of minds is a limited tool, extremely limited. Without the intelligence of Presence, the mind is as lifeless as a corpse. As we seek Presence, as we hold it in our minds and hearts, we are invited by the perfume. We leave the corpse of the body and the mind and we discover our freedom, our eternal youth in this Source.

Then, in coming back to the body/mind, there is a new beginning at every moment. In this way we become effortless commuters between the Source and the world. This commute doesn't take time. It is the easiest.

Francis Lucille

Ottawa, Canada

September 7, 2003

Is thinking an obstacle to Self realization? - Francis Comments - 1

Is thinking an obstacle to Self realization?

If thinking is useless in helping seekers on the path to the discovery of their true nature, it follows that the words/thoughts used by teachers in guiding them are equally useless. We would therefore expect the teachers who claim such a uselessness of mind to remain silent. They would be at least consistent with their own thoughts. Are they saying here that the words of Buddha, Ramana Maharshi, Ashtavakra, Jean Klein and many others were useless for taking their disciples to the Truth? Are they saying these sages didn't know what they were doing?

“To think or not to think?” is not the question. “Does this thought originate from ignorance or from Presence?” is the relevant question here, for the thought that originates directly from the Absolute has the power to take us back to its source. Is higher reasoning -an expression coined by Atmananda, the only way, or even the most potent form of teaching? Of course not. But why exclude intelligence from the self realization process?

Now my life is the song I sing. Title: Alleluia. - Francis Answers - 72

Francis:

I have had many moments of recognizing or noticing that the self exists in thoughts only or in “conclusions” about patterns of sensations or emotions over the years. But there is still a belief here that a sense of “identity” with Consciousness is the ultimate proof that a shift, or enlightenment, has taken place. I can recognize when there is identification with a ‘self’ easily. But I still believe that when the sense of being separate falls away there will be a “recognizing” oneness, or a “knowing” or “identification” with oneness instead of self. Can you confirm or respond to this? Thank you.

Dear Darcy,

The sense of and the belief in separation gradually fall away as a result of the inquiry into the nature of awareness, leading to the recognition of our eternity.

We cannot identify with that which we are, since we are it already, but we can de-identify from that which we are not. The moment that-which-we-are-not is totally welcomed, it is seen for what it is, a mere appearance in the infinite Presence which is our true Being. How can you recognize that the object you call “self’ is not you without somehow knowing what you are? You would be like someone claiming simultaneously that a musician has played a wrong note and that he doesn’t know the right note. If that were true, how could he know the musician played the wrong note? He may sincerely believe he doesn’t know the right note and may well be unable to sing it, but that doesn’t imply he doesn’t know it.

Self realization is the rediscovery of this “knowingness” of infinite Presence as the background of our perceptions and activities. It is a two step process:

1. We see what we are not (discrimination using this knowingness, higher reasoning, higher sensing). It is like learning how to sing the right note while practicing for the live performance.
2. We see what we are in its total freedom and immortality (glimpse of our true nature, pure knowingness).

Now my life is the song I sing. Title: Alleluia.

We cannot speak the truth without living the truth. - Francis Answers - 73

It is clear that everything is consciousness and that absolute conscious/awareness is the source. Not so clear is why we always seem to attach certain positive qualities like, love, serenity, beauty, joy, God to THAT. How does THAT have qualities or characteristics when it is ISNESS itself?

Dear Jay,

There is a distinction to be made between isness itself and isness being aware of itself. It could be said that isness itself has no qualities, although this statement is still a limitation superimposed onto the unlimited. It could be equally said, without inconsistency with the previous statement, that isness knowing itself is an experience we could try to describe (and fail in doing so) as absolute love, absolute intelligence, absolute splendor, absolute happiness, absolute freedom, eternity, Godhead.

The reason why this distinction is important is because isness being aware of itself is not the only mode of isness. There is also ignorance, which is isness not being aware of itself. From the vantage point of isness, if we may use this expression, there is no such a distinction, and that is the point you are trying to make in your question. However, on a lower level, on a level where there are distinctions, this distinction applies. In order to avoid any confusion, we need to know on which level a statement is made. At the level of the Ultimate no statement can be made, the last attempted statements being perhaps "I am" or "Isness is" or "I am that Isness which is", something like that, words self dissolving into the experience of being.

Now here is the point: if we take the high road of non-duality, at the ultimate level, we cannot simultaneously feel or believe to be a separate entity with all the suffering attached to such a belief, and make the claim that everything is consciousness and that absolute consciousness/awareness is the source. We cannot speak the truth without living the truth. To speak the truth and to live the truth are not two separate experiences, and the one that matters is to live the truth. Whatever is said from the experience of living the truth, no matter how dualistic, or even sometimes childish it may seem to be, is true. Whatever is said from ignorance, no matter how logical it may seem to be, is false.

Warmest regards,

Francis

Why are we not aware of other's thoughts, feelings, etc. or can see "the world" from a different perspective? - Francis Answers - 74

Dear Francis, Thank you for answering so many questions - it is extremely helpful. My question is regarding consciousness. If our true nature is consciousness, which is unlimited, once we are enlightened why are we not aware of other's thoughts, feelings, etc. or can see "the world" from a different perspective. Of course since I am not enlightened - so this is a hypothetical question! But I assume that those who know themselves to be consciousness do not have this experience. I have seen your video which talks about consciousness as the space and individuals as baskets filled with apples (sensations), oranges (thoughts) and bananas (whatever else!). But it seems if we are the space shouldn't we be able to see into all baskets and feel all sensations? I know you have said, perhaps we have but do not remember if we were present or not, as we cannot be sure we were present at times other than now. But the fact which we never remember is confusing to me. I hope this makes some sense! Thank you - Rhonda

Dear Rhonda,

You ask: "why are we not aware of other's thoughts, feelings, etc. or can see"the world" from a different perspective?"

This is a fundamental question.

Short answer:

How do you know you aren't? Find the evidence that you aren't. There is none.

Long answer:

The human mind knows only one mentation at the time, always in the now. When a past mentation is known, it is in fact in the form of a current recollection, always in the now. It is this current recollection that gives "other times of this current mind" a seeming existence. In the absence of a current recollection, there is no "other times of this current mind" experience; but then, there is no current mind experience either, there is only experience of the current mentation, which arises out of, exists in, and vanishes back into experiencing, "awaring", and is therefore nothing else than awareness itself. Rhonda's personal mind is therefore an illusion projected onto the reality, consciousness, Godhead, through the creation of specific mentations that we could call "Rhonda's recollections". "Rhonda's Mind" is the name of one of the many channels consciousness creates in this way and watches.

There are infinitely many others, among which "Francis' Mind", made of "Francis' recollections" and "Universal Mind", made of "all minds' recollections". Not

really different from Rhonda's Mind or Francis' Mind, Universal Mind is still an illusion projected onto the reality of consciousness, an illusion that gives "other times of all minds" a seeming existence. It is the mind your question was alluding to, as if, if consciousness were universal rather than personal, this universal mind should be part of our human experience. But then our human experience would no longer be human. It may be also interesting to notice that the experience of universal mind and the experience of our true nature are not the same, and that the experience of universal mind doesn't liberate us from ignorance. That's why in many Hindu traditions the universal Mind remains in ignorance as long as the universe remains manifested and doesn't realize its true nature until the universal dissolution that ends the cosmic cycle. Unlike your question seems to suggest, neither the experience of other minds (which we in fact have) nor even the experience of the universal mind has the power to put an end to ignorance. Whether we view the "Rhonda's Mind" channel, the "Francis' Mind" channel or the "Universal Mind" channel it is "We", "I", the Universal Viewer who needs to experience itself as the reality of all minds for liberation to take place.

Such a liberated body mind becomes God's instrument. May your body mind become Krishna's flute.

Love,

Francis

“Why is there ignorance?” - Francis Answers - 75

Hi Francis, “The”I” first chooses ignorance and as a result creates ignorant thoughts and feelings.” Francis Lucille. In Q/A 68 under the 3rd question: is it the “I” that thinks these thoughts, and why do they tend to be negative? Answer: It is the “I” that thinks these thoughts, for there is only one thinker and only one doer. However they are distorted by ignorance. The “I” first chooses ignorance and as a result creates ignorant thoughts and feelings. They are negative because they arise out of frustration. Ignorance is the most basic of all frustrations: it frustrates us from what we are. In your answer above, this sentence (The “I” first chooses ignorance and as a result creates ignorant thoughts and feelings.) caught my attention and a question arose in me asking, how can it be that the I first choose ignorance before it is ignorant? If the I is not ignorant (Advaita) it seems that it would not choose ignorance. I the realize that perhaps we are caught in words and so I attempt to resolve it this way: If I was to answer my own question I would separate the I from AM and say that “I” is the bridge between objects and AM (IS) is Consciousness, undivided all knowing(Advaita). Describing it in this way the “I” is the bridge that has the (seemingly) freedom of choice to dissolve itself into AM, Advaita or shrink away from Consciousness, Advaita. However this answer still does not answer another question. Why was ignorance created (or chosen) to begin with? In other words, why a pure IAM (Advaita), a pure presence would choose ignorance (the first time it chose ignorance) in the first place? And why there is an I at all? The answer (the joke is on us) is that there never was (is or will be) an I or a choice. There has never been any choice, there is no i, or I, or bridge, or presence (as this imply someone aware of it), or a chooser, or choices. Perhaps that is why we cannot separate the I from AM for I and AM must be indivisible in order to be Consciousness, Advaita. And that is why all of the above is nothing more than thought creating around and around its own illusions. That is why only the personal experience of the unnameable can answer and dissolve these questions and nothing else. If you find the time would you please comment? Is this view correct? Thank you so much for your clear guidance. With love, Albert

Dear Albert,

You say “If the I is not ignorant it seems that it would not choose ignorance.” Why not? Your statement comes from the belief that ignorance is bad, a belief which is itself a residue of ignorance. For this “I” nothing is bad, nothing is even neutral as some intellectual interpretations of Advaita would like us to believe, but “all is well and unfolding as it should”, as Robert Adams used to say. All, everything, including ignorance, emanates from the single Source. Your question reminds me of the paradox theologians find themselves in: if God is almighty

and all knowing, it created evil, or at least he is aware of it and has the power to stop it. Since there is evil, it follows that God is not loving. Then they do a lot of intellectual tap dancing trying to prove that $2 + 2 = 3$ (that God is loving and almighty, but that man is evil). Their problem is that they agree on the statement “there is evil”, to which God could answer: “in your eyes, gentlemen, not in Mine”.

Any distinction between “I” and “am” makes an object, a mentation out of either “I” or “am”, and a mentation doesn’t have the power to create anything, including ignorance, for a thought, a perception gets created and doesn’t create another thought or perception.

When I say that the “I” chooses ignorance, I am simply pointing at the innate freedom of our true nature. This choosing is different from the pseudo choosing of a separate entity devoid of reality, and therefore of real freedom. As it chooses, it creates, and as it creates, it perceives.

Let’s now examine your next question, “Why is there ignorance?” For this question to have any legitimacy, there must really be ignorance. We don’t ask the question “why are there unicorns?” for unicorns don’t have real existence. Ignorance however doesn’t have a reality of its own. Its only reality is granted by us. So the only answer to this question is “because we love it, love it, love it more than dear life!

Love,

Francis

Is there something going on apart from awareness? - Francis Answers - 76

Francis, The teaching that nothing exists apart from consciousness, I can understand when it is referring to name and form. But the doubt that keeps arising concerns change, if I bury an egg in my garden it is out of sight out of mind, when I go back and dig it up 6 months later it is not the same egg, change has happened without my awareness of it. Does not this imply that there is something going on outside of or apart from awareness? Perhaps the egg being egg, the dirt being dirt, change being change is itself an awareness?? Thank you, James

Dear James,

We have to make a distinction between awareness and mind. Be open to the possibility that nothing happens outside of or apart from awareness, but that many things happen outside of or apart from our human mind. The belief that nothing happens outside of a limited human mind is a form of ignorance known as solipsism. Contemplate instead the following possibility: everything, including all minds, “happens” within awareness. There is only one awareness. Your awareness, my awareness and God’s awareness are the same awareness which is the substance of all things, literally “that which stands under” all things, that which understands all things. And that which “understands” all things is also that which comprehends all things, literally that which holds all things together. Awareness is beyond the duality of mind and matter. It is the formless and nameless presence that creates mind phenomena (names) and physical phenomena (forms).

The most common form of ignorance in modern civilization is the belief that awareness is a product of mind, and mind a product of matter, a view which is at odds with the simplicity of our direct experience, for the foundation, the centrality of our direct experience resides in awareness. Instead of relying upon this simple intuition, we fall into the trap of the complex ready made belief systems prevalent in our culture which offer a materialist view of the world and of ourselves, a view which alienates us from our own reality and is the root cause of all psychological suffering.

Love,

Francis

Losing my head, finding my heart - Francis Answers - 77

Subject: Atmabodha

Dear Francis,

I've been contemplating your rendition of Atmabodha over the past 2 weeks or so and a couple of questions have arisen. [Very good rendition, by the way!]

Both questions essentially relate to the following 'logion' or statement:

"67. When Atman, the sun of understanding, rises in the space of the heart, it disperses darkness; permeating all and sustaining all, it shines, and all is light."

1. Above, you've used the expression 'the sun of understanding' rather than, say, 'the sun of all being' or some equivalent expression. Perhaps this was deliberate, I'm not sure? For me, the term 'understanding' has connotations with 'mental' and 'intellectual', etc. Deconstructing the word a bit yields 'standing' and 'under' implying that 'understanding' stands under something which is more *direct*, so to put it. In this context, understanding, I would say, stands under direct non-conceptual *Apperception*, so to express it - where *Apperception* is akin to a percept but in the other direction, as it were. [Language being dualistic is always problematical in nondual contexts, but you perhaps catch my drift.] Anyway, the question here is did you use the term 'understanding' deliberately and if so, why?
2. It seems to me that the separate self sense has 2 essential aspects:
 1. Cognitive - of the mind or intellect
 2. Deeper 'felt' sense - less apparent and of or in the heart

Now some thorough enquiry and analysis can relatively easily deconstruct the notion or idea of being a person, i.e. there can be a clear recognition that 'self' does not refer to a body or a mind or to anything objective. Furthermore, in consequence it can in due course be clearly 'seen' (popular word these days in certain circles!) that what we are is ever-present timeless awareness, etc. Now this is all fine and good, of course, but to assume (as many seem to) that this significant and worthwhile realisation constitutes Self-Realisation in its true proper sense does not seem accurate to me.

What's missing, I feel, is this deeper aspect. And the reason the deeper aspect is missed is that it simply isn't apparent; it's buried quite deep, you could say. And this lack of apparentness of the

deeper aspect is especially the case as the “Wow!” phase of the less deep ‘cognitive realisation’, so to call it, takes centre stage with its own particular euphoria. Now in due course, things settling, should there be further atma-vichara (self-enquiry) and a healthy dose of perceptive honesty (maybe!), the enquiry might begin to reveal this deeper aspect of the separate self sense hidden in the heart, so to put it. In fact, I would say that it does! And this seems to be confirmed by Ramana who clearly indicates that enquiry has its resolution and conclusion in the heart. [Dissolution of the ‘knot’ of or in the heart.] Also, Douglas Harding in his own particular way suggests this, too. To paraphrase, the ‘seeing’ gravitates to the heart-centre. He equates Enlightenment (Self-Realisation) with ‘I find my heart’ in his 8x8-fold plebian ‘map’. [The immediate prior stage Kensho or ‘I see my Original (No) Face’ he characterises as ‘I lose my head, but have yet to find my heart’ - signifying the less deep ‘cognitive realisation’, I would say.]

So, in brief, we can say in regard to the deeper aspect that the jiva-self is replaced by (or perhaps expanded to) the Brahman-Self. And this arising happens in the ‘cave of the heart’ as the Upanishads have it, as it is here that the (obscuring) deeper aspect of the separate self sense is resident. So as the ‘sun’ of the Brahman-Self rises the separate self sense in consequence dissolves and dissipates. Atmabodha also confirms this as we can see from the above ‘logion’ which states, “When Atman rises in the space of the heart, it disperses darkness etc.”

Now my question here (finally!) is, would you agree with this distinction between the 2 aspects of the separate self sense? The more surface aspect being essentially cognitive (of the mind) and the deeper being a deeper ‘felt’ sense having its root in the heart. [This is all said in an experiential empirical sense, by the way.]

In addition, please feel free to comment on the above as you see fit, should you be so inclined.

Love,

Alan

Dear Alan,

You asked two questions:

1. Did you use the term ‘understanding’ deliberately and if so, why?

The answer is yes. That which stands under is the foundation, the substance, (from Latin: sub = under + stans = standing). We could use the words intelligence, or awareness, or substance, or presence, or being, all pointing at the same reality. The word understanding was chosen perhaps to challenge our usual

perspective, a perspective according to which understanding is less real than thoughts, thoughts are less real than feelings, and feelings less real than physical objects perceived through the senses. We usually don't see understanding or awareness as the ultimate reality of the world, the body, and the mind. Awakening is the recognition of the eternity, omnipresence and substantiality of awareness. This recognition could be redefined as the understanding of understanding.

It would be a gigantic mistake to assume that this understanding is "intellectual", meaning "takes place in the human mind". Another word for understanding would be perhaps "knowing". We understand a thought, a feeling or a sense perception when we know it completely as it dissolves into its substance. The understanding of the thought is intelligence, of the feeling, love, and of the sense perception, beauty. Understanding is vastly misunderstood :-) and, as a result, underrated in spiritual circles. We have to see that not only intelligence, but also love and beauty are various aspects of understanding. There is no intelligence without love and beauty. That leads us to your second question:

2. Would you agree with this distinction between the 2 aspects of the separate self sense, the more surface aspect being essentially cognitive (of the mind) and the deeper being a deeper 'felt' sense having its root in the heart?

Yes and no.

Yes, there are these two aspects. The former is comprised of belief systems rooted in the belief that we are a separate consciousness, the latter of feeling systems at the somatic level that conspire to create the impression of an embodied consciousness.

No, the latter is not deeper (if deeper means more fundamental) than the former. They are both equally important as they relate to the extent to which this "understanding of understanding" permeates respectively the realm of thoughts and the realm of bodily sensations. No stabilization in the peace of our true nature can be achieved without the dissolution of all or most of the residues of ignorance. A complete glimpse of our true being has a deep impact at both levels, and sets into motion the self realization process that leads to the abidance in our natural state of freedom. An incomplete glimpse is one that liberates us from a specific belief system or feeling system, but fails to eliminate the central knot of separation. Using the metaphor of the snake and the rope, a partial glimpse is one in which it is seen that there is no snake, but the underlying reality (the rope) has not been ascertained; a complete glimpse is the recognition of the rope. Such a glimpse (nirvikalpa samadhi) will be followed by the progressive stabilization in the natural state of freedom (sahaja samadhi), as the body-mind realigns itself with the new direction that was revealed in this apperception.

I am bringing this up is because a partial glimpse, being still tainted with objectivity, can be legitimately qualified as "intellectual" or "felt". Such a glimpse cannot be qualified as "absolute". Too often, partial glimpses of either kind are misconstrued by truth seekers as satori, or awakening, or nirvikalpa samadhi, all synonym terms. The result is a premature calling off of the quest.

The seeker seems to formulate clearly his understanding of the Truth (provided the fine prints are not scrutinized), but the perfume, the essential power behind the mantra, is missing, and too often the preacher who so preaches the dharma fails to do the karma. Such a realization, no matter how worthwhile it may be, doesn't constitute Self realization or even awakening in its true proper sense. There is however a parallel, equally depth lacking realization, in which there is a surrender at the feeling level, at the heart level, but the intellectual attachment to the concept of a separate consciousness remains. This second type of "half baked" seekers is mostly found among those on the path of devotion.

In the complete glimpse of our true Self, the losing of one's intellectual identity and of one's felt identity are concomitant. Both are the result of the revelation of our true identity, and most certainly the heart is part of it. Lets put it bluntly: any realization that is not the revelation of our immortality, of our absolute freedom, and the experience of absolute happiness, absolute love and absolute beauty, is not the experience of which and from which the Buddha, Ramana Maharshi, Ma Ananda Mai, Jean Klein and many other sages spoke. There is no such a thing as discounted, partial, second class enlightenment. It is absolute or it is not.

As you can see, my answer doesn't contradict the statements you made and I understand the concerns of superficiality and intellectualism implied in your question.

Love,

Francis

Has the goal been reached? - Francis Answers - 78

Reading and contemplating over your post number 65 appears to have burst 'me'. 'I' am writing to confirm my understanding/experience. Initially when I read about the "ultimate perceiver", the thought that came was "why cant there be more than one perceivers? (i.e. various individual perceivers and probably one super perceiver or God)" As enquiry into that question continued, after a day or so it dawned on me that a) my body-mind-thoughts-emotions are in awareness and not the other way around b) since awareness is not in any one location, there is no boundary separating "my" awareness from "anyone else's" awareness. i.e. it is a field of awareness in which bundles of body-mind-thoughts-emotions show up. c) The only "separation" from awareness is a thought that "I am separate". But since the thought itself is just arising in awareness and has no independent existence, it occurs like a bubble. As soon as that recognition arose, the "I am separate" thought burst. d) There was recognition that everything and everyone arises in and dissolves back into the field of awareness. Awareness/consciousness is all that is. e) "enlightenment" is a joke! There is no one to get enlightened! A thought/emotion bubble in consciousness appears to seek enlightenment, but the bubble bursts at some point into awareness/consciousness into which it arises. Thoughts-emotions-body bundles ("people" as commonly understood) have thoughts "I am not enlightened", but are no different from "enlightened bundles" as both are just bubbles in consciousness. f) There was laughter accompanying the above realization. Then thoughts came back if this is just a temporary experience or just mental hallucination. That was followed by thoughts, "how does it matter"? The thought "I am enlightened" or "I am not enlightened" shows up in presence/awareness and disappears. Neither of them are true nor mean anything. g) There was a thought - "I should ask Francis." followed by "What if Francis bunks it as hogwash!" followed by "How does it matter? There is no one here to be validated/not validated." "I" am writing to you anyway. Any comments / suggestions? Thank you so much for being available. Regards R

Dear R,

The sequence of thoughts you are describing makes sense. The understanding that "Awareness/consciousness is all that is" is all that is needed, provided this understanding is absolutely experiential and is not confined to the realm of thought. The way to ascertain this is to ask yourself: "Am I perfectly satisfied? Has the goal been reached or is there still a sense of lack?" This is a very intimate question and I am not asking you for an answer. This question is only between you and yourself. In most cases, the answer will be "no", but this doesn't mean

the experience wasn't true. It means there are still levels of resistance that have not been dissolved by it.

If that is the case, don't call off the search yet, but keep investigating until you are fully satisfied. It may take some time and the assistance of a teacher may be required. Life will provide whatever events are needed to reach the goal, provided the desire for it stays alive. How couldn't it?

Love,
Francis

You are the sweetness in all things - Guided meditation - 3

You Are the Sweetness in All Things

Francis Lucille

Temecula, California

August 21, 2003

Leave the world of objects alone.

Thoughts, perceptions, feelings, sensations—don't interfere. In the beginning all we can do is to notice that we constantly interfere. The only way is to say "Yes" to the attraction that comes from the background, from the sweetness.

Simply be open to the possibility that what we like in anything is not the thing, but that in which the thing appears, of which it is an expression or an extension. Open your grasping body, your grasping mind because the sweetness cannot be grasped by the body or by the mind. The sweetness grasps itself when the body and the mind stop grasping. Be in waiting without awaiting.

You are the love in everything you love.

You are the beauty in everything you behold.

You are the intelligence in everything you understand.

You are the sweetness in all things.

Just seek yourself as this sweetness. Stay focused on the sweetness and don't be attached to the things. The things are the shell. The sweetness is the pearl.

Don't take what is being said as something that can be put to use later on as an interesting aphorism of wisdom. This has to be tried and experienced in the moment, right now. Don't postpone.

We all have the experience of the sweetness. The mind doesn't know where it is. But because the sweetness knows itself, if we seek it and let go of all objects as they arise, then we will dive into it, merge with it, abide in it.

The reason why most people stay away from it is not because it is too complicated, but because it's too simple.

Every cell, every organ in our body has been conditioned to seek happiness outside. When we start seeking happiness in its pure form, the deconditioning begins. It is not in the body, not in the mind, not in the world.

And if at some point waves of joy permeate your body, don't stop there. Keep your intention with the pure Presence. Let the ocean of joy merge with this peace. We are not interested in anything that comes and goes. Don't abide in

things. Abide in the sweetness of things. Don't try to hold things. Hold the sweetness.

Find the sweetness of the thing which is currently present, which is currently offering itself. You don't need to bring up another thing. You do not have to pronounce the mantra. You can let the universe pronounce the mantra for you. The mantra is the thing. The resonance is the sweetness.

Just abide in the resonance of what is being said.

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Francis Lucille

2003

Never forget the goal - Francis Answers - 79

Dear Francis, is it possible to keep the focus on consciousness and work as executive in a company at the same time? The same question could be extended to any profession where you have to use the mind continuously, speak to a lot of people and have the pressure of getting economical results. I would not ask this question if I were enlightened, but I am afraid I may never be if I continue working like this. Please, advice. Thanks

Dear Xavier,

The theoretical answer to your question is yes, it is possible to do the sadhana while being active in the world. The situations you have to face at the work place become yoga exercises you have to master. They are helpers rather than obstacles. The sage Atmananda used to say that a job in the armed forces or in law enforcement was excellent for a truth seeker, because if you can keep your equanimity there, you can keep it everywhere. I think he was only half serious.

In practice however, situations in the world will appear to facilitate your sadhana, provided you let them guide you. In my case, I have always tried to accommodate the kind of job I had with the requirements of the sadhana. I needed to spend a lot of time with my teacher, attending all of his retreats and spending on top of that 5 or 6 weeks in private with him, and this lasted for many years. But it didn't feel like a sacrifice, because I enjoyed every single minute spent in his company over these many years. These months were the vacations I had always dreamed of becoming reality. All it required was to have my priorities straight: Truth first, anything else second. This was the desire of my heart, and I always ended up following it, because it was so strong. Along the way, I tossed away a few items other people would consider very valuable. I had been a good achiever and held fancy college degrees in Science that were the key that opened the door to top executive positions in the French system. I happily tossed that key into a roadside ditch as I started seeking jobs that were carrier dead ends, the sole purpose of which was to allow me the freedom to frequently visit with my teacher as my sadhana required. It turned out that the Universe always cooperated beautifully and serendipitously with my goal, and I never regretted my decisions.

Going back to my first theoretical answer, I would amend it as follows: master only the yoga exercises that are unavoidable. Life will supply you with the right amount of those: accidents, relationships, relatives, customers, supervisors, employees, etc. . . Don't seek more (unless you love it), don't join the armed forces, unless it is your true vocation!

Never forget the goal: unalloyed happiness.

Warmest regards,

Francis

If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound? - Francis Answers - 81

Dear Francis, I was very interested in your comments about the distinction between “awareness” and “mind” (question no. 76). You said: “Be open to the possibility that nothing happens outside of or apart from awareness, but that many things happen outside of or apart from our human mind. The belief that nothing happens outside of a limited human mind is a form of ignorance known as solipsism.” That statement gives rise to two questions: 1. Is there really such a thing as a “limited human mind”? What I mean is, here there are thoughts, feelings, perceptions. Why presume that these thoughts, feelings, perceptions are somehow “limited”? And why presume that there is something happening outside of what you call the human mind? It seems to me that, if there is a “belief” involved, it’s a “belief” that something is happening that is not known here. So it seems that you would answer “yes” to the question, “If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound?” Because while the limited human mind wouldn’t perceive the sound, awareness would. But to me that seems to be pure speculation, devoid of actual experience. 2. If there are things happening in awareness of which the human mind is not aware, then who or what is aware of them? If the answer is: “Awareness itself is aware,” isn’t that akin to saying, “Omniscient God is aware”? In other words, it seems to set up awareness as a kind of diety, aware of things inaccessible to the “limited human mind.” I’m not sure how clear I’ve been (or how clear I am to myself!). I think my central question is: although you call solipsism “a form of ignorance,” isn’t solipsism what is actually experienced, and everything else is speculating about what may be happening but is not experienced? And if there is no “person” as such, and therefore no “limited human mind,” isn’t the experience of reality in effect a “solipsism for no one”? This is the nut I can’t crack! Michael

Dear Michael,

You asked several questions:

1. Is there really such a thing as a “limited human mind”?

In our human experience? No, not really. There are only mentations appearing, existing and disappearing back into in awareness-consciousness. Their substance is consciousness, therefore there is only consciousness.

2. Why presume that these thoughts, feelings, perceptions are somehow “limited”?

Because they are. For instance the perceptions of being in California and of

being in Maryland are different, meaning each of them is limited: the air cannot be dry and humid as a same perception.

3. Why presume that there is something happening outside of what you call the human mind?

Because the mentations are limited. Because there seems to be California, where the body called Francis seems to live, and Maryland, where the body called Michael seems to live. You are presuming it yourself, since you are asking Francis this question. But you are right that at that stage in our investigation, it is still a belief.

4. So it seems that you would answer “yes” to the question, “If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound?”

It depends on what we mean by “sound” and by “no one”. If by “sound” we mean the experience of hearing, and if by “one” we mean “consciousness”, then “no one” implies no “sound” and the answer is “no”. If by “one” we mean the limited minds of Francis or Michael, the answer is “perhaps”.

5. If there are things happening in awareness of which the human mind is not aware, then who or what is aware of them?

Cats seem to be pretty much aware of mice, and dogs of cats. Why limit consciousness to human minds, or, even worse in the case of solipsism, to Michael’s mind? Why even limit awareness to minds? Mind (that is mentations) appears in awareness, not awareness in mind. That which appears in awareness doesn’t limit it.

6. Isn’t solipsism what is actually experienced, and everything else is speculating about what may be happening but is not experienced?

Solipsism is that which is seemingly experienced when we identify the perceiving consciousness with a perceived limited body-mind. It is a shrinkage of the divine, eternal, all-knowing awareness to the tiny size of a human, mortal and limited mind. It is the epitome of ignorance, of alienation and of suffering. The solipsist, denying others existence and consciousness, remains a prisoner within the dungeon of his logically unassailable belief system, unaware that everybody around him sees what a fool he is.

But it is not true to say that it is that which is actually experienced, for that which is actually experienced is awareness and awareness alone.

7. If the answer is: “Awareness itself is aware,” isn’t that akin to saying, “Omniscient God is aware”? In other words, it seems to set up awareness as a kind of deity, aware of things inaccessible to the “limited human mind.”

Yes, Michael. It is akin to saying that. What’s wrong with it? After all, That is what you are, Awareness. Be open to that possibility, be open to your divine Presence.

Love,

Francis

Follow up to answer 81 - Francis Answers - 82

Dear Francis,

Thank you, that's very helpful. But there's still a grain of confusion, so if I may, let me try a dream analogy.

If I'm dreaming, in my dream there may be a Francis character who appears to be in California, and a Michael character who appears to be in Maryland. In the dream, Francis may say, "The air feels so dry here." And Michael may say, "The air is feeling so humid."

So it appears within the dream that Francis is experiencing aridity, and Michael is experiencing humidity. That would seem to be evidence of limited mentations, limited to the minds of Francis and Michael.

But when the dreamer awakes, the truth appears: there was no limited Francis experience or Michael experience. Francis and Michael were not experiencing anything at all. Only the dreamer was having any experience whatsoever, and what the dreamer experienced was simply the APPEARANCE of Francis and Michael having experiences. In truth, there were no such limited experiences (mentations).

So from the dreamer's perspective, the dream is a solipsistic "reality." Only the dreamer and its experiences are "real," and everything else is mere appearance, which is understood as mere appearance upon awakening from the dream.

So if one substitutes "awareness" for "the dreamer," don't we have a pretty accurate description of waking reality?

You may have made a related point in answer to another question when you said, "perceptions do not perceive." In that case the appearance called "people," as objects of perception, do not themselves perceive. Only the one perceiver, awareness, is doing any perceiving. Everything else is the perceived.

Am I on the right or wrong track?

Love,

Michael

Dear Michael,

You are conceptually on the right track, especially in the last paragraph of your message. It is important to have the right map showing the path to the experience of our true nature. However the acquisition of the map is not the end of the journey, but a useful step of it. The goal of the journey is the experience of the divinity of our true Self, and our subsequent establishment in this wonderful certainty.

One remark, though: the dream analogy is not easily applicable. Here is why: In the dream, there are two characters appearing to the dreamer. Either 1. the dreamer has access to Francis' mind, feels the dry air outside and doesn't see Michael, although he can exchange email messages with him, or 2. the dreamer has access to Michael's mentations, feels the humid air outside and doesn't see Francis, although he can correspond with him, or 3. he has no access to their minds and only sees their bodies from the outside, but one at a time, since this external witness cannot be SIMULTANEOUSLY inside Francis and Michael, nor can he be simultaneously in California and in Maryland. Unlike the dreamer, consciousness in its pure, timeless state simultaneously contains both Francis and Michael, California and Maryland as potentialities.

Awareness is omnipresent across time, space and minds. Because of the existence of memory, its omnipresence across time is easily graspable by the mind, whereas its omnipresence across space and minds is difficult to conceive from the vantage point of a limited body-mind localized in space.

Consciousness is the timeless and spaceless place that contains, actualizes and perceives all the times, all the minds, and all the places

Love,

Francis

Follow up to answer 77 - Francis Answers - 83

Dear Francis,

This is an excellent and insightful reply to my 2 questions. Thank you.

In your answer here there is perhaps a point which it may be helpful to clarify. You say that in cases of an incomplete glimpse “the central knot of separation” has failed to be eliminated. The implication here of the expression “central knot” does seem to suggest a central or fundamental point on which the main sense of separation is dependent. Now if it is the case, as you very reasonably assert, that they are “both equally important” - the dissolution of ‘ignorance’ or the separate self sense in regard to both intellectual identity and felt identity - the question arises where is this

“central knot”? Is it of the ‘cognitive-intellectual-mind’ system or of the ‘feeling-somatic’ system?

{{ Not wishing to put words in your mouth - heaven forbid! - is not the ‘heart’ the heart of the matter? I remember in ‘Eternity Now’ (was it?) something about monkeys swinging from branch to branch then having the good sense, apparently, to let go and then finding themselves falling into the heart. There was also some mention about the heart being the true centre and the final destination. I acknowledge your point about ‘half-baked’ devotional types where there is a surrender at the heart level but no cognitive ‘understanding’, but, that said, there is a strong sense here that the heart is key and central. Again, I’m reminded of the ‘logion’ or statement from which my questions arose:

« 67. When Atman, the sun of understanding, rises in the space of the heart, it disperses darkness; permeating all and sustaining all, it shines, and all is light. »

sun - centre, heart of solar system

heart - centre, core of feeling-somatic system }}

Love,

Alan

Dear Alan,

Why try to dissociate Intelligence, Love and Beauty? Aren’t in fact one as the experience of our true nature? When we are poetically inspired, I agree with you, Heart is a better word for it than Reason. But on those days when we are logically inclined, it may seem too fuzzy, even for fuzzy logicians.

Let’s go now to the heart of your question:

“Now if it is the case, as you very reasonably assert, that they are”both equally important” - the dissolution of ‘ignorance’ or the separate self sense in regard to both intellectual identity and felt identity - the question arises where is this “central knot”? Is it of the ‘cognitive-intellectual-mind’ system or of the ‘feeling-somatic’ system?”

You have a rope with a big knot in the middle that seems to separate the rope in two halves. One half is known as the cognitive-mind half and the other as the feeling-body part. You can start untying it from either side. Once it has been untied, there is only the rope, there has ever been only the rope.

Where was the central knot?

On the rope.

Love,

Francis

I would very much like to experience more joy and aliveness while inhabiting this body - Francis Answers - 84

Dear Francis, I very much appreciate this possibility to ask you questions. I would like to ask a question that is seldom addressed by spiritual teachers, but what still seems to be very much part of the human condition. I am 50 years old and I feel that is tiring to be in this physical body. The body and the nervous system seem to limit how much awareness and joy I am able to experience. It is also frustrating to experience that I don't have the energy to do all the things that I would like to do. I am not ill, but I just feel this tiredness and limits of the body and the nervous system. (I have tried to take reasonably good care of the body by healthy nutrition and exercise. So that is not the issue.) Sometimes I have seen 80 or 90 years old people full of joyful presence in spite that they are in a diseased and frail body. They seem to be very transparent; the spirit is flowing through them. My first priority is to wake up totally, but still I would very much like to experience more joy and aliveness while inhabiting this body. What would you suggest? Thank you in advance.

Dear Juhana,

I understand your concern, but it is at the very root of your problem. There is a paradox about the experience of joy and aliveness while inhabiting this body: it manifests spontaneously the moment we are not attached to this body. Similarly, we truly enjoy the world the moment we are not attached to it. The paradox we are facing is that we cannot pretend we are not attached to the body, the world and the pleasures they offer if we are in fact very much attached to them.

However, the very fact that you are asking this question shows that you have begun to realize that they cannot deliver the happiness you seek. This understanding may create an apparent state of indifference which can be misconstrued as a lack of enthusiasm and aliveness, whereas in fact your enthusiasm has started to shift away from the world towards the Presence which is the reality of your experience.

My advice to you is to follow your enthusiasm, your interest, wherever it takes you. Enjoy your freedom, preserve the freshness of your love. Even if your interest takes you apparently away from so-called spiritual activities, the spiritual activity I am recommending in your case is to be extremely attentive at every moment to whatever it is you really want to do in this very moment, to wherever it is you want to be in this very moment, not later, but in this very moment. Be with the spontaneity of your real desire. Don't follow this or that object, but follow instead your heart's interest step by step, from moment to moment. You will be surprised to see where it takes you!

Love,
Francis

Should we focus on an unpleasant feeling or on that which experiences it? Francis Answers - 85

Dear Francis, In meditation often a strong uncomfortable feeling such as fear, sorrow, anguish, etc. arises. When this occurs, if the feeling can be approached without thought, the result usually is bodily shaking and spasms for a couple of minutes, after which arises comfortable feelings of oneness and peace. Sometimes rather than “diving” into the uncomfortable feeling, the question is asked, “Who is it that is experiencing this feeling?” Focusing awareness on “that which experiences” rather than the uncomfortable feeling may also sometimes be followed by feelings of oneness and peace, (though this happens less often and any feelings of oneness and peace feel less “direct”). Is either approach better? The former seems more “effective” and the latter sometimes feels tinged with suppression. While I certainly appreciate the dissipation of “uncomfortable” feelings and the experience of “comfortable” feelings, my motivation is cultivation of wisdom and facility for opening into the truth. Any suggestions? Much thanks, George

Dear George,

The fact that you have two different options indicates that in both cases you are doing something. What is the goal of those practices? Is it not to get rid of the discomfort the feeling generates? and if so, could we call such a practice “welcoming”? in the former case you focus onto the feeling in order not to feel it anymore and in the latter you focus onto something else in order perhaps to escape the feeling.

True welcoming, which I recommend in your case, simply welcomes the feeling with benevolent indifference, and everything else that arises in the field of awareness. Awareness itself is this nonjudgmental, unfocused, goal-less welcoming. You simply revert to the natural functioning of awareness, without focusing on the unpleasant feeling, nor on the “I am” concept or feeling. It allows for the feeling to tell the rest of its story, providing the time and space it requires to do so. In this contemplation, you really take your stand as impersonal presence.

If my suggestion seems difficult to follow, I would recommend as a second choice the former of the two approaches you described, provided your investigation into the nature of self is not confined to the realm of thoughts or to the realm of body sensations but has an unlimited scope instead and is conducted with the intention to truly find out the living answer to the question “what am I?”, not to eliminate the unpleasant feeling. This approach will eventually lead to the one I recommend.

Love,

Francis

What is the right practice? - Francis Answers - 86

Dear Francis, Since many years I'm interested in non-dual teachings & got more & more absorbed by it. I love "your" embodiment of the consciousness/awareness we all are. I feel very drawn to the way you are pointing to the truth & that's why I feel that you are the teacher to whom I want to ask this question: I "practice" to identify myself as the impersonal consciousness which witnesses what appears in it, instead of being identified with the appearance. It "works" specially well with so called negative emotions- I noticed that what ... sees the anger, isn't angry, ... sees the fear, isn't afraid, ... sees the sadness, isn't sad ... and so on. When I check in like that it brings me to the same space, like the question "who/ what am I?" Candice o'Denver from the "Great Freedom Teaching" suggests "to take short moments of awareness many times" which points in my understanding to the same. Also I play with the focus of my attention in the way I picked up from your friend Rupert Spira: EVERYTHING (including my body) appears in the same "space" of consciousness without distance & simultaneously - that's instantly relaxing. Would you say that it's the right approach to realize & embody the oneness with consciousness? I have to say, it turns out to be difficult to put my question into words... Thank you for your answer

Namasté

Bhasha

Dear Basha,

Just as at some point your question cannot be formulated, the answer to it cannot be given through words. The very presence of a guru who is knowingly established in the Self guides the disciple effortlessly, beyond words, through the last stages of the path. I have no rational explanation for this. I just know it from experience. Some kind of understanding may apparently be conveyed through words, but the presence of a well qualified instructor is in most cases necessary for the disciple to get established in unshakable peace. Self realization cannot be delivered via e-mail or Facebook, even if some important obstacles can be removed through intellectual understanding.

Regarding your practice, it should never be mechanical and always flow from your understanding. The most important element is to always be open during your investigation to the possibility that your everyday consciousness is universal and unlimited. If this openness is not there, your practice remains psychological. Once you are open to that possibility, you can create as many practices as you wish. In the beginning you can get them from a teacher, but then you come up with your own exercises. I don't like the term "practice", because it

suggests effort and repetition. We could call it exploring the Infinite which we are, conducting experiments on the way we perceive the world and the living beings that surround us, our own feelings and body sensations, and our own thoughts. As a result of this exploration our perceptions, thoughts, feelings and actions get realigned with the reality of our being.

Love,

Francis

Why are minds personal and different from each other? - Francis Answers - 87

Dear Francis, In Answer #74, you said, “Rhonda’s personal mind is therefore an illusion projected onto the reality, consciousness, Godhead, through the creation of specific mentations that we could call”Rhonda’s recollections”. You also said, “There are infinitely many others, among which”Francis’ Mind”, made of “Francis’ recollections” . . . Are you implying that Francis’ mind is also an illusion, and that it contains no recollections other than the personal recollections of Francis? This leads to my main question, which is, why are minds personal and different from each other? Is there some answer other than that God wants it that way? If not, this is the same answer that the Church gave to all such questions of why? before science was liberated from it in the 17th century.

Dear Stanley,

You asked two questions:

1. “Are you implying that Francis’ mind is also an illusion, and that it contains no recollections other than the personal recollections of Francis?”

Yes. Francis’ mind doesn’t exist, because Francis only has the experience of consciousness and of its perceptions, the substance of which is this very same consciousness. Therefore Francis only experiences consciousness and it (not he) doesn’t have the experience of Francis’ mind. And if Francis doesn’t, nobody does. As a corollary, since this mind doesn’t exist, it cannot really contain anything.

2. “Why are minds personal and different from each other? Is there some answer other than that God wants it that way? If not, this is the same answer that the Church gave to all such questions of why? before science was liberated from it in the 17th century.”

I agree with you that the various churches haven’t done a good job in answering the questions “why?”. What concerns me is that you make it sound as if Science had done a better job. Can you tell me whether Physics answers the questions “why is there energy? why does light travel at the (ubiquitous and ridiculous) value of 300000km/s in the void? why has the Planck constant the (equally ridiculous and ubiquitous) value of 6.626068×10^{-34} J s?” I am not sure that even Einstein wouldn’t have given almost the same answer as the church: “Because God wants it that way, since he/she/it doesn’t play dice”. The truth is that even if Science could attribute a cause C1 to an effect E, therefore seemingly answering the question “Why E?”, the next question would be “but why C1 then? - because of C2” etc. . . the buck keeps getting passed on to the next cause, unless it reaches God, that which is its own cause (Spinoza’s definition of God), where all bucks stop. I love Science too much not to recognize that it is beautiful

and interesting and that it does a good job in answering some of the questions “how?”, questions such as “how is the trajectory of a photon traveling in the vicinity of a big star going to be affected by the local gravity field?”, “where can I find Mars in the sky tomorrow at 10pm?” or “what are the various possible energy levels of the electron in the Hydrogen atom?”

Let’s go back to your main question, “Why are minds personal and different from each other?”. You posit first the real existence of personal minds and then ask why they are personal. Unless you prove experientially their existence, the question is similar to “why do unicorns have only one horn?” Minds are like the clothes of the naked emperor: everybody seems to agree on their existence, however nobody has ever seen one. And I am the trouble maker saying aloud “the Emperor is naked!”

And the naked truth is: there is only one Reality, and it is that which we perceive, and it is that which perceives, and it is God.

Love,

Francis

God in the quad - Francis Answers - 88

Dear Francis, In Answer #76, you said, “There is only one awareness. Your awareness, my awareness and God’s awareness are the same awareness which is the substance of all things. . . .” Are you implying that God is a being with a mind? And that this mind contains the egg that was buried for six months? Isn’t that tantamount to saying that objective reality is real? That it exists whether or not it is being observed? What you are saying is reminiscent of the famous pair of limericks summarizing the idealistic philosophy of George Berkeley: There was a young man who said “God Must find it exceedingly odd To think that the tree Should continue to be When there’s no one about in the quad.” —Ronald Knox “Dear Sir: Your astonishment’s odd; I am always about in the quad. And that’s why the tree Will continue to be Since observed by, Yours faithfully, God.” —Anonymous Stanley

Dear Stanley,

Thank you for sharing the limericks. I am afraid we have lost the art of elegant and witty debate somewhere along the road to the Twenty First Century.

When I say that your awareness, my awareness and God’s awareness are the same awareness, I am not implying that God is a being with a mind. I am saying that awareness is universal, that the cosmos itself is aware in all beings, and that this cosmic awareness is the reality, the substance of the totality of that which exists, including, but not limited to, material existence. The egg that was buried for six months doesn’t have any empirical existence independently from awareness, which is tantamount to saying that awareness is the reality of the objective world. When objective reality is not being observed, it “returns” to awareness which it had never left. In other words, pure awareness is the form of existence of the world between observations (or shall I say “measurements”?). It is the God in the quad, when he/she/That dreams the quad. When That leaves the quad, the quad dissolves. That remains.

Love,

Francis

Advaita and reincarnation - Francis Answers - 90

Dear Francis, As there is no individual identity either for the jnani nor the ajnani then, upon death, aren't they both finally liberated? So why in traditional advaita is the one 'liberated in this life' told that he will 'not be born again' if there is no individual in any case? If death is final and there's no individual to reincarnate couldn't one merely commit suicide? But wait! Even then, what's to stop the new experience of another 'me' (not this one of course) but a brand new individual starting all over again (like this 'one' did) with a life of suffering and ignorance? This seems from my limited perspective to be a most perplexing conundrum. Can you help Francis?

Dear Roger,

You asked several questions:

1. As there is no individual identity either for the jnani nor the ajnani then, upon death, aren't they both finally liberated?

Are you asking a hypothetical question, or is it your experience that there is no individual entity? And if such is your experience, why bring up a question about an illusory personal entity, the ajnani? If you don't believe in Santa Claus, why would you ask about the color of his coat? Do you believe in reincarnation? Is this really your question, or are you just trying to make sure that Advaita is a consistent theory in order to reassure yourself that you are using the right theory to seek the Truth? Advaita is not a consistent theory, for it is not a theory, but the reality of our experience and the reality of all that is experienced. The teaching of Advaita doesn't have to be consistent, but rather to consistently point at that reality from the position occupied by the disciple. Because different seekers seek the truth from different vantage points, the pointers given by the teacher may seem to be inconsistent with one another. Once the truth is realized, it becomes evident that they were all pointing at the same reality. We have to conclude that your question doesn't originate from the experience that there are no individual entities.

In fact there is real individual identity for the jnani only. There is only one Jnani, only one Sage, one individual. There are no ajnanis in need to be liberated. This is the answer that can be given on the absolute level, the level where there are no individual entities.

If one who believes to be a separate and limited consciousness seeks liberation from her/his burden by asking a question like yours from a teacher, the teacher will adapt his answer to the level from which the question originates. Often the student is not able to grasp directly the truth of an answer given on the absolute level. In that case, the teacher will give an answer that will provisionally grant the belief in the existence of separate entities, ajnanis and jnanis in this case. In the Hindu culture, the Vedantic guru will also very often grant in his answer the belief in reincarnation, according to which the individual mind survives the

death of the physical body and reincarnates in a new body. It follows from this perspective, on this relative level, that if the mind still holds at the time of death the belief to be a separate entity, the same mind, being reincarnated in a brand new body, will hold the same belief and ignorance will be reborn in this new body. However, in the case of the Jnani, the belief in separate existence has been surrendered during the life of the body. The Jnani is no longer a mind-body entity, but universal and eternal Awareness, for which there is no death or rebirth.

2. Why in traditional advaita is the one 'liberated in this life' told that he will 'not be born again' if there is no individual in any case?

For the jnanin, only consciousness is real. The rest, including past or future existences is only a dream that celebrates this Reality. From the advaitic perspective, reincarnation can only be an illusion because the limited reincarnating entity itself is an illusion. However, since our true nature is infinite potentiality, reincarnation is one of its phenomenal possibilities, a possibility it can actualize whenever it chooses to do so.

The one who is liberated knows he was never born and will never die, and therefore doesn't need to be told that he will never be born again. However, the one who is still in ignorance, attached to the belief to be a separate mind with the burden of endless suffering throughout countless existences, is told in the East that there is a possibility to put an end to this cycle of births and deaths as an incentive to seek liberation. Similarly, in the Western culture, a materialist who believes that the mind doesn't survive the body could be told that this short lifespan is the only opportunity he has to realize the truth as an incentive not to postpone the spiritual quest.

3. If death is final and there's no individual to reincarnate couldn't one merely commit suicide?

The physical body is not the cause of ignorance. Its disappearance doesn't therefore imply the disappearance of ignorance. Therefore suicide is not a good tool for enlightenment. Besides, there is no personal entity to commit suicide. If suicide happens it is, like ignorance, a choice made by the Self.

4. Even then, what's to stop the new experience of another 'me' (not this one of course) but a brand new individual starting all over again (like this 'one' did) with a life of suffering and ignorance?

That which is not never begins to be, and that which is never ceases to be.
(Baghavat Gita)

Experiences, phenomena, bodies, events seem to come and go, but they don't have real existence. A new real individual cannot begin to exist, and that which is really alive right now will never die.

Love,

Francis

Could one possibly inspire his fellow man to share the same vision of Oness? - Francis Answers - 91

Dear Francis, I have come to realize that looking within & getting to know one-self is the interpersonal relations. Could one, and if yes, how would one go about inviting/inspiring a greater number to “look within”? peace&tranquility.

Sam

(Francis asked for clarification)

Dear Francis,

Thank you for replying.

What I meant is knowledge of oneself the path to freedom from the obsolete mindset (greed, selfishness ect)? if that is true could one possibly inspire his fellow man to share the same vision of Oness and Inclusionality, where all beings are free of traits such as greed.

Kind regards

Sam

Dear Sam,

If one is free from sorrow, this freedom shares itself spontaneously without us having to even think about sharing it. But in this case, the question whether or not to share it or how doesn't arise. As long as there is an individual “sharer”, happiness doesn't share itself, because there is no happiness to share. In that sense, every enlightened being is a teacher, teaching without teaching, spontaneously.

Formal teachers are a different story. To sit on a platform in front of an audience of seekers requires, in addition to freedom from suffering, some God given talents, acquired skills and the deep enthusiasm of a vocation. If one of these four legs is missing, the teaching will be limping, and if the first of these legs is missing, it will be false, even if the words seem right. That is the reason why only a small number of enlightened beings become formal teachers and why, among the formal teachers, only a small proportion is truly free from death and suffering.

Two out of these four elements are birth gifts, the talent and the vocation. The other two, freedom itself and teaching skills can be acquired from satsang with the guru. If one sits for ten to twenty years at the feet of one's guru, attending all of her meetings, getting liberated on the way, chances are the teaching skills will be there, having been gradually and effortlessly acquired over these years.

A very common obstacle encountered by truth seekers is a desire to teach before being really established in Presence. They see teaching as an interesting way to make a living, or, worse, to become famous, or to get approval from others.

Those who are sincere and honest will be able to help seekers up to their level, but by doing so they will deprive themselves from the benefits of satsang with a truly liberated guru and postpone for themselves the enjoyment of the fruit of liberation.

Question on a “shift” in perception - Francis Answers -92

As I sat in my easy-chair on a Saturday morning recently, my intention was to simply sit aware of awareness. Nearly imperceptibly, there was a bit of what I will call a “shift” in perception. I began to be aware of a crystal clear reality, which would have made the sound of a crystal bell if it could have sounded. It was more real than sense perception. I noticed by it’s absence, my mind was not offering it’s usual ad-lib. I was very pleased about this, because had never known it’s absence prior to this. I would like to say I began to know that which is really Real. I was that which is really Real. It was grander, and yet simpler than I had ever imagined it would be. I went through the day in a leisurely way, if you can call this place leisure. Leisure is not a good word. I barely recall that I must have attended to normal routine functions as eating, etc. . . . I remember as I went outdoors that all life I looked at had a recognizable essence about or in it. I recognized that essence as mine, in fact I made the comment out loud as I touched a flower, “yes that’s me too!” I “was” all I experienced. I also noticed I had no questions of anything, as all there “was” spoke everything about itself in itself. In other words, I had the sense that All is well-as it has ever been. It surely was beyond mind. This shift sustained itself the entire day, and as evening approached I recall reading about experience of awareness in that it does not come always to abide continually. In fact I began to read an entire book I had located online about the same subject. My thoughts were that I hoped this “place” would be a lasting abode of mine, but as I woke up the next day, alas the awareness began to fade into the background as I laughingly assumed my age old identification with conditioning. Since this “shift” I am less apprehensive about the possibility of my being aware of it, yet I so want to walk there continually. I have resumed inquiry and attention to awareness as I can. I do still work 40 hrs a week, but my real job is the pursuit of a permanent shift in perception. Presently, though I know that this place Is. Dear Francis, do you have any thoughts or suggestions? Thank you for your sweet teachings.

Dear Stephen,

As long as we make a distinction between Nirvana and Samsara, we are in Samsara. (Buddhist saying)

Everything that has a beginning in time and an end in time is a mind state, no matter how spiritual, beautiful or non-dual it may have been. I am not minimizing the value of that experience, but I would recommend to try to focus on the element of it that was present then and that is still present now. Something must have shifted permanently in you as a result of it. What you

think yourself to be now is perhaps different from what it used to be. Whatever you have understood through this experience will keep growing and dissolving the dark areas of your belief in separate existence. But don't look back. Don't make it a phenomenal event that has happened to a separate human being named Stephen.

Love,
Francis

On dissatisfaction - Francis Answers - 93

Dear Francis I then came across your videos on the internet some months ago and seeing you and hearing your words seemed to connect with something inside me. I had just left an advaita organisation that I had been with for many years. However, I seem to be stuck now. I can't seem to do anything in relation to "spiritual endeavour" . Anything I start doing seems to be driven by a wish to be clean and happy and when I become aware of this I can't continue. I have been waking in the morning with awareness of thoughts, and dissatisfaction follows. I am aware of the dissatisfaction and can't do anything about it. I am aware of efforts to escape from it - trying to be indifferent, trying to observe what is going on, trying to stop trying. Previously, simple observation did seem to take place which resulted in clarity and release, but increasingly the dissatisfaction just goes on. Can you advise? Best regards Carlo

Dear Carlo,

The more you try to liberate yourself from the dissatisfaction, the more dissatisfied you get. The reason is that you are dissatisfied of your dissatisfaction, which only piles up one more element of dissatisfaction on top of the preexisting ones. Understand clearly that the origin of it is your sense of being a separate consciousness and try to find out from your own experience whether or not you are such a limited or separate awareness. In this way your focus will shift away from the problem (the dissatisfaction) towards the solution, the universal presence which we all are.

Love,

Francis

What are your views about the year 2012 & catastrophic events to happen for planet earth? - Francis Answers - 94

Location: Australia, Gold Coast

Hello If this life is a dream, an illusion, then what are your views about the year 2012 & catastrophic events to happen for planet earth? i mean shouldn't we still play the game & do something about it? Cheers Victor

Dear Victor,

I do whatever I can to make this dream a better dream, not because I feel I have to, but because I enjoy doing it. If we would all try to do the same, it would be a very sweet dream. Too sweet perhaps, like American chocolate?

All is well and unfolding as it should (Robert Adams). We'll all be fine at the end.

Love,

Francis

Spiritual teachers are not jealous wives or husbands - or at least they shouldn't be. - Francis Answers - 95

Location: England

Dear Francis I found your videos recently and felt a strong emotional connection with a lot of what you say. It was a relief because I had just left an organisation which teaches Advaita after having been a member for about thirty years. I left in the summer, after a few years of discomfort. I think it was mainly because I felt that the teachings were being rammed into us in a dogmatic way. I had also suddenly had the clear understanding that after thirty years in the school, and all the teachings and practices, I really did not know anything. I had had an earlier understanding that the ego is unreal, but even that doesn't seem relevant now. I now feel that I can't do any kind of practice because it just doesn't seem right. When I hear you speaking I feel peace. I initially felt relief and gratitude, which seemed to confirm that my leaving the School was right for me. But seeing more of the videos, there is a lot I just don't understand in an emotional way, like the consciousness being universal. I can understand it with reason, from what you say, but I don't really understand it in my heart. I felt strongly with the video on the Gateless Gate and what followed, that this seemed to be where I am. I feel I understand in my heart that I can't go any further with ideas, concepts, wishes, hopes and trying. This is fine when I'm watching the videos or not under pressure. However, in my everyday life don't seem to sit much in the hot seat. I am a science teacher in a boys secondary school, and find it difficult to cope with the challenging classes. One particular class is especially difficult - there are a lot of boys, who don't seem to be interested in learning but who appear to me to want to cause me pain and trouble! From starting to teach them in the beginning of the year, I have once connected with the boys and felt closeness and affection, but most of the time, I feel fear and even hatred for them, and I am struggling to control. It's all a bit confusing because there is obviously some love of truth in me, but in my actions I don't hold to this. Can you say anything to help? With gratitude and love for what I have received already.

Carlo

Dear Carlo,

As we progress on the spiritual path, we may realize that we have outgrown teachings that used to be dear and useful to us in the beginning of the journey. They seem now to be flat and devoid of fragrance. Or they seem to be limiting and dogmatic, although they were exactly what we needed at the time when we

first chose to follow them. When this happens, we have to remember that our highest allegiance is to the truth, not to a teacher or to an organization. We must always get the teachings from the best source available to us, following in this both our intelligence and our heart. Spiritual teachers are not jealous wives or husbands - or at least they shouldn't be.

The reason why you don't understand in an emotional way that consciousness is universal is because your emotions are in the way of this experience. You have trained yourself to feel the body and to perceive the world in a way that was consistent with the belief systems you had about them: I am a separate individual body mind lost in a foreign and potentially hostile world. Through the use of your higher reason, you are now open to the possibility that consciousness is not personal but universal, which enables you to conduct experiments at the level of the body and of the world to check out this new possibility. Feel your body, as often as possible, in a way that is consistent with this new perspective. Feel it to be transparent, all expanded, all including, all embracing, weightless, all penetrating. Similarly, give others a chance not to be hostile strangers. Feel that they are the very same consciousness you are as you interact with them, with your students for example. Remember the young boy you were, the stupid and sometimes cruel things you did, all part of the learning process that has turned you into the beautiful truth seeker you are now. Your students are your yoga exercises to be mastered. Be eager to meet them in the morning before class begins. Look forward to having the opportunity to change yourself, and, in doing so, to change others for the best. Unless you master this yoga exercise, it will keep resurfacing in your life under various disguises. Apply the pieces of advice I just gave you. Fear nothing, especially not the kids. If you fear them, they will abuse you, and rightfully so, it is the way life teaches us not to be afraid. If they fear you, class will be war, you won't enjoy it, nor will they. Understanding and love are the keys.

Love,

Francis

The Next Thought is God's Thought - Guided Meditation -4

The Next Thought is God's Thought

Francis Lucille

Temecula, California

April 1, 2006

There is only one Reality.

This means that that which is hearing these words and the words that are being heard, that which sees and that which is seen, that which thinks and the thought, are One. The thinker and the thought, the seer and the seen, the hearer and the heard are names that refer to this one single Reality.

For this Reality there is no death and there are no problems.

The apparent problems are waves through which this Reality expresses itself and, in the same way, the solving of those problems are also waves through which this Reality enjoys itself.

Don't simply hold this to be true as a concept, because no concept is true, but go beyond the concept. Realize, or at least be open to the possibility, that it is true right now—that which hears and that which is heard are One.

That which hears and that which *speaks* are One. That which hears is hearing itself speaking to itself.

When you don't fall prey to the belief in separation, you realize this has always been your experience. There has never been ignorance. It has always been this Reality loving itself, enjoying itself, celebrating itself.

The wave has no reality separate from the ocean. Without the other waves next to it and without the depth of the ocean below it, the wave collapses. A separate wave has never been found in nature. It doesn't exist. If you think deeply about this, if it is true of the wave, it is true of everything. All things are waves of this ocean.

These words are waves dancing on the surface of this ocean of Presence, which is hearing them and speaking them. And all of your thoughts and feelings and sensations are also other waves of this same ocean.

Ask yourself the question, "If all is the same ocean, what is missing?" Or even, "What could be missing?"

Discover your fullness, not the fullness of ignorance or the fullness of a fragment that wants to grow bigger and to have more, but the fullness of that which is One within itself, with nothing outside it and no things inside it.

One single Presence, one single Consciousness, one single Intelligence present to itself, perceiving itself, understanding itself—in so many ways. Be open to this possibility and then see: “Gee, it’s going on right now!”

One eternal Being in constant renewal, always the same and never the same.

If you think about it, that’s the way we think about ourselves in ignorance. On the one hand we think, “I’m always the same, Francis, John—whoever.” But on the other hand, we think, “I’m ever changing, aging, changing minds, moving, changing shapes, changing conditions.” Ever changing, never changing.

But this ‘ever changing, never changing’ understanding doesn’t apply to that which is limited, because that which is limited ever-changes but is not changeless.

Only the Totality is both changeless and ever changing. So the part in us that we know never changes is the true part: the Consciousness, the I Am-ness, the Root, the Atman. And that which ever-changes is also the true part, provided we don’t assign any limits to it, any contour.

So as your body appears in your meditation in the form of sensations or your mind in the form of thoughts, understand that the body and the mind are waves of this ocean and the thoughts and sensations and feelings are the wavelets, but beyond the waves there is the ocean.

So know that whatever is appearing in this moment in your body, in your mind is the face of God, the face of that one single Reality.

When you are simply open to that, all resistances go down the drain. How could you oppose yourself? How could you resist that which you are, when you understand you are pulling and pushing yourself at the same time?

And when this understanding happens, the mind flows, the body flows, the world flows. We are atoned, at-one-ed. We are One.

The next thought that comes is God’s thought.

The next feeling is God’s feeling.

It is God feeling itself through that feeling, thinking itself through that thought, present to itself through that Presence.

Our only problem is that we were expecting God’s experience to be different! It is our projection of what it ought to be that prevents us from experiencing it as it is at every moment.

As long as we are expecting, we are not in line with our understanding. We are still a fragment seeking completion. Even if we are expecting something spiritual, the problem is that even spiritual expectations are not spiritual at all.

Know that everything that is appearing is fine. “All is well and unfolding as it should,” as Robert Adams used to say.

All is well and unfolding as it should right now.

Regarding your body and the experience of the body, see that you are not just that which is appearing as your body. You are that which appears, you are that *to which* it appears and you are all the rest at every moment.

Francis Lucille

2006

Francis Lucille on Jean Klein

Jean Klein never meant for the world to be an illusion pure and simple, for the world as an experience is undeniable.

What he meant was that a world existing independently from consciousness is an illusion. But as an expression of reality, or consciousness, the world is real. Jean Klein's teachings are at the crossroads of Advaita and Tantrism (Kashmiri Shaivism) and the latter tradition emphasizes the reality of the world, and the intrinsic oneness between the world and consciousness, between Shakti and Shiva.

JK would often say that the distinction between subject and object used in the teachings was a pedagogical tool: if the disciple believes to be a separate perceiver, provisionally assuming that to be true, he is told that just as he is the witness of the world, he is the witness of his feelings and of his thoughts. This understanding liberates him from his identification with the body-mind, and opens the possibility for consciousness to be universal rather than personal. But this distinction has to be eventually transcended: the subject and its object are one, there is no "gap".

Now there is a gap of a different nature, the one Jean is referring to when he says: "but there comes a moment when the space is felt as our real nature, we abide in it, and the object, the sensation, appears in it." This space, this gap, is no longer between subject and object. At that point the conceptual subject has vanished. All objects appear for what they are: an expression of the space/awareness/reality in which they appear and of which they are made, just as waves are nothing else than the water they are made of. The problem we are facing here is that for most of us, the experience of pure Presence without objects is not recognized, and when we speak of it, our words are checked against the sole touchstone of phenomenal experience and miss the mark. All we can hope for is for the listener to be open to the possibility of a different type of experience, a non phenomenal, non objective form of knowledge, the mode of knowledge through which we know that there is consciousness, reality, the kind of knowledge through which we experience happiness. If this openness is there, the experience will sooner or later follow, an experience which is not a thought or a perception, but rather something like the perfume of love, peace and happiness that we felt in Jean's presence.

It seemed like every answer that you were giving to others questions were speaking directly to what I was experiencing - Francis Answers - 96

During Satsang today I had an experience, one that I've had before, in your presence, that I have a question about. As you were talking about the hot seat and about surrendering, something that I have been practicing a lot lately, I once again had this intense bodily sensation of expanding, of opening up. It was a blissful feeling, electric almost, and I had remembered you telling me when this happened before and it scared me a little that I was "stopping" it and then fear came in and to let it go next time, which I did. It seemed like every answer that you were giving to others questions were speaking directly to what I was experiencing, that I didn't need to ask a question to receive an answer, I felt as if you had awakened the teacher inside of me and that I had the answers. As always, when this happens I get extremely emotional and I start to weep, which brings up a sense of shame (I've always been teased for being too sensitive and emotional). As this shame came up I noticed that I started to have the thought "is this experience real, what if your mind is tricking you because your desire for enlightenment is so great". I thought "how can I trust this experience to be true" and I wanted to ask you about this but was too embarrassed because I knew I would get too emotional. When having these thoughts, I notice pretty quickly that these are just ways that my ego is trying to keep me from the truth, keeping me from "letting go" further and trusting in the experience and I also realize that the embarrassment that I feel, the holding back in asking you about this is also another opportunity to let go. So I don't know if I have a question as much as I would just like to hear your thoughts and confirmation that I just need to keep letting go, because that is what my inner teacher keeps repeating to me, let go, expand and let go. Or is there a practice that I can use the next time this comes up for me that will take me deeper?

Dear Shannon,

Two comments:

1. The experience you are describing, "It seemed like every answer that you were giving to others questions were speaking directly to what I was experiencing, that I didn't need to ask a question to receive an answer", is very familiar. I used to have the same experience with my teacher. It was not just that someone would serendipitously ask a the question I was having at that moment, but rather that a direct connection was established with my teacher "behind the scene" in such a way that he seemed to be

reading my mind and heart like an open book and I was doing the same. I miraculously knew the words he was going to utter as he conceived them, right before they were spoken.

2. Regarding the shame brought about by your being emotional, it should be noticed that there are two kinds of emotions: negative emotions which originate from ignorance, and positive emotions, like the ones you are describing, which originate from our true nature. I am not sure we should be ashamed of our negative emotions, but I am certain that we should proudly show our tears of joy and love to the rest of the world. Like you and all Truth lovers, I would often cry during my teacher's dialogues (men don't cry!) and I ceased to be bothered by these reactions of the body the moment I understood their source. I was just sitting there, like a child, free and careless, tears rolling down.

Love,
Francis

What is your core teaching? - Francis Answers - 97

What is your core teaching? I am right now seeing glimpses of witnessing. I guess my ego is still lurking behind the witnessing state. How can the witnessing state gets transcended? (I know how implies a method, and back again in the mind ..). Appreciate any help in understanding. Many Regards, Arun.

Dear Arun,

The core teaching is that there is only one Reality, Brahman. Therefore, the reality of that which we are, Atman, the Witness, consciousness, and that one Reality are the same. To put it in a nutshell: ATMAN=BRAHMAN. It follows that our true self is infinite, eternal, and shared by all beings.

To realize this, the Advaitic tradition suggests an investigative approach: to find the evidence, if any, and on all levels, body, senses, and mind, that the witness is limited, personal, mortal, etc. . . It will turn out that there is no such evidence, which will leave us open to the possibility that there is only one reality. As we conduct experiments about this possibility in our daily lives, the certainty will emerge that it is so.

The assistance of a well qualified instructor is required in most cases, otherwise the truth seeker may remain stuck on a level which falls short from revealing the full fragrance of the experience of oneness.

Love,

Francis

Parmenides - On Reality (fragments of a poem)

Born around 515 BC., Parmenides, was a citizen of Elea, a small town in the south of Italy. His poem "On Reality" was probably comprised of three parts of which we have only the first two largely intact.

The first part takes the form of an allegorical poem in which we see the poet, impelled by a strong desire, travel toward the domain of the Goddess, in a chariot pulled by powerful runners. After unveiling their faces for him, the Maidens of light guide him to the "threshold where the roads of Night and of Day converge", and he is allowed to cross it as a result of their intercession. He is then welcomed with benevolence by the Goddess who takes his right hand in hers and commences her teaching.

The second part, translated here, is the metaphysical section and contains the teaching of the truth.

The third, which is fragmentary, is the physical part. It represents ignorant public opinion according to which reality is the physical universe which came into existence in the past, exists today, and is destined to disappear one day.

Now then, I will instruct you; hear what I say:

Two paths are open to investigation.

The first says: being is and non-being is not.

It is the path of certainty, because it follows the truth.

The other says: being is not, therefore non-being is.

This misdirected path, I tell you, cannot lead to a sound conviction

For, if this statement were true, it would not be possible for you to conceive of non-being, nor to name it.

Speaking and thinking necessarily arise from being, because being is.

And non-being is not. I invite you to reflect deeply on this point,

And to move away, in your search, from that other path

As from the one traveled by those ignorant mortals

Who are the men of two minds: the uncertainty which resides in their hearts

Misleads their wavering reason. They are swept along,

Deaf and blind, benighted, the masses without discernment

Who pretend that being and non-being are simultaneously identical

And different, they for whom, for any statement, the opposite is equally true.

No power will ever bring non-being into existence.
So direct your thinking away from this path of exploration.
May habit, so often resumed, not force you to return to it,
With eyes blinded, ears filled with noise
And mouth with words, and may your intelligence alone resolve this contentious
issue.
Only one path remains for us to pursue:
Being is. And countless signs prove
That being is free from birth and death
Because it is complete, immutable and eternal.
It never was, it never will be, because it is completely whole in the now,
One, endless. What beginning, indeed, should we attribute to it?
Whence would it evolve? Whither?
I will not allow you to say or to think that it comes from nothingness,
Nor that being is not. What exigency would have brought it forth
Later or earlier, from non-being?
Thus, it can only be, absolutely, or not at all.
Our firm innermost conviction will never admit
That something can spring forth from nothingness.
In this way the goddess of Justice, forbidding birth and death,
Preserves without respite the existence of being. Whereas the question was to
resolve
Whether being is or is not. We must therefore decide to abandon as false
The second hypothesis, the path which can neither be thought nor formulated,
And to hold to the first, which is the path of the truth.
How could what is, one day cease to be? How could it have, one day, come to
be?
What is born, is not, neither what is to be born.
Thus dies birth and thus dies death.
Within being there remain no differences because it is completely identical to
itself.
There is not, here, something more that comes to break continuity

Neither, there, something less: but everything is filled with being.
Thus it is all continuous: being adjoined to being.
On the other hand, maintained motionless by powerful links,
It is without beginning and without end, since birth and death
Have been rejected as contrary to our intuition of truth.
Remaining itself, existing within itself, supported by itself,
Thus, immutable, it remains in the same place because the powerful necessity,
Hemming it in from all sides, keeps it firmly unified.
That is why it is not permitted that being be unfinished,
Because there is nothing missing in it; unfinished, it would be missing everything!
Thought is identical to being, and so it is for the object to which thought refers;
Thus there is nothing, and there will never be anything, outside of being
Which Destiny compels to an eternal bliss. Thus,
To be born and to die, to be or not to be,
To change place or appearance,
All of these events are but names superimposed by man's ignorance.
Being the ultimate, it is everywhere complete.
Just as an harmoniously round sphere
Departs equally at all points from its center.
Nothing can be added to it here nor taken away from it there.
What is not, cannot interrupt it's homogeneous existence.
What is, cannot possess it more or less. Out of all reach,
Everywhere identical to itself, beyond all limits, it is.

Translated from ancient Greek by Francis Lucille, edited by David Jennings

Is awakening possible while taking medication? - Francis Answers - 98

Have you had any experience with individuals who have “awakened” while taking medication, and does “self-realization” generally result in resolution of emotional difficulties?

Dear Don,

The answer to both questions is “yes”.

The experience of our true nature erases in due time the belief in a separate “me”. All the suffering attached to this belief dissolves with it.

Regarding taking medication, one has to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages through one’s own experience and make an educated decision. It is not for the physician to make the decision, nor for a spiritual teacher, but for you. They can both help you in the decision making process, but if they want to decide for you, my advice is to consult with another physician and/or spiritual teacher. These are practical matters, for which one should use reason and experience as a guide.

Warmest regards,

Francis

The Bridge Between Time and Eternity - Guided Meditation - 5

The Bridge Between Time and Eternity

Francis Lucille

Temecula, California

September 8, 2007

Go deeply into the present moment.

The only cause for suffering is our refusal or rejection of that which the present moment is offering.

We want it to be different. We want it to be according to our own projection, to our own personal plan. We reject everything that goes against the personal plan and we want everything that is in accordance with our own personal plan for happiness.

The problem is that the personal plan for happiness is flawed and doesn't work. We have had enough experience with it in the past to know that it is flawed and that it doesn't work. We have inherited the personal plan for happiness from our parents, from our friends, from our surroundings. And if we look at them, did it work for them? And if it didn't work for them, why would it work for us?

If we welcome the present moment, we will discover that in the present moment there is never a problem. The problems and psychological suffering arise only in relation to the past and to the future of a personal entity. In the now there is no such personal entity. That's the beauty of it. Only the now is real. The past doesn't exist any longer and the future doesn't exist yet, so only the now is real. In the now there is no personal entity.

The personal entity exists only as a rejection of the now.

Ask yourself, "What is so unbearable in the now?" We assume that the now is unbearable only because we have never experienced it to its fullest. In fact, it is quite bearable. In fact, the now is at peace and free from problems, free from suffering. All we have to do is to meet the now in our welcoming.

The now is the bridge between time and eternity. When we stop oscillating between the past and the future we start walking on that bridge.

The bridge is extremely narrow for the now is like an extremely narrow interval between the past and the future. At the other end of the bridge there is Presence, timeless, eternal.

When we stop rejecting the now, things become simply neutral. It is not that they become pleasant. Appearances are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. They are somehow irrelevant in terms of peace. They become neutral. We become

indifferent to them. They become as neutral as the 'tick' and the 'tock' of a clock, ticking away in the room, measuring the silence, measuring the Presence. Because the rhythmic sound is so neutral, it doesn't grab our attention for too long. Our attention gets liberated from the object and meets itself as Presence.

These words are like the sound of the clock. In and by themselves, they are just vibrations of little importance, revealing the timelessness from where they came, to which they return.

You cannot make an object out of this timelessness. If you do so, you lose it. You lose the freshness, the immediacy, the intimacy of it. You cannot rest on any sensation. You cannot even rest in the present moment. Your eternal repose is in the Presence which is already here, which you already *have* because you already *are* it.

We *are* that which we are looking for.

Remember to always take your experience to its true level, which is the level of Presence. Take it back to Presence, because that's where it takes place.

Remember that no matter whether there is a world outside or no matter how many worlds, subtle or gross, there are, still the reality of our experience is unavoidable, undeniable, totally certain.

If you abide in the reality of your experience, which is your true nature, your true being, what can happen to you?

Everything that arises in the mind and in the world is this Presence exercising its infinite power to create, to sustain, to dissolve. So take the experience of your mind, the thoughts, to their true level, which is Consciousness, this Presence. There is no mind at that level, only thought arising in Presence. During the presence of the thought, the thought is the Presence. The thought and the Presence are one, because there is nothing separate from Presence, nothing outside this Presence, nothing that is not this Presence.

In the same way, take your bodily sensations to their true level. Their true level is not the body; that's not where they take place. Their true level is not the mind. Their true level is the Consciousness.

And when you do so, there is no mind and there is no body. When you do so, you go straight to your deepest Being, to your true Being.

Francis Lucille

2007

God's Giggle - Francis Answers - 99

Hello Francis: I am looking for direct experience now. I love someone, now he is gone overseas for four months. The love which comes through me, for him, is no different than loving "God." How do I access that love for "me" to be that love and live that love every day? I mainly seem to be aware of it when directly, "in love" in his presence. I am not where you are Francis, yet, regarding projections, and my mind requires understanding, especially the subconscious, which is often disturbed, especially at night. Thank you. Patricia.

Dear Patricia,

That which we really love is the same Presence in all beings. It seems to reveal itself in some beings, and to remain hidden in others. But if we know it is there in hiding in all beings, it will reveal itself in all. Remember, when you were playing hide and seek as a child, and you knew in which closet your companion was hiding, you would get close to the place and, without opening the door, you would say "I know you are heere!" Then you would hear your little friend giggling inside - He couldn't resist, knowing he had been found.

Make God giggle from inside all closets!

Love,

Francis

A paradox evaporates - Francis Answers - 100

Location: Nagpur, India

Dear Francis, I understand from the basic tenets of Advaita that no efforts/practice (as they are in time & space) e.g. holding on to the 'I' consciousness, be oneself, meditation etc. are required to be done (or not done) (as there is no doer) in order to realize our true nature. The advaita seed of understanding implanted in the consciousness (and forgotten) is bound to bear fruit sooner or later automatically. However, I notice that various kinds of practices are advised by advaita teachers. Please will you explain the apparent paradox. What is your opinion? Or is the understanding flawed? Thanks in advance for clarification. —Shanko

Dear Shanko,

You must follow your understanding and your experience. If it is your understanding and your experience that there is no personal doer, then there is nothing for a personal doer to do, and the question "to do or not to do?" doesn't even arise. Doing and not doing happen, even without a personal doer. However, if it is your understanding or your experience that you are a personal doer, then you can assign to the personal doer, decider, thinker and perceiver you believe to be the task to discover her or his own limits in time and space, if any.

The paradox exists in practice only if one takes simultaneously two opposite stands: 1. I am a separate entity and 2. I am not a separate entity. Choose one side, and the paradox evaporates.

Love,

Francis

Spiritual sandpaper - Francis Answers - 101

Location: uk

Dear Francis, I was on the progressive path for many years until discovering finally this more direct and simple and obvious way, but I have a lot of conditioning from the progressive path and just human conditioning, about being nice etc etc. . . . Do you have any advice on finding the balance, I seem to become withdrawn a lot when there are challenges with my close family and it is sometimes hard to relax with just being grumpy, sometimes its fine and I dont mind, its even quite funny, but sometimes I get caught especially when there is a lot of negative feedback. Thanks, Louise

Dear Louise,

The balance will find itself in due time provided you keep your eyes on the prize, consciousness. Other people are opportunities that Grace has placed on our path to make us grow in wisdom. They are the grains of sand on the sandpaper that polishes us and gives us the shine of eternity. The more advanced the work of the Polisher, the tinier the grains. Close family members often belong to the coarse category.

Love,

Francis

Something has forever existed - Francis Answers - 102

Location: Barcelona, Spain

Dear Francis. When I was a child, I used to think, when in bed before sleeping, “how is it possible that the Universe has come into existence? If something exists, something else is the originating cause”. Going backwards, I always arrived (and I still arrive now) to a conclusion: “something exists from ever. But this is impossible to my logic... so nothing exists.” Many times I felt, just for an instant, a sudden vacuum when concluding that nothing exists. But then I noticed that I was there, thinking and conscious, so I existed!!!! My logic says that nothing exists and never existed, but I am here writing this... This contradiction has opened my mind to any possibility. If I can not understand how is it possible that anything exists, then anything can be possible, and the Truth (the reality) can be whatever, I will not be more surprised than now. When I learnt years later about the Young’s double slit experiment and other paradoxes in quantum physics, I was not surprised at all. In fact, all phenomena are simple details, what matters is the substance that is behind them. My question: non-dual teachings look to me resonating with what I just related. Even the nothingness that is totality at the same time sounds like the paradox of something uncaused. Do you, in your consistent openness and enlightenment, “understand” (or whatever word you use) this paradox? Is it possible to penetrate this mystery? Thanks and kind regards Javier

Dear Xavier,

You say: “something exists from ever. But this is impossible to my logic... so nothing exists.” Why is it impossible? it is impossible only if that which exists must have been created. The logical conclusion is: if something has existed forever, it was never created. If it was never created, it cannot have an preexisting, external cause, and it is therefore its own cause. Since it preexists before all created things, it must be the cause and the substance of all things. It is also unique, for if there were two substances or realities, either one of these realities would be the ultimate reality of the other, or there would be a third reality that would be the ultimate reality of the two. Only this ultimate reality would be the “something that exists from ever”, the real reality.

Now let us consider the consciousness or presence which we refer to as “I”, whatever that might be. Either “I” is that “something that exists from ever”, and that is the perspective of wisdom, or it is not, and that is the point of view of ignorance. If “I” is not “something that exists from ever”, then it is not its own reality, **not the real “I”**. In that case, who cares about the false “I”?

You ask “Is it possible to penetrate this mystery?”. The first step I would suggest

is to be open to it by reflecting upon the arguments that I have presented until all objections have been addressed.

Then the mystery will penetrate you, and you will become the mystery.

Love,

Francis

Simultaneity and awareness - Francis Answers - 103

Location: New York

Dear Francis, I am awareness and all the sensing and thinking is myself through the objects defined as this mind and this body (at least from my understanding from Atma Darshan of Shree Khrishna Menon). The awareness that is reading now these words is aware of something else than the awareness that is writing them now? Or is the Francis Lucille just a mentation in the awareness that is writing this email and any reply to it is born from the same awareness that wrote them in this text box now? Thank you for your kindness,
Dorina

Dear Dorina,

You would agree, I suppose, that it is the same awareness that was writing the question then and that is reading this answer now. Just as it is the same awareness then and now, it is the same awareness here and there, aware of Dorina's mind here and of Francis' mind there. However, there is in fact no here nor there, since the here and there don't belong to that which is aware, but rather to that which is perceived by that which is aware. For a similar reason there is no then nor now, since the then and now belong to that which is perceived. Regarding that which perceives, there is only here and now.

Going back to your question, you are offering two possibilities. The latter should be excluded as pure solipsism, and the former should be amended as follows: the awareness that is reading these words now is aware of everything.

Love,

Francis

The unalloyed ease of being - Francis Answers - 104

Dear Francis:

I'm not sure if you respond to random emails but I will shoot it anyways knowing that it is sincere.

I have a couple of questions for you and I wonder if you would have the time to respond:

Dear Sudhakar,

Here are your questions and my answers

1. We are not what we experience; that much is clear. We experience our body-mind as much as we experience the world "outside" of us. This means that we (whoever that "we" is) are as distant from our body-mind as the apparent world outside. This can also be experientially evidenced in some cases. However I wonder why is it that the "I" who is this all pervasive consciousness and also me does not feel the hunger or the pain or the joy of another body-mind complex.

What makes you so sure it doesn't? What if it does and the selective memory attached to this body-mind complex doesn't have access to and doesn't remember the sensations and thoughts of another body-mind?

2. The intellectual answer is that the "consciousness" is welded and fused with the apparition called the "ego". This fusion is also apparent but seems real because of the "identification". However there must be a way to experience evidentially the experiences of all the B-M-I complexes. . .

Actually, there might be some fleeting moments during which we experience the thoughts and feelings of another body-mind, for instance during a telepathic experience. But because this experience, no matter how unusual it may be, is still confined to the phenomenal realm, it doesn't put an end to ignorance, which is the only desirable achievement.

3. Time has no meaning in and of itself; it is clear to me that it is a construct of the mind and our psychology. I can also feel that at the "watcher" level there is no time or attributes. It takes effort to be aware of where we are operating from, I guess that this effort will become spontaneous and slowly I will be able to abide in that state. Is this understanding correct or is my mind cheating on me?

The effort to be aware of where we are operating from is a last ditch effort by the mind to perceive that which it cannot perceive, for the mind, made of perceptions,

cannot perceive the awareness that perceives the mind. A perception doesn't perceive. That's the bad news. The good news is that we are the awareness that perceives, and that we somehow know this awareness. This points at a different form of knowledge, direct, immediate, with no involvement of the mind. The light from which you derive the knowledge that you are aware reveals the path that leads, beyond the mind, to the source of all things..

4. According to Hindu philosophy, realization is not possible until there is a complete cessation of "vasanas" or latent tendencies of all kinds. Is that really possible in a body-mind framework that is hard-wired, evolved and designed in a particular way where there will always be traces of some ambitions and desires?

We have to make a distinction between a glimpse of our true nature (nirvikalpa samadhi) and our subsequent establishment in the peace of our natural state (sahaja samadhi). Only the latter refers to the cessation of the vasanas which are habits (of thought, of feeling and of behavior) that were by-products of ignorance. A glimpse of our true nature suffices to eliminate ignorance. It is jivan mukti, liberation while alive. As a result, the old habits, being no more fueled by the belief in separate existence, become extinct one after another like oil lamps after the passing away of the old servant who was in charge of refueling them. This progressive extinction corresponds to the establishment in wisdom, the fruit of liberation, the unalloyed ease of being.

We can, in most cases with the help of a Karana Guru, cooperate with the dissolution of the residual vasanas. It would be like blowing the lamps that remain burning to accelerate their extinction.

5. I feel that this consciousness, if it had a quality it probably is Compassion or Humor; one thing is clear the more I pay attention to "that" , the more fearlessness I experience. So I guess that maybe I'm on the right path.

This Atman has many qualities: Immortality, Absolute Happiness, Intelligence, Splendor, Life...and, yes, Fearlessness, Compassion and Humor. So, I guess, you are on the right path.

Love,

Francis

Can seeking be dangerous, can it come close to madness? - Francis Answers -105

Hello Francis,

Can seeking be dangerous, can it come close to madness?

Like with the poet Rimbaud, or Nietzsche for example. The image of the sage is someone sitting peacefully and blissfully, and sometimes I get to thinking that some seekers are TRYING to be peaceful. It seems like the way can be very intense, uneasy, and passionate, more like the poets or artists. Can you comment on this?

Yes Nicholas, the way can be very intense, uneasy and passionate. It actually is always passionate, for passion is the engine that drives the seeker on the path. Without it, one remains stuck in the garage, a boring place to be in. The secret is to be at every moment where one wants to be, doing exactly what one wants to do, while at the same time fully welcoming the situation as it spontaneously arises. The image of the sage is just an image. Who wants to spend his or her life sitting? There is a time for sitting, and a time for running, singing, painting, chatting, cooking and many other *ings. The sage is neither this nor that, and also this and that. I like the passion that the artist and the poet bring to their art. They feel the Presence beyond the last thin veil of objectivity, the very same veil that causes their madness. When they glimpse beyond the curtain, like Rumi, Kabir and others, their mind and body relaxes, but their passion intensifies and merges with Love.

Sorry for the delay, I have a full plate.

love,

Francis

A couple of nights ago, I woke up in a panic - Francis Answers - 106

Location: Shanghai, China

A couple of nights ago, I woke up in a panic. My mind was touching such a profound and powerful truth, and I quickly pushed it away. I was frightened. I wasn't ready. When I meditate, this is the very state I am trying to achieve, isn't it? I feel so frustrated because I know that the only way I will ever be truly free of the suffering I have attracted in my life is by going to that place, and yet, a couple nights ago it didn't feel like anything I have expected or wanted. There was such a deep and overwhelming sadness and pain in that brief awakening that sent me running for the hills, not wanting to see more, though, I know there was so much more waiting to be discovered. Just to think of the experience a couple of nights ago brings me to tears, not because I am sad, but because of something more, something I can't articulate. I suppose I am asking for guidance, but of what specifically I don't know. Perhaps interpretation, perhaps how to soften my resistance. Any thoughts are very much appreciated. Thank you. Sincerely, Aurora

Hi Aurora,

I am sorry for the delay in answering your question.

The experience you are describing may be perceived as a missed opportunity, but there is not such a thing. All is well and unfolding as it should. Next time it happens, be ready to welcome the fear up to its very end. Like a sailor who attaches himself to the mast of his boat to endure the storm, take a firm hold in the truth of your own reality as the clouds of fear gather in your mind. Let's face it: welcoming the display of the energies of your body-mind is not going to kill you, you can afford the experience. But don't seek it, don't try to resurrect the same circumstances. Surrender instead from moment to moment the totality of the landscape of your mind, body, world to the conscious presence to which it appears.

Love,

Francis

Are other people real? - Francis Answers - 107

Location: Northern California

Hi Francis, Last night I invited the king in and looked for the “I”. What became apparent was that the “I” is not local to this body. The body became unreal, and all that was there was “me”. Thought was happening. What was “me” hides within the body or seems to, appearing to be a person thinking. As the “me” outside of the body, things appeared to happen in front of me, and within me, as if a stage play was going on and “I” am both the theater and the director. Everything else, actors, scenes, dialog seemed to be conjured out of my imagination. When the physical body opened its eyes again, the awareness seemed to be back in the body, as it was before. Now I feel like an absolute beginner, with so many new questions raised. Are other people real? I mean, it must be me talking to myself, right? That’s what the teachers say, but it just makes my head want to explode, which is also what the teachers say, that this can’t be understood with the mind. Lots of confusion here. Thank you for your help.

Dear Claudia,

Sorry for answering so late.

You asked two questions:

1. Are other people real?

The adjective “real” has various meanings.

In our materialistic culture, it often means “made out of matter”. Your question then becomes “are other people made out of matter?”. If by “other people” you mean physical bodies, the answer to your question is yes; if you mean “other minds” or “other consciousnesses”, the answer is no, as far as we know.

However, if “real” means “made out of matter”, there is a problem: we don’t know what matter is, we simply believe we do. Here is how it happens: (almost) everybody who is not a physicist believes that he/she knows more or less what matter is, that there is a branch of Science, Physics, which deals with this question, and that there are there physicists who know a lot better, in great details, what matter is. Unfortunately, when we go to the Physics department and ask the people there, or when we become one of them, we realize that we don’t know at all what matter is. We learn a lot on **how** it seems to behave in some precise circumstances at a certain scale, subatomic, human, extragalactic, and on the laws that govern this behavior, but we never learn **what it really** is. Physicists don’t know what matter is. Or if they know, they have to refer to a reality, a “stuff” which is prior to the matter-energy they conduct measurements on. After taking the detour through the Physics department, and a lesson in humility, we have to acknowledge the sad truth: the word “real”, when taken

with the aforementioned meaning, is...meaningless. This detour is not the failure it seemed to be at first sight, for it has cleansed our view of reality from its dependency on matter.

Having returned from the dead end of materialism, we have to take a new beginning in our quest for reality. This time, let us take the detour of the illusion, for if we understand what illusion is, we will get closer to reality as being that which is not an illusion. How do we recognize an illusion? How do I know that the hundred Dollar bill someone gave me during my night dream was an illusion? By looking now in my pockets and not finding it there, where I thought I had put it. It has **absolutely** disappeared, “absolutely” meaning there is no place in this world where it could possibly be found. Therefore “illusory” refers to that which can absolutely disappear, and, as a corollary, “real” refers to that which never disappears. The element of reality of something is that part of something which is always present. And we have this deep intuition that there is this ever present reality behind the ever changing phenomena. The problem is that we see ourselves and others as separate and distinct from this reality, as “less real” than this reality, as phenomena.

If we seek the real “I”, the only one that matters, the one which which we truly are, we will discover that we are precisely this ever present reality, and that, as this one reality, other people are real, just as real as we are.

2. I mean, it must be me talking to myself, right?

Yes.

Love,

Francis

Awareness is temporary - Francis Answers - 108

Location: Barcelona, Spain

Questions:

Dear Francis, all these questions about awakening and enlightenment, being present... all refer to people living with a body. You can stand as awareness more or less frequently, but you still eat, feel the temperature of the air, sleep... All this is temporary and lasts as the brain lasts. What happens when the body dies? Do you know it for sure?

Dear Xavier,

There is a misunderstanding about what “standing as awareness” means. You see it as a temporary state, or condition of the body-mind. I see the body-mind as a temporary state, or condition of the awareness I am.

You say “All this (awareness) is temporary and lasts as the brain lasts.”

Dear Xavier, what happens when the body dies? Do you know it for sure? As long as you know, or believe to know the answer, why ask the question?

Is it possible to be aware or enlightened as you interact with people and mundane problems during a “normal” daily activity?

Yes.

How can you act as a non separated entity when you are negotiating a contract, for instance?

As a separate entity, you try to maximize your profit and advantage -a very short sighted view of life. As universal consciousness, you do your best to reach a deal that makes both parties happy. A satisfied customer will be a return customer or will prescribe your products or services to other customers, a dissatisfied vendor won't deliver good services.

Francis, the “Awareness that you are” is attached to Francis' body and brain. You eat and sleep. I guess you sometimes feel tired, and a hot or cold weather may discomfort your body. The eternity, stability, unchangeability... of “the Self that you are” is affected?

No

And apart from possible physical disturbances, how do you feel?

Happy, enjoying life, free from the feeling of impending doom that goes along with the fear of death.

Is “happiness” your normal state?

Yes, it is yours too.

Is there any sensation you could describe so I can understand how you feel?

Like a fish in the water, and like the water, and the rest.

Love,

Francis

When I'm looking for God I'm deader than I am if I WANT something. Francis Answers -109

Hello Francis,

Would it be fair to say that spirituality can become a trap. In that we can spend a great deal of our lives cooped up and trying to 'get it'. The contrast of the spiritual path seems to be the 'worldly' person. Someone with a DESIRE to go out and make something. That desire to create and do seems to be completely in tune with sexual desire as well. It seems like when I'm looking for God I'm deader than I am if I WANT something. When I want something, when I'm doing something I'm so much more alive, I feel so much more energy. I was reading some Rumi poems just a moment ago, and felt very inspired by them, and it almost seems like the opposite approach of what I thought religion is. It's like, we can find the source through doing, through not restraining any desire. Whether it's to make love, or paint, or eat a really delicious pastry. I was listening to an interview with Madonna (the pop star) and she said at some point that sometimes when she's on stage she has really bizarre experiences. Like being out of her body and so forth. Could you comment?

Dear Nicholas,

It would be equally fair to say that activity can become a trap in that we can spend a great deal of our lives desperately trying to get happiness were it cannot be found: in objects, relationships, fame, money, etc. The wanting makes us feel alive because it feeds on our very life and turns it into misery the moment we believe that our happiness depends on the fulfillment of this desire. There is no problem with trying to fulfill a desire as long as we enjoy the trying. If the trying becomes a chore, stop it. Stick to happiness instead of projects.

By the way, I very much recommend Rumi. Other than that, I have no comments to add.

Warmest regards,

Francis

What happens to appearance when the perceiver falls back into itself as the unmanifest? - Francis Answers - 110

Location: manchester uk

Dear Francis, An apparent object arises in consciousness, for example, a sound. I ask the question 'What knows this sound?' I trust that asking this question leads to some kind of falling back into the true I, silence or subjectivity - that which is unknowable. I am then left with two questions: 1)What happens to appearance when the perceiver falls back into itself as the unmanifest? 2)In the original inquiry there appears to remain some fundamental duality operating between the unmanifest and the manifest with a privileging of the unmanifest over the manifest. If this is the case is the use of the question 'What is experiencing this?' enough to dissolve this apparent duality as it seems to privilege the unmanifest over the manifest? Could it be the case that the true I, silence, or true nature is in fact previous to both the manifest (appearance) and unmanifest (emptiness)? Would a better question then be 'What precedes both appearance and emptiness?' However, even this more subtle questioning creates a duality as it seems to be pointing at one thing over another. Is this perhaps the point to let go of all questions and fall into the unknown with no more inquiry? Is this in the end the only way in the finish the form/emptiness duality and die? Many thanks for your answer in advance. Richard.

Dear Richard,

You asked

What happens to appearance when the perceiver falls back into itself as the unmanifest?

Appearance becomes pure consciousness, which it had been already during its existence. What happens to the wave as it reaches the shore? It becomes water, which it already was. The problem is that your question starts positing a duality (appearance and the unmanifest) which you later on have to struggle with. Go to the experience, to the real meaning to which the words of the sages lead, without getting caught in self-created intellectual paradoxes:

"The eye through which God sees me and the eye through which I see God are the same eye." (Eckhart)

"Wherever the eye falls is the face of God" (Sufi saying)

"Emptiness is form and form is emptiness". (Buddhism)

"That which is never ceases to be, that which is not never begins to be" (Baghavat

Gita)

Beautiful. No duality there.

Love,

Francis

Is the empirical world made of mind or of matter? - Francis Answers - 111

Location: Amsterdam, Holland

Beloved Francis, There are two great theories regarding the external world in Vedanta : Is the empirical world the mental vritti objectified, or is the objective world a reality which the vritti receives and reports to the jiva? Love, John

Dear John,

From the vantage point of consciousness, both the mental vritti and the “real” objective world are illusions, the true nature of which is consciousness, just as the true nature of a snake seemingly threatening us turns out upon closer scrutiny to be a rope onto which the snake was superimposed by our imagination. Your question then becomes: is the empirical world an illusion of the first kind or of the second kind? The fact of the matter is that an illusion is an illusion, and that trying to establish which one is the “truest” illusion is as illusory as the illusions between which we are trying to establish a difference. It is like trying to say that unicorns are more real than tricorns because, unlike tricorns, they are found in fairy tales, whereas in fact they are both non-existent. The reality of the vritti, of the physical world and of the jiva is consciousness.

Love,

Francis

God is back, in a sense - Francis Answers - 112

Dear Francis, In Eternity Now you speak of there being no evidence for a material world outside of awareness and that the body along with the rest of the world is made out of sensory perceptions. If something is being perceived does it not then have a certain “reality” of its own in order to be perceived? If something is locked away in a vault for 100 years we could know from eye witness testimonies know, that it is the same object when it is uncovered 100 years later. Our intelligence tells us that it remained in the vault during the intervening period, outside of anyone’s conscious perceptions. Does this not then prove that it existed “outside of awareness” for 100 years? Similarly, if all living beings on this planet died at this very moment we know from experience that certain objects still have the potential to exist although at this moment, there would not be any conscious beings to observe them. Also, everyone would unanimously agree that metal is hard and that cotton wool is soft, through our sense perceptions, so why the concurrence of this difference if there is no objective reality to these objects? I would be grateful if you could clarify these points for me. Thank you Francis.

Dear Sandra,

I agree that if something is being perceived it must have a certain reality of its own. What about the nature of this reality in the absence of perception?

A first possibility is presented by the experience of dreams. The example you are describing could be part of a dream, waking up of which we realize that the 100 years have in fact lasted only 30 seconds and that the vault, its content and all the witnesses have absolutely vanished. In this case too the witnesses would agree that the diamond in the vault is shiny and hard. This intersubjective agreement is therefore no evidence of the continued existence of objects while not being perceived. **The reality of the perceived object is the consciousness that perceives it. (Proposition A) Consciousness is defined as that, whatever that is, which truly perceives these words in this very moment (Definition1)**

A second possibility, the one you are suggesting, and the one which is generally **admitted** in our culture, is that a physical object has a continued existence in an external reality called the universe. According to this view, this object is made of particles or wave packets dancing together a dance that lasts for as long as the existence of the object lasts. Just as a vortex in a river doesn’t have a separate existence from the rest of the river, this dance is simply a local convergence of universal forces, an expression of the underlying universal reality, subjected to its laws. The dance that is perceived and the instruments through which it is perceived according to this view (sense organs, nerves, brain, body) are all objects of this universe, the dancing object being perceived by a dancing observer in a “pas de deux” organized by their underlying common reality and ruled by its

laws. **The reality of the perceived object and of the perceiving object is the same universal reality. (Proposition B)**

Is there a way to reconcile these two apparently irreconcilable perspectives? The answer is yes, and can be formulated as follows:

Consciousness is the universal reality. (Proposition C)

Let us now focus on proposition C. The main objection to it is that there is a strong body of evidence showing that consciousness is particular, separate, dependent upon a body, localized in space and time and therefore doesn't meet the universality requirement of proposition C. If we take a closer look at the evidence, we discover that the particular, separate, local, limited, body dependent consciousness is the one whose presence is inferred in sentient beings from our interaction with them. A computer answering our questions following a sophisticated program (one that passes the Turing test of Artificial Intelligence) could fool us into believing we are interacting with a conscious being and could be called conscious because it would meet all the objective criteria of inferred or objective consciousness. Such a consciousness could be regarded as local, limited, etc... for the simple reason that it is inferred to be present in a localized, limited, etc sentient body. However, inferred consciousness doesn't qualify as the real or subjective consciousness of Definition 1. Real consciousness is experienced as subject, inferred consciousness is experienced only as an objective phenomenon appearing in a body. **The identity between real and inferred consciousness is never experienced. It is assumed without any experiential supporting evidence.** This assumption is in fact rather childish and simplistic. Imagine a time traveler from the Neanderthal age landing in one of our living rooms while the Jay Leno show is being watched on TV, and trying to liberate poor Jay from the flat screen in which he believes him to be imprisoned, ignoring that the same show is viewed simultaneously by millions of people in different places, and that the real Jay doesn't reside in the TV set, but somewhere in Beverly Hills or Malibu (another assumption). His presence in the set was only inferred, not real. Similarly, the presence of consciousness in a limited body is always inferred and never experienced. Once Jay has been liberated from the TV set and consciousness from the body through the understanding that they were never there in the first place, the strongest objection to Proposition C has been lifted. At least the Neanderthalean visitor had probable cause in trying to rescue Jay from his jail, but there are no mitigating circumstances for the ignorant who believes consciousness to be located in the body without the slightest piece of supporting evidence.

Let us now look at a few corollaries of Proposition C:

1. There is no need to choose between Propositions A and B. They are both equally valid under Proposition C. This answers your question.
2. The physical reality of proposition B was often regarded (without reason) as mineral, indifferent, devoid of love beauty or intelligence. The materialist outlook was one of pessimism and despair. The eternity and infinity of

mineral reality had the temperature of intergalactic space. Consciousness, being identical with this reality, brings into the picture the warmth of intelligence, love and beauty. God is back, in that sense.

3. Consciousness is subjectively experienced as the reality of our human experience, the changeless background of all the changing perceptions. It is only natural that this subjectively experienced reality be identical with the absolute reality of all things and beings, since there is only one reality.

There are many more corollaries. I leave them for you to discover as exercises.

Love,

Francis

How do I get what you have got? - Francis Answers - 113

Location: Sydney, Australia

Can you explain to me how you know this is all an illusion, how we arrived at being a human being and then told it is an illusion, that our ego's are an illusion, that we are not the body or the mind, that I am that? And what is 'that' and how do you know that is that? If consciousness is all there is, how do you know that? Stephen Wolinsky says the only reason we believe we are here is because we have a brain and a nervous system that buys into the senses, how do you know that? Why do you feel the way you do and I don't, and how do I get what you've got? Don't tell me I already have it, because presently I don't feel it and don't know what you are talking about? Please explain!!! Thank you from a very long term seeker.

Dear Fiona,

Your problem is not what you don't know, but what you believe to know. How do you know you are a human being, a body - mind? How do you know there is something else than consciousness, since everything you know appears in consciousness? You'll get what I have got and feel the way I feel by getting rid of your unnecessary and unsupported beliefs, not by acquiring new beliefs.

Love,

Francis

**If we are consciousness and the rest is illusion,
what is the point of continuing on in body? -
Francis Answers - 114**

Francis

If we are consciousness and the rest is illusion, what is the point of continuing on in body? I am truly only what I was before birth and what I will be after death and so why not just stop participating in the illusion?

Simone

Dear Simone,

You are starting from the wrong assumption:

We are consciousness and the rest is illusion

The right assumption to start from is:

We are consciousness and the rest is consciousness.

Love,

Francis

Is the ego, as far as you are concerned, a totally empty concept? - Francis Answers - 116

Location: Toronto, Canada

1. Dear Mr. Lucille, An admirer of your doctrine and method has told me that you deny that there is such a thing as the ego at any level of reality, be it at the level of the Absolute or the Self, or that of relativity and contingency. And he makes a distinction between his relative existence as a human being, which – true enough - has its ultimate reality in the Self, and that of the ego which, he claims, has no such claim to reality at all. What is more, he claims that the ego is a completely empty, psychological concept, a figment, so to speak, of the imagination. And yet, when I asked him, what is meant by your injunction: “Surrender!” or what, in other words, he thinks he is asked to surrender, he says that it is surrender “From the constricting view of the suffering individual, with all its wants, fears and struggles. . .” Now, I do accept that these wants, fears, and struggles” result from a separatist, hence false view, of reality. But what is it that suffers (rightly or wrongly) from these things and, I will add, from insult, humiliation, and the like, if not the individual subjectivity, which is “mind” and ego. Psychologically, we conceptualize as ego that which is ambitious, etc. and suffers insults and humiliations. We know the ego, not because we can measure it, weigh it, or touch it, but by its effects. And where there are effects, there are causes. All of which is, of course unreal from the point of view of the Self, but it is relatively real within the homogenous dream which this world is (not the dream, of course, of any human individual) and in which we are submersed. What is more, everything in this world has its prototype in the Self. And if the human being is a reflection of the Self (capital “S”), his subjectivity, or self (lower case “s”), is necessarily a distant reflection of the subjectivity or the Consciousness of the Self. Not only is the ego not an empty psychological concept, as this admirer of your approach claims it is, for there is no such thing as effects without causes, but it has its metaphysical foundation, as I mentioned above, in the correspondence between the micro, and the macrocosm. That it should not be stressed at all, methodologically, is quite a different thing, and it goes without saying. What this man seems to confuse, is his “mind” with that of the Consciousness of The Self. He seems to think that knowing in his brain that he is “That ,“ that thereby he is It. As to his ego, he doesn’t even confuse his individualized consciousness, or ego, with that of the subjectivity of the Self; he simply denies that there is

such a thing as ego, even within the cosmic dream. And so he tells me: "I exist, but not as a psychological construct, a mere concept, a non-entity, which is what the so-called ego is." And again: "I have been experiencing physical pain recently, but not psychological pain whatsoever. True, if one identifies himself with, or as, a separate individual mind." That the ego or individual subjectivity has exactly the same degree of reality as his "mind" and that the two, mind and ego, are dimensions of the same relativized consciousness, he refuses to accept because, he claims, that Advaita Vedanta says so. To prove it, he emailed me the following, among other things: "We want to play God, to tell God what to do and how to make the perfect universe. We would like no mosquitoes, no death, no flu, no cancer, no autumn, no seasons, and no bugs. We want everything in the right place. By thinking in this way, we are forgetting the perfection that is evident from moment to moment. We are living in the past, in the future, in thinking. The now is always free from suffering, problems and separation. It is always free from ego. In the now there is no ego. The ego cannot live in the now." "If we think there is a problem with the world, we have a problem! We are not the problem, we are freedom. The world appears in accordance with our views. It is for this reason that keeping our mind on the problem only perpetuates it. You have to de-hypnotize yourself from the problem, which is the object, and to turn towards the Self. The Self will deal with the problem in an appropriate way. Surrender to the Self." Francis Lucille I wholeheartedly accept the above as truth in itself and as a way of leading individual consciousness from the outward to the inward, and if "there is no ego in the now" this is so precisely because the ego has surrendered to the now, and in so doing has been absorbed into its transcendent root. But it requires surrender, and not as this man thinks: imagining, in his "mind," that he has no ego. This is all I have to say about it, for the time being. I look forward to your response. Yours sincerely, William

2. Question: I understand that all spiritual paths have this in common, and in this order: Purgation, Illumination, Union. There is, in other words, no such thing as illumination without prior purgation. In your introduction to your Way you state: "Ramana Maharshi used the self inquiry method with his less advanced disciples. The student who practices selfinquiry keeps his attention focused onto the source of the I-thoughts and feelings, whenever they arise." And this, I take it, is also the method you follow. Now, you are teaching in the West, to Westerners, and westernized students. No doubt, therefore, that

you be familiar with the Western concept of the 'ego.' If so, would you not admit that the 'I-thoughts' and the 'I-feelings' of Ramana Maharshi's self-inquiry method are in many ways expressions of 'ego,' and as such require purgation? Can one deny any kind of existence to the human ego? After all the subjectivity of the individual, his self or 'I' is, and necessarily can be nothing else, than a reflection, or drop of the ocean, of the supreme Subjectivity, the Self or the only 'I' that ultimately is. Since you are concerned with self-inquiry, with 'I-thoughts' and 'I-feelings' at the beginning of the Way, you obviously attribute some kind of reality to this world including the human 'ego,' whether you conceptualize the latter, as Westerners do, or not. Tell me then, in no uncertain terms, and quite apart from what may or may not be fruitful in your method: "Is the ego, as far as you are concerned, a totally empty concept, having no reality whatsoever and, therefore, has no role to play at the initial stages of your Way? I look forward to your answer. William

Dear William,

Let us start from scratch, forgetting everything you and I know about the spiritual path to liberate a space in which a mutual understanding can blossom. Misunderstanding is often a result of different meanings being attributed to the words used to communicate. I find the use of the word ego confusing, for it can have multiple meanings:

1. Consciousness, that, whatever that is, which is truly perceiving these words right now.
2. The personal memories, skills, qualities, behavioral patterns that seem to be proper to and emanate from a specific human body. This is the meaning I will exclusively use in this answer.
3. The cause of psychological suffering, which I call "ignorance". Ignorance is the identification of consciousness, as defined in 1., with the body and the ego as defined in 2. A "way" is a path that leads to the disappearance of ignorance.

You asked:

"Is the ego, as far as you are concerned, a totally empty concept, having no reality whatsoever and, therefore, has no role to play at the initial stages of your Way?"

The answer to your question varies depending on which of the meanings 1, 2, 3 we attribute to the word "ego":

Meaning 1: Consciousness is not an empty concept, it is the absolute reality of ourselves and of the world, and it is the sole real agent at all the stages of the way.

Meaning 2: The ego is not an empty concept, and plays a role at the initial stage of the way, as a tool created and used by the absolute reality.

Meaning 3: Ignorance is a belief that is totally devoid of supporting evidence. The only role it plays on the way is to get out of the way.

Warmest regards,

Francis

On thought control - Francis Answers - 118

Location: NY, US

You say that we have no control over thoughts but what about the use of mantras during which other thoughts stop and the mantra goes on continuously? Other thoughts are stopped; that is, controlled. People control their thoughts all the time by suppression of anything they don't want to think about. There seems to be thought control going on all the time. People make themselves happy by remembering something good which happened or they can make themselves sad and depressed by thinking about something bad which happened. The Dalai Lama has said that the only freedom which human beings have is the freedom to choose what to allow into our mind streams. This entails the ability to control thoughts. The Buddhist practice of metta, loving kindness, is based on cultivating good thoughts and excluding bad thoughts and there are many similar practices in other religions. Is this not based on thought control and are not many people successful in it? The sufi mystic Rumi said "If you become angry and commit some bad act, it is you who will suffer the consequences, not someone else. If you work, you get paid for your work, not someone else." This has something to do with thought control, it seems to me. Are you saying that it is a waste of time for an angry person to try to control his thoughts?

Dear Larry,

I am glad to see that you are perfectly happy. Since you can control your thoughts, you can choose to have only happy thoughts, loving thoughts, compassionate thoughts, or no thoughts at all. I speak only for those who can't and I bow to the Buddha.

Love,

francis

Is the tendency for human society to be idea imperialistic justified? - Francis Answers - 119

Location: Ballarat, Australia

I have been thinking a lot lately about the nature of reality and the implications on every day societal interactions. I am always intrigued by our conformist nature, our desire to fit in and the levels to which this is taken, especially in modern day western society. It's not fitting in or conformism I am questioning, because I don't necessarily think that wanting to be like those you idolize for traits you love is a bad thing. What I am questioning is the out of control egotism and abuse of the human desire for community. I believe that we do create our own realities individually and collectively, but I am curious to know what you think about the tendency for human society to be idea imperialistic, to try to control other's realities to suit their own the best. Do we NEED to live in a certain way if it displeases us, just for material gains and to make sure we're doing what's been STOMPED into us as the right thing? How do we escape to happiness and fulfillment?

Dear Nick,

As human beings, we are all beautifully different. The more we liberate ourselves from the belief that we, consciousness, are a this separate human body-mind, the more its specific qualities blossom. The perfect human community is not made of identical soldiers, wearing the same uniform, saluting everything that moves, but of free spirits, happy, artistic, creative, non judgmental, diverse, like the flowers on the meadow.

Love,

francis

Can you reveal the way to go deeper? - Francis Answers - 120

Location: Bucharest, Romania

Dear Francis, I have sent you a letter a few weeks ago. I did not receive an answer to it yet, but since this is a continuation of that first letter, if you ever get around to it, I will be content if you just answer to this letter. In your book you say: “The world does not exist as an object that is separate or distinct from awareness.” Can you please help me see if the understanding (experience) I wrote below is pointing to the right direction? And whether it is or not, can you point me the way to go deeper? -Whatever I see or experience is an expression of my senses. The limited ability of my senses allows me to see or create a certain world—a chair, a tree, a planet, a person, me, my problems, etc. (as a very small example, I imagine that if we were all blind the world we will experience will be a very different world than the one we experience now.) Because most people have similar senses, ‘out of common agreement’, a world has been created. Then, awareness is what allows any construction of any world at all—no awareness, no world. First comes awareness—whatever that is (in my limited perceived world it is the naked sense of I’M) and then the construction begin. – Thank you very much, Carlos

Dear Carlos,

You are trying to build an intellectual model or interpretation of reality, and such a model will always be only a set of concepts. However a concept doesn’t perceive, think, create, decide, understand, love, experience or act. I am not saying that you are on the wrong path, for you can replace an erroneous model with a more accurate model, and that is a good thing, but at the end of the day no concept will deliver the peace and happiness you seek. Be open to the very simple possibility that this ordinary awareness which is understanding these words right now is in fact infinite and immortal. Be nothing else than that which you directly know to be.

Love,

Francis

Through the self-realization process, does the conditioned mind eventually cease to manifest? - Francis Answers -121

Location: Manitoba, Canada

Through the self-realization process, does the conditioned mind eventually cease to manifest, thereby making mind made suffering an impossibility?

Dear David,

A large part of the conditioning of the body mind is useful and doesn't disappear as a result of our stabilization in our true identity. We still know how to drive or speak language. Only that part which was a by-product of ignorance dissolves with the removal of ignorance, and ignorance made suffering vanishes with it.

Love,

Francis

A follow up on Question 111 - Francis Answers - 122

Dear Francis:

My question is whether the natural body and what is superimposed on it, leading to error of perception, are both illusions from the perspective of consciousness, given that what is superimposed is a vritti (as an imagination, a thought, would be, would it not?), but that, at the same time, the reality of it (the vritti) and of the physical world (the natural object that undergoes the superimposition by the mind) is consciousness - would you not say this? The subject matter, and the answer you gave to Q. 111, would then be the same or closely related.

Alberto.

Yes, dear Alberto, I think you are getting it. Just to make sure: it doesn't matter whether or not the "external" world "really" has its existence within or without the mind, because from the vantage point of the TV set of consciousness-reality both mind and world are only images appearing on the screen. It is impossible for an illusion (the world) to "really" appear within or without another illusion (the mind). The question vanishes as meaningless.

Love,

Francis

More remarks on Question 116 - Francis stands corrected - 124

Dear Mr. Lucille,

Thank you for your reply. Let me tell you, however, that there would have been nothing wrong with a well-founded, well-supported criticism of what I said in my letters; no quarters given to my ego. But for one reason or another, you brushed it all aside, wishing to “start from scratch” and “forgetting everything you and I know about the spiritual path to liberate a space in which a mutual understanding can blossom.” Still, even this would have been alright, were it not for the fact that you had no intention to keep your side of the bargain. It would have been fine as well, had I been talking about the ego without troubling myself with its diverse meanings. Fine too if, rather than trying as best I could to support my argument, I had indeed wanted to show off what I know of the spiritual path.

I said what I said in my letter in order to make a point. My point was, that the ego does have a relative existence, contrary to the claims of an acquaintance of mine, who supposedly spoke on your authority. To support my position, I touched upon all three meanings of the ego; even four. I spoke of individual consciousness and likened it to a drop of the ocean; the latter being Consciousness as such (two “meanings”). I spoke of mind which, via memory, vehicles your no.2, namely “personal memories, skills, qualities, behavioral patterns,” etc. I will call it now ‘empirical ego.’ And I recognized no.3, stressing however the culpability of its passion. I tried to show, that this last layer of the subjectivity, is just as real or unreal as your second; and to show that the individual subjectivity with all its aspects is real in one sense and unreal in another; except, of course, the innermost divine Center which, as you say, is ultimately the “sole, real agent at all the stages of the way.”

Having touched on all these meanings, more or less, and subsumed them under the term ‘subjectivity,’ I argued that they are all real at their respective levels; something you implicitly did as well. For, if words have any meaning at all, then the ‘meaning’ of a word is the reality of that, to which the word points. Clearly, then you addressed yourself to three realities, or to three aspects of the one reality which I called the ‘subjectivity.’

The weakness of my position lay in the fact that I did not classify... which, in a way, justified your intervention, as well as the fact that some of what I just said, and am saying now more explicitly, was then rather vague and more or less implicit. Your input, therefore, helped and forced me to be more precise. But, in so doing and, in a sense,

guided by your classification, it became obvious to me, not only that your classification was fragmented and fragmentary, but that your denial, of what I would call the ego of ignorance and passion, was ill-conceived. What is more, the meaning attached to ego by my acquaintance was already given by his statement, which I quoted, and quote again: "I exist, but not as a psychological construct, a mere concept, a non-entity, which is what the so-called ego is." He is clearly not speaking of the first two of your classification, but refers to the last; no need, therefore, in making your answer dependent on what anyone may have meant by ego. This last of your explanations, on the other hand, is to Westerners, who are more likely to be mired in the outermost layer of their subjectivity, quite deceiving. For, it seems to say that there is no such thing at all.

You may recall my purpose of writing to you: to get definitive, clear answers from you for a man who seems to think, subconsciously, or whose passionate ego wants to think, that Enlightenment via Advaita Vedanta is a purely cognitive affair; so much so that it would appear to him that the Way of Advaita is certain to leave the passional side of his lower ego unscathed. This illusion on the part of a Westerner in the face of Advaita Vedanta is all the more plausible since the latter lays doctrinal stress on the cognitive aspects of the human subjectivity. And this is as it should be, for Easterners are more contemplative and less passional (to distinguish it from passionate) than are Europeans. It is not for nothing that the West has known, more or less, (for the last two millennia; almost four in the Abrahamic tradition) only of religions who saw the culpable, passional ego as the root cause of the human predicament.

But both doctrinal emphases, the Eastern and the Western, are equally correct. For the former it is the dimming light of the descending ray which is emphasized, for the latter it is the concurrently fading heat of that self-same ray. None, however, would be complete if it did not, and does in practice, incorporate its complement. After all, you will agree that apart from men who are simply ignorant, there are men who do not really want to know some truth or the Truth; and others who, both consciously and unconsciously, oppose it (this is individualism). As for Westerners, not only are they more action and passion oriented than the peoples of the East, but their passional individualism sits deep, having been ingrained in the course of close to seven centuries of so-called 'progress.'

All meanings of the ego, therefore, as you defined them, have this in common: they lack the aspect, sentiment ('heat' in the analogy above). In pure Consciousness this is represented positively by the ethical as well as the aesthetic or musical dimension of the divine Reality, which balances the mathematical. At the level of the empirical ego,

which you also accept as somewhat real since it is, as you say, “not an empty concept,” it is the emotional make-up of the individual which more or less determines how he sees himself. Number three, finally, is for you nothing but ignorance; yet, here it is where sentiment becomes passion.

This lack of symmetry, this absence of the complement throughout, makes your classification fragmentary. It is fragmented, furthermore, by the fact that it distinguishes three separate meanings, which would not only be meaningless unless these meanings pointed to realities but, it seems to me, these meanings or realities should be considered as being parts or aspects of the one reality, which I have called ‘the subjectivity.’ The transcendent center of it would then be the transpersonal subjectivity of the Self. This on account of the necessary correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm.

Your classification is fragmentary as well by the fact that you literally conjure away the outermost layer of the subjectivity. For, if ignorance is the absence of truth or reality, it does not follow that, therefore, it has no existence whatever, unless that absence is total. Being total it would be another Absolute; and surely, you cannot mean that. The fact is, that nothingness is something, not in itself, but in virtue of Being.

It is Being that lends it reality. For the world is real to the extent to which it partakes in Being and it is unreal to the extent to which it partakes in nothingness. Were it not for the structural constituent, nothingness, in the being of the world, the world would be the Self. No one could then call it by any other name.

We only know nothingness as the lack of something. Lacking something it has deleterious effects; and effects prove real causes. Would the Buddha have been moved by compassion for the sufferings of humanity if the nothingness of absent health or eternal life, etc. had been no more than the figment of his imagination? We are beset with privative phenomena which testify by their very relative existence, that any lack of something is something relatively real.

What follows, if I reasoned correctly is, first, that the question of the ego’s existence does not at all depend on the particular meaning one happens to have in mind. For the ego is one ego, or subjectivity, and the so-called nothingness of its outermost layer is relative, not total. It therefore exists, just the same. You say: “Ignorance is a belief that is totally devoid of supporting evidence. The only role it plays on the way is to get out of the way,” meaning, by contrast to your foregoing discussion of the empirical ego, that there is no such thing. This, I submit, is an ingenuous way of negating something, while

not really negating it. The first part of it playing the seeming role of denial, the second being a veiled affirmation. But the first part is also misleading, for it sees ignorance, the “belief that is totally devoid of supporting evidence” as a nothingness, pure and simple. Yet, human ignorance is always a lack of something, namely of some, or part of a, truth; even the Truth. And that, as I have shown, can never be total.

All I have done was trying to apply the lessons I learned from my Master, who knew how to put things where they belong, and considered it important that one had the certainty of real knowledge - in the mind - before attempting to interiorize it, existentially, via the method. That this involved the virtues and their practice, as well as the invocation of the Holy Name goes without saying. I, therefore, pray that it was veracity which moved me, when I said what I said, and I hope that it will be in the spirit of veracity that it be received.

For the sake of my acquaintance then, who always thinks that the grass is greener elsewhere, would you, please, answer the following questions with yes or no:

1. Is ‘ego’ a meaningless “psychological construct”, an empty concept, a “non-entity,” having no reality at all?
2. Is the passional, or ego of ignorance, likewise empty?
3. Does the latter play an important, though negative, role in the initial stages of the Way of Advaita Vedanta?
4. Do you consider this ego to be an obstacle in the Way, such that it must be moved out of the Way?
5. Would the lower ego of an as yet unenlightened person survive, as is, the rigors of the Advaitan Path?

Sincerely,

William

Dear William,

I take from your letter that we both agree that the individual subjectivity with all its aspects is real in one sense and unreal in another; except, of course, the innermost divine Center which is ultimately the “sole, real agent at all the stages of the way.” From our mutual agreement follow logically the responses to your five questions, both at the relative level and at the real or absolute level:

1. The relative answer is no, The **real** answer is Yes
2. The relative answer is no, The **real** answer is Yes

3. The latter seems to play a role, but in reality only the innermost divine Center, the “sole, real agent plays all the roles at all the stages of the way.” The relative answer is Yes, The **real** answer is No
4. It seems to be an obstacle, but what could possibly be a **real** obstacle for the innermost divine Center? The relative answer is Yes, The **real** answer is No
5. The ignorance of an as yet unenlightened person who honestly seeks the Truth, no matter the path this seeker takes, will not ultimately survive.
The relative answer is No, The **real** answer is No.

Note regarding answer Nr 5:

The path which is the most appropriate, Advaita or another way, will be provided for by Grace to such a genuine seeker. If we wonder which one is the better teacher: an enlightened being with no knowledge of Advaita or one who teaches this method and hasn't realized his true being, the answer is clear: the realization of the teacher is primeval, the method used, ancillary. The reason for this remark is that I am not attached to any method, and that my heart recognizes the same Truth in the teachings of many sages both of the East and of the West (Buddha, Lao Tse, Huang Po, Huei Neng, Ashtavakra, Gautapada, Abivanagupta, Shankara, Ananda Mai, Krishna Menon, Ramana Maharshi, among many others, on the East side; Jesus, Plotinus, Rumi, Parmenides, Meister Eckhart, Jean Klein, among many others, on the West side). Nor am I attached to the sole direct path of non duality. I equally recognize the value of the progressive paths which are better suited to many truth seekers, provided these paths are taught with absolute honesty by a truth lover. If this truth lover is completely free from ignorance, he or she can then guide the disciple all the way to the final realization. It is not Advaita that I honor, or any other method or teacher, but the Truth and the Love in all methods, teachers, beings, and especially in You, William, whose interest for the Truth is evidenced by the time you have taken to write these letters and the consideration you have given to my answers.

Warmest Regards,

Francis

Is there something beyond, or prior to, Consciousness? - Francis Answers - 125

Location: Chicago, USA

Dear Francis, Is there something beyond, or prior to, Consciousness? I am referring to the seeming lack of Consciousness during deep sleep, or when one is under anesthesia where there is a lapse of Consciousness/Awareness. It is only after waking or coming out of anesthesia that one seems to be able to say that they were unconscious. In other words, consciousness seems to recognize its own absence only in retrospect. If I am not conscious of the fact that I am sleeping or unconscious due to anesthesia, is consciousness then only a temporary state? If there is more, how does one realize it? Can you please give your thoughts on this? I apologize if this has been answered before. I have only recently discovered your teachings, so I am therefore not completely familiar with all of them, but I am very grateful for what I have read and watched so far. Thanks, Mike

Dear Mike,

How could consciousness possibly experience its own absence? What or who could have this experience, if not consciousness itself? but then it requires the presence of consciousness. Therefore the experience of the absence of consciousness is impossible. You say that consciousness can have this experience in retrospect. What kind of experience is that? Experience is only possible in the now, when both consciousness and that which is being experienced are present. Since consciousness and the absence of consciousness cannot be simultaneously present, the absence of consciousness cannot be experienced. It can only be assumed from the absence of memories left from the experience of anesthesia for instance. It cannot be logically inferred from this absence either, since the absence of recollection of a past event doesn't imply that we weren't conscious when this event occurred. **Therefore for you, and that is the only aspect that matters, consciousness can never be absent.**

What a relief!

Love,

Francis

Hello, Francis. I am stuck - Francis Answers - 126

Location: Shanghai, CN

Hello, Francis. I am stuck. I have been following Ramana Maharshi's teachings of self inquiry, and, at first, I was amazed by how quickly I was able to let go of thoughts. There was one instance in which I experienced being part of something so grand, but then it disappeared. Although it was brief, it was enough to fill me with such elation. I knew it was real, that this oneness existed, that all this here that I'd been living through up to this point didn't matter. That none of this mattered, and I wanted to laugh because it was so clear, how much I couldn't see that all made sense, and how much most of us can't see. . . Laugh because I was happy. So happy. I'm sorry because I can't adequately describe how I felt, and it was so brief. However, here I am now stuck, when asking myself, "Who am I?" I don't believe I'm trying to recreate that same experience I had before, but I'm just in open space searching with not even a hint of what I experienced that evening. In fact, I felt I didn't want meditate or do anything remotely spiritual for a bit. I think subconsciously I was trying to protect myself from being disappointed that what I experienced was a hoax played on me by my own mind. Like self sabotage. I find myself unable to get beyond the belief that consciousness beyond the "I" is also just a part of the brain. That there is nothing else beyond the brain, that when we die, that's it. There is no connection or awareness or spirit after that. I try to examine what was there before the physical brain, but fail miserably. I am sorry because my explanation of what I'm experiencing is less than eloquent, but when I go into that part of the inquiry, the ground beneath me disappears and I return to doubting and fearing that there is nothing beyond the what we perceive, that there is no oneness, no bliss, no all connecting consciousness. Please help me. I don't know what to do to get beyond this, or how to penetrate this obstacle. My mind isn't returning to thoughts, but just stops and I seem to fall back into nothing. I don't mean the nothing where there is just consciousness, but emptiness with no grand realization. There's nothing. It feels like I've been trying to get into the funhouse at some amusement park and waited in line so long, only to enter the door that leads me directly to the back exit, and I never make it into the actual funhouse. Like it's all a big joke. It's so frustrating. I know the Maharshi would say to examine from where these doubts arise, and I have, but here I am, again, at the back exit. Please help.

Dear Aurora,

Three suggestions that can help with your unsticking:

1. Instead of asking "who am I?", try for a change to find the evidence, if any,

that consciousness is limited in time or space, at least up until you are absolutely convinced that there is none. This is achievable on your own.

2. In order to go beyond the belief that awareness is limited because it is a by product of a limited brain, convince yourself first that your **real** identity is the ultimate reality, whatever that is, of this consciousness which is perceiving these words right now. Either this consciousness is its own reality, or the brain is its reality. If we assume the latter to be the case, we have to ask the next question: what is the ultimate, the “real” reality of the brain? It will become clear that the brain is not its own reality, and that the reality of the brain must be the reality of the universe and of the other brains. It will be clear by then that the reality of consciousness is the ultimate reality of all things. **Our real I is the reality of all things.** That’s it, no need to go further. Stay there.
3. Allow for this understanding to gently sink deeper and deeper into all the realms of your human experience, to permeate all the thoughts of your mind and all the cells of your body.

Love,

Francis

Two a priori statements - Francis answers - 127

Location: San Rafael, CA

Francis, I am troubled by something that might seem elementary for someone who has been investigating spiritual matters for over 40 years. It is evident if we investigate our own experience that everything we ever experience, whether “internal” or “external”, is experienced by or within consciousness. Consciousness is, then, the a priori reality of our human experience. Clearly, realizing this most profoundly leads to a life radically transformed by freedom from any sense of limitation. However, to go on to state, as you and all other non-dual teachers do, that consciousness is the a priori reality of all existence, would seem to be an extrapolation, not directly supported by direct experience. The fact that we, as human beings, can never experience anything outside of consciousness does neither mean that there is nothing outside of consciousness, nor that consciousness is the a priori reality of all that is. All that direct experience can reveal is that consciousness is the a priori reality of human beings (since it is human beings, and only human beings, who make that assertion). Surely any statement beyond that is an extrapolation. I was dissatisfied by your response to question 125, when you stated: “absence of recollection of a past event doesn’t imply that we weren’t conscious when this event occurred. Therefore... consciousness can never be absent.” The second statement does not seem to inevitably follow from the first, but rather to be an extrapolation not supported by direct experience. And the first statement is also open to question: while absence of recollection of a past event doesn’t imply that we weren’t conscious, nor does it imply or prove that we were! The experience of deep sleep, anaesthesia, or any other moment of “unconsciousness” suggests that, rather than consciousness being the a priori reality of reality itself, it may only be the a priori reality of a human being in the waking or dreaming state. That, in turn, would suggest the possibility that the materialists are correct, that consciousness may indeed be an epiphenomenon of the human brain. This would not contradict the direct evidence of Self-Realization, only its extrapolations. Similarly, it is often stated that consciousness is eternal, that it survives the death of the physical body. This too, while entirely possible, would seem like an extrapolation. This is only ever asserted by living human beings who, by definition, have not yet died (at least, not physically). Even evidence of near-death experiences, or the testimony of those who have medically “died” and have been revived is not conclusive, as the death process clearly has not completed itself in those cases. So, while the disquieting and unconsoling materialist assumption that consciousness ends with death cannot be definitively proven, neither can the more comforting

and consoling assertion that consciousness survives death. It would see that, at least relative to death (and, probably, deep sleep and other “unconscious” states) that the only intellectually honest position is one of agnosticism. Cheery assertions to the contrary do not constitute proof! Clearly my own investigation of these matters has revealed my own previously hidden materialist assumptions; and, while I am more than willing to explore their limitations, I am equally unwilling to blindly accept assertions to the contrary, just because my spiritual ego prefers them! Thanks you, in advance, for your anticipated response. James Haig

Dear James,

Thank you for your question.

I agree with you that “The fact that we, as human beings, can never experience anything outside of consciousness does neither mean **** that there is nothing outside of consciousness, nor that consciousness is the a priori reality of all that is.” However, the point that you will have to concede is that, contrary to a very common assumption, there is absolutely no evidence that there is anything outside of consciousness, nor that it is **not** the a priori reality of all that is. “Anything outside of consciousness” finds itself therefore in the position of the unicorn: spoken of, never seen, with one difference, though: someone may someday see a unicorn, nobody will ever see anything outside of consciousness. “Something existing outside of consciousness” is both logically possible and experientially impossible, whereas “everything existing within consciousness” is both logically possible and experientially possible. The same Occam’s razor we use to eliminate unicorns from our preoccupations should be used to eliminate the useless externality of things and people. I could understand our tossing a coin to chose between two possibilities if there were no consequences one way or the other. But the clear understanding that the discovery that there are no external things and people would put an end to our misery gives us an enormous incentive to further investigate the truth of the matter.

Regarding my answer to Q125, here is the entire excerpt: “Since consciousness and the absence of consciousness cannot be simultaneously present (A), the absence of consciousness cannot be experienced (B). It can only be assumed from the absence of memories left from the experience of anesthesia for instance. It cannot be logically inferred from this absence either (C, since the absence of recollection of a past event doesn’t imply that we weren’t conscious when this event occurred (D). Therefore for you, and that is the only aspect that matters, consciousness can never be absent.(E)”

The logical structure of the sentences is: A implies B, D implies C, B and C imply E

Your lecture: D implies E is wrong, which explains, I hope, your dissatisfaction.

You say also: “The experience of deep sleep...suggests that, rather than

consciousness being the a priori reality of reality itself, it may only be the a priori reality of a human being in the waking or dreaming state” Which experience are you talking about? Doesn’t this experience imply the presence of consciousness during deep sleep, during this experience? and if yes, how does this “suggest” that consciousness is not primeval, in spite of its continuous presence?

A final remark to clarify the a priori statements and the logical implications involved (implicitly or explicitly) contained in my “assertions”:

A priori statements:

- S1. There is only one reality
- S2. Consciousness is a reality

Logical implications (a few among countless others):

- L1. Consciousness is its own reality
- L2. The reality of our human experience is consciousness
- L3. The reality of our human experience and the reality of the universe is the same reality
- L4. The same consciousness shines in all beings
- L5. Consciousness is the reality of the universe

If you believe that one of the five logical implications is false, you must face the music and tell yourself which one of the two a priori statements is false. If you believe that there are more than one realities, for instance you and I, you must explain for yourself how these two realities can communicate with each other, as we are doing, without being both immersed in an ultimate reality that encompasses both you and me, in which case you and me are not absolutely real. And if you believe that consciousness is not real, you have to explain to yourself how this non real consciousness could make any true determination, including the determination that it is itself not real.

My goal in answering a question is not to give a solid logical proof of S1 and S2, which is impossible since they have to be known a priori, but rather to guide the readers up to a place from which they can directly realize the truth of both statements to their full satisfaction. I cannot prove it, neither do I claim I can. Sometimes, I use logic to prove the fallacy of a statement the reader may hold to be true, but not in this case. Either we see the truth of both S1 and S2, or we don’t. And we don’t see it until we see it. Having seen it, we never revert to full ignorance. It cannot be seen on the phenomenal level. To see it is to awaken to our true self, and to live it in the depth and breadth of its implications is to be established in peace, freedom and love.

Love,

Francis

More remarks on Question 116 - Francis asks a question - 128

Dear William,

I believe we are now in agreement on the answers to your five questions, which would imply a de facto agreement on a wide variety of related issues. I was wondering whether there was an area where your and my experience or understanding would diverge, when I remembered something you said : “ I spoke of individual consciousness and likened it to a drop of the ocean; the latter being Consciousness as such (two “meanings”).”

To clarify my incertitude, could you please answer the following question: in your experience and understanding, is the consciousness that **really** perceives **these words** the individual consciousness, or is it the Consciousness as such?

Warmest regards,

Francis

Dear Mr. Lucille,

To explain what I meant, there is first: man’s individual consciousness likened to a drop of the ocean. The ocean here symbolizes, by its vastness and sheer inexhaustibility, the infinite Consciousness of the Self. The drops, on the other hand, symbolize both identity of substance with it, and separation in form from it. Both these, Consciousness as such and its individual modalities, being total, are by that fact subjectivities. For The Self knows itself and so das man.

We have, then, two subjectivities, hence two egos, both of which are transcendent, for even the drop does not really belong to existentialized, individual man, but constitutes his divine center, his “inner man”, the inner, transcendent witness of all his thoughts, intentions, and actions. And since, furthermore, it is the endpoint of the manifesting Spirit ray, man is thereby, as is the fetus by the umbilical cord, connected to the Ultimate. Only what I called the empirical ego, a manifested and hence exteriorized modality of the latter, belongs properly to earthly man and so, of course, does the empirical ego’s outgrowth, the passionnal ego of ignorance. We have here, in summary, four egos. The last two ‘are’ and ‘are not’, that is, they merely have a relative existence.

Next: “...is the consciousness that **really** perceives **these words** the individual consciousness, or is it the Consciousness as such?” Answer: Ultimately, what perceives these words, can be

nothing other than the Consciousness as such, the ocean in my earlier analogy, because ultimately that is what alone is and all that is. But since the ocean and its spray or drops are identical in substance, and in fact connected, Consciousness as such perceives the world both from the “outside” so to speak, as well as from the inside, through its consciousnesses as they are deployed in creatures.

Best wishes,

William

Dear William,

I was very happy about your answer, which agrees with my experience that the subjective or perceiving part of our seemingly limited, ordinary consciousness is in fact already divine Splendor, eternal Love and infinite Intelligence, a bridge between the finite and the Infinite, a ray between man and Spirit. Although most of my teaching methods and formulations come from the tradition of my Master, Advaita Vedanta, I immensely enjoy expressions of the same Truth that originate from other authentic traditions and beings such as Sufism and Rumi, whose poems always make my heart sing. The moment we agree on that which is essential, the other divergences are only complementary views or semantic differences (I plead guilty of misuse of a language, English, which is still foreign to me). These divergences can always be reconciled in the light of That which is essential.

Warmest regards,

Francis

How can we be more present to Life? - Francis Answers - 129

Location: Bogota, Colombia

I am aware of mind activity; random thoughts: images and sounds, or a song playing in my head. When I observe this, I have a few interpretations: the mind creates a sense of separation: when the mind is happening (thought running or a song playing) it seems that this creates a private space that can't be shared directly with anyone else; I am the only one that "hears" the song that is sounding in my head. It is as if the activity of the mind serves the purpose of making me abandon the present moment, making me disconnect from life, from reality, and withdrawing to this private psychic space. It seems as if the energy that could be the energy of my open and available presence, get's directed to the mind and creates this mental activity (the sounds, thoughts or song playing), this inner compartment were my attention goes, and it is as if I was hiding or taking shelter from the world, by existing more in this created compartment (the mental activity) and less in connection with the world. Are these observations and interpretations accurate? If I want to exist less in the isolated inner space that the mind seems to be, and more in direct relationship to the present, open and connected to reality... what can I do?? (there seems to be a very subtle and powerful inertia for attention to go to the random mental processes instead of remaining open in the Now).

Dear Alfonso,

The private space you are alluding to has also its beauty. It is where music gets composed, positive feelings appear, Truth gets investigated. In other words it is also the doorway to beauty, love and intelligence. Symmetrically, the public space has its shortcomings too: ugliness, ignorance and aggression are found almost everywhere. Therefore it is not a suitable path to happiness to try to live exclusively in the public area. Try instead to live from the Self and for the Self in both spaces. While in the private space, think and feel only from truth, love, and beauty. While in the public space, perceive and act only from that same place.

Then you will know its name: Heaven, your true home.

With all my love,

Francis

Do you know something about the Universe? - Francis Answers - 130

Location: indonesia

Dear Francis,

1. Is there any God?

There is only one God

2. Do you know something about the universe?

Very little.

3. And where are we now?

Where consciousness is is where we always are.

4. Why do we live? Does life have purpose?

To know the reality of all beings and then to celebrate

6. What happens when we die?

The body dies, we, consciousness remain.

7. Is there any spiritual power that can eliminate all sufferings in
this world?

Yes, a kiss from the Beloved who abides in our heart as our ultimate reality, for
He only is.

Love,

Francis

What made you to preach this ancient vedic Advaita? - Francis Answers - 131

Location: Dubai

I understand that you had the opportunity to meet sages in India. How was your experience and what made you to preach this ancient old vedic advaita. Rgds Ram

Dear Ram,

This body called Francis never went to India. It met in France another body called Jean Klein who went to India and studied with sages there.

My experience was and is and will be that our ordinary consciousness, the one that is perceiving these words right now, this Atman, is in fact the universal and eternal Brahman.

I don't preach, I merely listen to questions, and then I listen to the answer within. On rare occasions, answers or actions arise without a question or a demand. This body is just an instrument. What made me do so in the beginning were questions from seekers like you. Now I travel and do things such as writing on the Internet, having a Facebook profile, etc. . . because it is my experience that some people like it and I want to please them. Nobody is forced to listen. I am like a bird singing his tune on his branch. He doesn't care whether nobody listens, or a few, or all the beings in the forest. He sings because he is happy and singing makes him even happier. If he notices that some are trying to listen and have a hard time doing so because of the distance, he flies to a tree closer to them and sings louder to oblige. Not having wings, I fly using airplanes and sing louder using the Web.

Thank you for listening,

Love,

francis

Follow up on Q. 131 - Francis Answers - 132

Dear Formless,

Is the seeker separate from the sought!

Is there a experiencer separate from the experienced!

Is there a listener without listening

Is there an action without knowledge

I there a knowledge without the knower

Is there a creation without the creator

Everything presupposes knowledge (consciousness-limitless) infinite and that knowlege is eternal and all pervading including this Jagat and Jagat is not separate from ISWARA. This Body is all Pervasive and my finger is not separate from my Body. The Knowledge I am is pure conscious being and I am also the BODY.

Mere theoretical understanding I am not the BODY and I am not the MIND is only for the MIND but understanding through the INSIGHT one sees the TRUTH without the SEER that is silence and not singing on the web or flying on the flight. Formless can never fly because it is all pervading. If the formless flies there must be limitation in space but space is itself limitless and absolute. Everything is formless existence and hence there is no seeker, no listener, no preacher, no singer, no passenger,

HARI OM TAT SAT.

SAT CHIT ANANDA

Dear Ram,

A western bird sings an Indian song. Why should an Indian bird feel offended, since the same Formless sings everywhere, in all the birds. You are telling me there are no birds. True. I am not a bird, but I am also a bird, therefore I'll keep singing. Thank you for the music lesson. I didn't ask for one, but since you, dear Ram, asked a question, here is my advice: do not preach, just answer, if there are questions.

Love,

Francis

There is lack of trust - Francis Answers - 133

Location: Tampa

Francis, I sit here wondering if I have the trust in my understanding of the state I am. Since about a year the Atmavichara is going on, and my ego is not on firm grounds any more and I have an understanding of homeliness and peace with me. But the distrust and lack of faith swirl around often. When they subside infrequently, there it is, such happiness. Atmavichara, inquiry continues amidst health problems (brain) and the medications. But it is OK. Then, I decided to do the inquiry on paper. I am tremulously placing this for your perusal. Even if there is no response it is OK. It went this way: “Let me take a close look, at a single thought and its activity as a typical one of all occurrences, thousands of thoughts, happy thoughts or otherwise. Now let me examine a case of a thought not occurring, or even better, let me look at a remote possibility when there are, or were ever, no thoughts that occurred, not even once. Then this special case of no-thought-ever event contributed obviously to a no-memory or zero-memory state that now cannot report to the body and the mind. If this state, if it ever occurred, must be all observed by me then, even in that state, I am still there not dead but devoid of this or any me-story. What will happen to me then in that case? I am not cognizant of any thing, because there are no thoughts, no memory, but only me! Nothing! Till now, I carried all my memories, all the experiences, since my childhood etc., all needed and contributing to this every day operating me. Now I find this me is not reliable but just a dream, made up of just thoughts! But I still exist beyond these as I am, that cannot be defined by any thoughts, just really nothing!! Only consciousness existing. The one Reality. In this absolute blankness, nothingness, no events are happening, no movement, no time, and is therefore I is eternal. Never born, never to die. Just here now. I was that, always and is that eternally, Tat Tvam Asi. What a discovery!” But there is lack of trust. But the light in the horizon, the study of Francis response to questions, will cast away the shadows of this distrust. Probably then I will stop having consistent dreams of driving around again and again looking for my lost home!! Ben

Dear Ben,

You are drawing inferences from a hypothetical experience, the experience of pure consciousness. The inferences you are drawing are correct. The lack of trust you are experiencing comes from the lack of real experience, or, more precisely, from the belief in such a lack.

Now, would you say that you know that you are conscious through hearsay, or through direct experience? I presume you will say, as I would, that you know it

from direct experience, and not because your parents have told you so and you believe them. If so, what kind of experience are we talking about here?

The first encouraging piece of news is that this experience is available to you, and, even more encouraging, that it is always available to you, at any moment.

The second positive conclusion you may reach is that the certainty that can be reached through this experience is absolute: unlike any conclusion that may be reached from phenomenal experiences, the certainty that there is consciousness is beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The third positive conclusion is that the experience of consciousness itself, of pure consciousness, is available to us, for it is only from the direct experience of consciousness that the knowledge of its existence can be derived with such a level of certainty. Any knowledge derived from hearsay, inference, assumption or belief would leave residues of doubt.

If you examine the three points above in the light of your own experience, you will easily convince yourself of their truth.

Love,

Francis

Passivity and non-duality - Francis Answers - 135

Location: Cape Coral, FL

Do you think a non-dualistic view of the world leads the individual to passivity in the face of the world's suffering?

Dear Lorenzo,

A non-dualistic **view** of the world may well lead to systematic passivity in the face of the world's suffering if it is just that, a mere theoretical interpretation of the world. In this case there will often be a conflict between love and reason. A non-dualistic **experience** of the world will lead to the proper action, compassionate, practical, non judgmental, or to the proper passivity, depending upon the circumstances. The absence of conflict between love and intelligence is the benchmark of proper, impersonal action. Sometimes reason is too harsh and love wins, sometimes love is too weak and reason wins. It doesn't matter which one wins, provided they both agree.

Love,

Francis

Are Atman and Brahman the same? - Francis Answers - 136

Location: east aurora, new york

Dear Francis, It has been stated that Brahman and Atman are one. I wonder though, does this mean they are the same? I know the Atman that is myself and I sense that it is the same Atman that is every other one. But the knower (Atman) "in me" does not know the experience of all beings and hence seems not to be equivalent to the universal Brahman which I presume includes the experience of the entire universe. As a wave might be said to be one with the ocean, being made of the same water the ocean is made of, it would not be true to say that the wave is equivalent to the ocean because a wave is not as vast as an ocean. In This Love, Murray

Dear Murray,

Yes, they are the same. This is precisely the point. If it is clear to you that the Atman that is you is the same Atman that is every other one human being, it shouldn't be difficult to understand that it is the same Atman that encompasses all things. Your difficulty arises from the belief that Atman can be subdivided just like the ocean can be subdivided into waves. But only an object can be subdivided, and consciousness is not an object. We are not entitled to superimpose upon it the limitations of an object. If we do so, it becomes a mind, which exists only as a concept, as an assumption, but is not found in our direct experience. The problem is that we can visualize only objects, and that any attempt to visualize consciousness is doomed to failure. We have to understand this fully: unfortunately, we cannot visualize consciousness, because it is not a specific object; thank's God we don't have to, for we are it. Don't try to think the Unthinkable. Just be it.

Love,

Francis

Traduit de l'anglais par Stéphane Badach

A question on no-Self, Bernadette Roberts, Advaita, Buddhism - Francis Answers - 138

Dear Francis,

Thank you very much for giving me your address. What a beautiful way of starting the new year.

Some time ago I sent you a question to which no answer ever appeared on your website. Probably there was an error and my question did not reach you, or perhaps you had some reason not to answer. The question was about one Bernadette Roberts, who is a Christian mystic, and who to her astonishment discovered that what is regarded as the final 'stage' in her tradition – which she thinks is the same as the Sat-Chid-Ananda of the Advaitins – dropped away one day, swallowing up and dissolving completely everything that could ever be called the true Self, 'I AM' or God. She calls it the 'state' of 'No Self'.

Since she could not find anything about this in the Christian mystic literature, she started studying Hinduism and Buddhism, and she says that the only place in literature where she found anything pointing to this was one reference of the Buddha.

She says that it is very easy to confuse the state of no ego with the state of no Self, but that it is entirely different. It happened to her totally unexpectedly, 25 years after the ego had dropped away.

To Bernadette it seems that all the books and enlightened ones talk about the no-ego state, not about the stage of no Self. Though she is convinced that it has been reached by many.

I know, that at my total-ego stage it is of no immediate consequence. I have to free myself of this hypnosis. Still, the question sits deep inside and I cannot help asking for your comment. This age old discrepancy between Hinduism and Buddhism as to the eternal existence vs. the non-existence of Self. Is it, as is often said, rhetorical, or is it real after all? Here is a part of an interview with Bernadette:

Bernadette: That occurred unexpectedly some 25 years after the transforming process. The divine center - the coin, or "true self" - suddenly disappeared, and without center or circumference there is no self, and no divine."

Initially, when I looked into Buddhism, I did not find the experience of no-self there either; yet I intuited that it had to be there. The falling away of the ego is common to both Hinduism and Buddhism. Therefore, it would not account for the fact that Buddhism became a separate religion, nor would it account for the Buddhist's insistence on no eternal Self - be it divine, individual or the two in one. I felt

that the key difference between these two religions was the no-self experience, the falling away of the true Self, Atman-Brahman.

Unfortunately, what most Buddhist authors define as the no-self experience is actually the no-ego experience. The cessation of clinging, craving, desire, the passions, etc., and the ensuing state of imper-turbable peace and joy articulates the egoless state of oneness; it does not, however, articulate the no-self experience or the dimension beyond. Unless we clearly distinguish between these two very different experiences, we only confuse them, with the inevitable result that the true no-self experience becomes lost. If we think the falling away of the ego, with its ensuing transformation and oneness, is the no-self experience, then what shall we call the much further experience when this egoless oneness falls away? In actual experience there is only one thing to call it, the “no-self experience”; it lends itself to no other possible articulation.

Initially, I gave up looking for this experience in the Buddhist literature. Four years later, however, I came across two lines attributed to Buddha describing his enlightenment experience. Referring to self as a house, he said, “All thy rafters are broken now, the ridgepole is destroyed.” And there it was - the disappearance of the center, the ridgepole; without it, there can be no house, no self. When I read these lines, it was as if an arrow launched at the beginning of time had suddenly hit a bulls-eye. It was a remarkable find. These lines are not a piece of philosophy, but an experiential account, and without the experiential account we really have nothing to go on. In the same verse he says, “Again a house thou shall not build,” clearly distinguishing this experience from the falling away of the ego-center, after which a new, transformed self is built around a “true center,” a sturdy, balanced ridgepole.

Bernadette also wrote very detailed book on this, parts of which are available to read online: <http://books.google.be/books?id=ujxTTC7vjQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Bernadette+Roberts>

I'm sorry to trouble you once again with the same question. If for some reason you do not wish to comment on it, please let me know.

Many thanks and greetings and the best wishes for the new year (though to you there are no wishes and no time :-))

Om

Vishvarupa

Dear Vishvarupa,

A few remarks:

1. Different writers or teachers use words with different meanings. I define Self, consciousness, awareness, Presence, experience or Atman as that, whatever that is, that truly perceives these words right now. Obviously, Ms Roberts uses the word “Self” with a different meaning, since she talks about a no Self experience, which implies experience of no Self, therefore of awareness as the experiencer of no Self. In other words what she calls “Self” is an object, the absence or disappearance of which can be experienced.
2. “The ridgepole is destroyed”: the Buddha refers here to Self-realization, the final stage following the revelation of Atman-Brahman, our true nature, a revelation that potentially destroys ignorance, the belief that we are a separate consciousness. Self realization may or may not correspond to the experience Ms Roberts describes as the “no Self” state. It is known in the Indian tradition as Sahaja Samadhi. The prior glimpse or revelation that paves the way to this abidance in Presence is known as liberation or moksha. That may or may not correspond to the experience Ms Roberts describes as the falling away of the ego.
3. The distinction between Buddhist, Advaitic, Sufi, Christian, Taoist, Alchemist, Pre-Socratic etc. . . realization is artificial. Our true nature is the same and always will be, and is independent from latitude, longitude and time. The differences are only in the teaching methods being used, not in the experience of the Divine.
4. The “anatman” doctrine of some buddhists is in fact a heresy that arose about a millennium after the death of the Buddha. This heresy perpetuated itself as the Tradition of the Buddha was lost by his distant followers. It is significant that this doctrine is implicitly denied by the great sages of Chan Buddhism, such as Hui Hai and Huei Neng:

“Q. When the sound ceases, does hearing (consciousness) cease?
 A. Hearing never ceases.” (Hui Hai”)

Consciousness or Atman is nothing else than the “true nature” or “Buddha nature” to which the Chan teachings refer. The recognition of its eternity and divinity is moksha or satori. A Sage or a Buddha is one who knowingly and unshakably abides in it and as it. There is only one Sage, only one Buddha, only one Atman.
5. Misinterpretations may arise when a tradition is accessed through books instead of through a living teacher.
6. Even a liberated one may in the beginning misinterpret his own experience, especially if he is not assisted by a living teacher. It took Ramana Maharshi many years and the reading of Advaita scriptures to put his experience in the correct perspective. This doesn’t invalidate or change in any way the experience itself. However, in the case of a spiritual teacher, clarity does matter. That is why Ramana didn’t start teaching before he had this clarity.

7. I reluctantly answered this question because I feel that you should have asked Ms Roberts and also because it is a waste of time and energy for a seeker to try to reconcile the sayings of different teachers or traditions. Stick to the best available teaching. If you are seeking water, it is better to keep digging at the spot which seems the most suitable rather than to dig shallow little holes everywhere. We should find the teacher whose teaching we feel to be the best according to our heart and intelligence, and follow him/her for as long as we feel that way. We should choose our teacher for this reason alone, not for convenience such as proximity, access, gender, tradition, etc. . . . We should honor the Truth by seeking the best teacher. We cannot buy the Truth on sale. Also, the teaching that can be conveyed through words, and therefore through texts, is a very tiny portion of that which is required in most cases and cannot be conveyed through words. The Internet is a very limited teacher. Seek the real presence of your human teacher. Remember that Ramana Maharshi used to say that the “silent teaching” was the highest form of teaching, a teaching which is often denied by those who only have a limited intellectual understanding and cannot speak of that which they have no experience of. It is the same silent teaching that Gautama and his disciple shared when they smiled after the Buddha silently showed the flower. It is “a direct transmission, independent from the words” according to the Chan Buddhist tradition, the baraka of the Sufi, and the “transmission of the flame” Jean Klein speaks of.

Love,
Francis

On food addiction - Francis Answers - 139

Location: New Jersey, USA

Dear Francis, I recently discovered your site after many years of seeking. Some kind of understanding about the nature of things has occurred, certainly in the realm of thought but also sometimes experientially. The abiding with this nature of things is mostly erratic. One thought that drags me into the mire is an emotional addiction involving food and excessive eating. I am working with a social worker around the emotional issues but there is this thought that if I would come upon a greater understanding/abidance with reality, this addiction would be less of a struggle. Then I ask, "who is it that wants/feels this way?" And that feels like the right way to go there, but it still feels like there's some kind of crazy loop that I'm getting hung up on. I would so much appreciate any words of advice. Thanking you for all is given on this site, Albert

Dear Albert,

Do you want freedom and happiness or do you want to eat less? You cannot use your understanding of the Truth as a gimmick to cure you from your addiction to food, because doing so you perpetuate and reinforce ignorance, the belief that there is an addict. Furthermore, ignorance happens to be the source of all addictions. The way out of this predicament is a genuine interest in your own self, in the consciousness who is aware of your thoughts, feelings and perceptions. Let this interest become the sweetest addiction. Don't worry about the rest, it will be taken care of.

Love,

Francis

How does one slip past dualism, at last? - Francis Answers - 140

Location: Brooklyn, NY

How do "I" slip past Awareness as an object of thought to Awareness Alive and Subjective? I know that "I" can do nothing. I know that Awareness cannot be attained because It already is. Is it ego to practice being Awareness? Ego does not exist either. I feel that I am at "the gateless gate". How does one slip past it, past dualism, at last?

Dear Daniel,

That which is perceiving these words right now is awareness alive and subjective. It is ignorance to practice being what we already are, and it is also ignorance to believe that this alive and subjective awareness that we are is limited in time and space. Whenever we are not subjected to this belief there is nothing to do, but whenever we believe to be a separate entity, a separate doer, thinker, decider, perceiver, we can investigate the evidence, if any, that supports this belief. That will take us past dualism, for the time being, and leave us in welcoming, our natural state. We have to resume this investigation on all levels every time we relapse into ignorance until we abide past dualism, at last.

Love,

Francis

Isn't the "I Am", even when it's not identified with any object, subtle or gross, physical or mental, the last trick to overcome? - Francis Answers - 141

Location: Spain

Hello, Francis. My question relates to the waking state and the "I Am", a concept which, I think, has different meanings in the different traditions. I use it to describe the pure feeling of being, of existence, that appears in the waking state before getting identified with thoughts, names, body, mental processes, etc. and disappears in deep sleep. I think this was the way Nisargadatta used it, too. There's something that confuses me. Most teachers use to speak about the Truth from the waking state's standpoint only and, as the "I Am" is the purer feeling of this waking state, they make a goal of it. This creates the "spiritual seeker ego", that is, the pure feeling of being, the "I Am" stops identifying with the usual mental processes just to start identifying with a subtler witness, a spiritual one. But this pure "I Am" feeling is only felt while we're awake, during the waking state. Deep sleep does not care about "I Am" or "I Am Not", it does not care about spiritual searches whatsoever so how could this pure "I Am" be the goal? Aren't all this searches, all this meditations, satsangs, books, etc. just a product of the waking state and a fiction that only belongs to this state? Isn't the "I Am", even when it's not identified with any object, subtle or gross, physical or mental, the last trick to overcome? Is it not true that even the I Am is a perception, the subtlest, but a perception anyway? Shouldn't we use the waking state to realize that which transcends the three states, and not to reinforce a personality or a pure sensation that just appears in one of those states? Sorry for the lots of questions, and thank you very much in advance, Francis. I'd truly appreciate some words on it.

Dear Chris,

You asked the following questions:

1. Deep sleep does not care about "I Am" or "I Am Not", it does not care about spiritual searches whatsoever, so how could this pure "I Am" be the goal?

According to your own words, the "I Am" you speak of is a feeling that appears and disappears. I don't know what other teachers mean when they use this word, but I certainly don't use it with the same meaning as you, for the "I Am" I speak of doesn't appear and disappear, but is rather the changeless background of all appearances and disappearances. Therefore you are right when you say

that the “I Am” (you speak of) couldn’t be the goal and I would be right if I said that the “I Am” (I speak of) is the goal.

2. Aren’t all these searches, all these meditations, satsangs, books, etc. just a product of the waking state and a fiction that only belongs to this state?

No, because the waking state doesn’t produce anything. It is itself a product, a set of appearances within the “I Am” (as I define it). Everything you described (searches, meditations, satsangs, books, etc) has relative existence and is not therefore purely fictional. That which is a pure fiction is a personal, limited and separate “I Am” (as I define it). That is nowhere to be found, unlike books that can be found in bookstores.

3. Isn’t the “I Am”, even when it’s not identified with any object, subtle or gross, physical or mental, the last trick to overcome?

Let’s face it: the “I Am” you speak of is an object, a “feeling . . . that appears . . . and disappears” in your own words. The real trick is not an object, this one or any other for that matter, but our belief that we are an object, this one or any other.

4. Is it not true that even the I Am is a perception, the subtlest, but a perception anyway?

Yes, it is true that the “I Am” (the one you speak of) is a perception and no, it is not true that the “I Am” (the one I speak of) is a perception.

5. Shouldn’t we use the waking state to realize that which transcends the three states, and not to reinforce a personality or a pure sensation that just appears in one of those states?

Yes, you are right.

Love,

Francis

What happens when we die? - Francis Answers - 142

Location: uk

Having experienced an expansion of the heart and grief from the loss of my 25 year old son, I would like to know your thoughts on what happens when the physical body falls away; do we retain any of the personality we had, memories, emotions, love? While I guess much of this has to do with the mind, I would like to know what happens.

Dear Tracey,

Your first question (do we retain any of the personality we had?) implicitly assumes that there was a separate entity endowed with a personality, which, after the death of the body, could retain the subtle yet objective elements of this personality. In fact there is only one single universal entity that creates, retains and destroys, becoming that which it creates, remaining as that which it retains, returning to that which it always was at the time of destruction. Where does the water go when the wave breaks at the shore?

Your second question (what happens?) can be subdivided as follows:

1. What happens to consciousness?

That which is not in time or space: love, happiness, intelligence, beauty, peace, eternity.

2. What happens in consciousness?

Time, space, and everything in it.

Love,

Francis

Is ignorance of our true nature a personal choice? - Francis Answers - 143

Dear Francis,

If it's true that everyone has had an experience of awakening, though some of chosen to ignore it, then there is no excuse for ignorance (?)
Please comment. Thank you.

Dear Lois,

What do we mean by "everyone"?

If we mean that there is a multiplicity of body-minds that have had an experience of awakening, and that some have chosen to ignore it, this cannot be true, for awakening is not experienced by a limited body-mind. Therefore, if we mean that ignorance is a choice made by an individual, this cannot be true either. It follows that there is no individual "guilty" of ignorance.

If we mean by "everyone" the consciousness that we all are, then it is true that this Presence knows itself and chooses to temporarily ignore itself by playing the game of ignorance. This Presence is fully responsible for everything that happens, including ignorance. However, since there is nothing else than this Presence, there is nobody else to whom anything could happen. Everything happens in this Presence, but nothing happens to it.

Love,

Francis

When I'm looking to find myself I can't find anything. - Francis Answers - 144

Location: Greece, Athens

Dear Francis, I don't even know what I'm asking for, but I'll try to put it into words and you might understand my question better than me. When I'm looking to find myself I can't find anything. I find a "nothingness" in which everything appears. I wouldn't even call this empty space since it's dimensionless. I can understand that or better: see that, if I look honestly. Seeing that does not give me peace though, I don't feel that I've always been that (shouldn't I?), and I don't know if that nothingness is actually "me" since I feel alive and this seems dead, foreign to me. How can I know if what "perceives" is this nothingness? Does this no-thing do the perceiving? Can I verify it? Can I even have a taste of what makes perception possible or be sure of such things ever? Can nothingness perceive at all or am I telling myself another exotic oriental style story, just like the many stories we humans are telling ourselves? Might I be idolising the concept of "nothingness" and losing the facts? Can you point to me a way out of this dead end? I could try to express the question with more words, but it won't make any difference I guess. How can I know that the "no-self" that I find is alive, or how can I know that there is life in me? Thank you very much for everything.

Dear Giannis,

That in which everything appears is certainly not a nothingness. How could it be? You feel that way because you are trying to perceive it through the usual channels of perception, as a thought, a feeling or a sense perception; that is impossible, for that which perceives cannot be perceived objectively. When you try to do so, the mind projects a "nothingness", a "blankness" which is still an object, a dead and foreign thing. Therefore that which perceives, that which you are, is not this nothingness. The way out of this dead end is the absolute certainty that there is an element of reality in your experience: even when you dream at night, there is something really happening, there is perceiving and perceiving is real. You are not making it up. How do you know that there is perceiving and that perceiving is real? Is it because you have learned it in school or because your parents have told you that such is the case? Obviously not. Therefore you must know it from some kind of experience, a kind of experience which doesn't use the usual channels of perception. This experience is the way out of your dead end.

Love,

Francis

What is true earnestness? - Francis Answers - 145

Location: minnsesota

Francis, I often hear you speak of the necessity of earnestness. I feel all my actions are aimed at the benefit of the entity I believe myself to be. I can give lip service to the concept of selfless action without intention as put forth in the Bhagavad Gita but there would still be the intention of reaping the rewards that this is supposed to bring. ramana proscribed this type of action also but he also said only a jnani can be a karmic yogi. That seems to be a precise summation of the student's position. He is saying if you are selfless you can perform selfless actions so it seems any attempt at realization is self centered and would enhance the sense of self. so how to develop this earnestness? I fully admit my interest in this subject is a feeling of inferiority. I am miserably depressed and feel this is my only hope at happiness and by happiness I mean being admired by others. so my interest is no different than any worldly interest. I to be totally honest it is really for me a means to be better than others or more specifically better than one man in the eyes of one woman and I feel totally inferior in every way so I want to acheive the 'ultimate.' I even criticize people in my mind for their wordly desires and feel a sense of superiority for having found the truest teaching. so as you can see I am as far from being "earnest" in a search for truth as one can get and I dont see how I could ever become earnest short of realization itself. any advice? one other question I had was about freewill. ive heard you say that one has no choice in what the body goes through but you have the freedom to inquire who it is happening to. this seems like a pretty big but. I mean that totally changes one's responses to what happens and therefore chnages the course of events. I also have a question about solipsism. it seems that is the only verifiable reality, whatever arises to me. I have faith that the arisings I call people also have perceptions and thoughts and exist somewhere spatially different from me. the metaphor of this world to my dreams makes intellectual sense yet I feel if I am not aware of the world it still goes on. it does not come into existence upom my waking and becoming aware of it as Ramana so often says and I feel he is expounding solipsism in those statements. I can see this world is perceptual and that a tree only exists in the perceiving of it yet I feel like some of my perceptions also have perceptions of their own though I can not verify this. any help? thanks, Noah

Dear Noah,

I would be nice if the questions were formulated with a proper use of upper and lower case fonts and a proper spelling. I endeavor to do that in my answers, which is sometimes difficult because English is not my natural language, and I

type with only one finger. It would make it easier for others to read the posts on the Advaita Channel. I changed all the “i”s into “I”s in your question, but gave up making further corrections. I decided that I will not answer in the future any sloppily written questions.

That being said, I appreciate your clarity and your honesty regarding your motivations for seeking self-realization. I started seeking the truth for similar reasons; I had a feeling of inferiority in the presence of others, and I was seeking a cure for my misery. Along the way, I encountered the spiritual path, and it became clear that the root cause of all of my psychological problems was my belief to be a separate consciousness. For a while, I kept trying to find a solution to my shyness, but my interest for the spiritual quest was simultaneously gaining momentum, until most of my energy and time were devoted to my quest for reality. I had almost forgotten the problem that had brought me to the path, when, a few years later, without having done anything to eliminate it, I noticed that it had disappeared, just as a specific leaf on a tree finally turns yellow and falls once the tree has been uprooted. So, yes, there is a personal interest stemming from ignorance mixed up with your interest for the truth, but your love for the truth is still there, pure, unaffected by the residues of identification with a personal entity. In due time, it will prevail. Here is the advice you asked for: follow always your love, your interest, your enthusiasm, and you will be fine. That is true earnestness. It will take you where you really want to be.

You asked several other questions.

1. Is the path of selfless action open to a student still subjected to ignorance?

The answer is no, whenever the student is subjected to ignorance. The good news however is that a truth seeker is not always under the spell of identification. There are moments when he is open to the possibility that his very consciousness is not personal and limited, but universal and divine. In these moments, he can choose to act from this new perspective. Such an action is karma yoga. Because of his openness, he is a jnani in these moments, since he takes his stand as impersonal Presence. That explains why Ramana has said that only a jnani can be a karmic yogi.

2. Does the freedom we have to investigate the nature of consciousness changes the course of events?

The answer is yes.

3. Is Advaita a form of solipsism?

You say: “I feel if I am not aware of the world it still goes on”. What is the “I” you are referring to? Is it a personal entity, or the universal consciousness-reality? If it is the body mind, you are making the (false) assumption that the body mind is aware. If it is the universal consciousness-reality, the world, when not perceived, is nothing else than that reality. In that sense, it could be said that it continues to exist as that reality. The difficulty you are facing originates from the belief that consciousness is personal and dependent upon a specific body mind.

Revisit the issue from the possibility that consciousness is universal, shared by all, and the problem soon vanishes.

Love,

Francis

A question on spiritual escape - Francis Answers - 146

Hi Francis!

Happy happy christmas, first of all:)

I hope you have a moment for this little question, that has been bothering me..

As there is more presence in this space, it seems like at times life can give you a shock, and because that peace is available always, by “going there” it seems like one uses that as a shock absorber, and i´m pretty sure that is a sort of spiritual bypassing, or escape.

at the same time, if that peace is real, and one can save on suffering, it seems like there is no point in letting one fall into the suffering.

could you shed some light on top of this issue, so that I may be able to know a bit better, when i´m tricking myself out of living life directly?

I hope that makes sense. . .

Best wishes for the festivities, namaste!

Guillermo

Dear Guillermo,

The relief that originates from a”space” or a “presence” to which we can “go” has a very short life expectancy, for such a space or presence is still a state of mind. The relief that originates from the experience of our true nature is eternal. I would like to use a metaphor to illustrate this point. A jung child is taking walks with his parents in the moonlight. Walking by a gate protected by two lions, he fears for his life, as they appear to be real. Having managed to walk by the monsters, he experiences relief as he walks farther away from the gate. His relief is however short lived, for he has to walk by the same gate on his way back. One day, as he passes by the same gate at noon, he realizes the lions are made of stone. He is immediately and forever relieved from his fear. In this metaphor, the transient relief experienced while walking away from the danger zone corresponds to the “shock absorption” achieved through spiritual practice, whereas the permanent relief experienced as a result of the discovery of the real nature of the lions corresponds to the peace and bliss that follow the discovery of our reality.

Love,

Francis

All there is is consciousness - Francis Answers - 147

Location: Seattle

Hi Francis, Sorry for the long question, but it's something I've been mulling over for a while now. Thanks! According to the Direct Path, as I understand it, the self gets folded into consciousness, on the one hand, and external objects get folded into thoughts, which in turn get folded into consciousness, on the other. The result is that: all there is is consciousness. Folding external objects into thoughts and then into consciousness means that what we naively regard as external objects do not have independent existence. This is where I, and I'm sure many others, have a problem. There is an extraordinary coordination between various perceptions, between those of different agents, between those of the same agent at different times, and between different sensations of the same agent at the same time. Mary can tell me about a new statue in the park, and I can go there and appreciate it for myself. I can return to my bedroom each night, and see that that the bed, the nightstand, the floor lamp, and the dresser have the same appearance and configuration as they did on previous nights. I see, hear, and pet the barking dog, and these various experiences are resolved into a single, coherent perception of the dog. How are these familiar occurrences possible if there is not a world of independent, existing things, a world that has some sort of intersubjective reality that is more substantial than fleeting forms of awareness? As I see it, Direct Path teachers try to defuse this sort of objection by permitting only an appeal to "direct experience". It's true that external objects are not part of my "direct experience". As far as my own experience goes, there are only perceptions, feelings, and thoughts. But can't one reasonably infer the existence of external objects from one's own direct experience and the reports of others? Doesn't the behavior of even self-realized Advaitins indicate that this inference has been made? It seems to me that someone who really took seriously the notion that her sensations do not correspond to a substratum of independent, existing things would regard the world as a series of disconnected flashes of images, feels, and smells. Another problem with the restriction of evidence to "direct experience" is that it seems to be tantamount to solipsism. I have no "direct experience" of the awareness of others, and, thus, shouldn't I also discount my own belief and the claims of others that they are aware?

Dear Ian,

You say:

1. "According to the Direct Path, as I understand it, the self gets folded into

consciousness, on the one hand”

Yes, although I would rather say that the reality or substance of thoughts, feelings and external sense perceptions is consciousness, or “subtle reality”. We may notice in passing that this subtle reality is directly experienced by us, and that we are therefore absolutely certain of it.

Then you go on saying:

2. “and external objects get folded into thoughts, which in turn get folded into consciousness, on the other.”

No, for if there are external objects, their substance may be other than thought. Let’s call it “physical reality”. We may notice in passing that the physical reality is not directly experienced by us, and that therefore the existence of external objects is inferential, not experiential. It is inferred from our intersubjective agreement about the qualities of these external objects, as you have already noticed.

Then you add:

3. “The result is that: all there is is consciousness.”

Although this is true, it cannot be logically implied by 1 and 2 (since 2 is not true}, which explains why you, and many others including me have a problem with this line of reasoning.

We have been conditioned to see consciousness as a limited object located in time and space, somewhere between the ears. This childish belief, or one of its variations, is the root of the ignorance of our true nature. What experiential evidence do we have of such limitations, or that consciousness is an object? Absolutely none. This opens the possibility to envision consciousness as an ever present and ubiquitous “field”, just as we envision the laws of physics to be in effect everywhere at all times. Our openness to this possibility is a prerequisite for the understanding of that which follows.

Let’s go back now to the two realities that we have encountered earlier on, the subtle reality we are absolutely certain of and the physical reality, the existence of which is inferred from the intersubjective agreement.

Let us assume for the time being that they are two distinct realities. In that case, either they interfere and communicate with one another, or they don’t. Since we claim that our sense perceptions (the reality of which is subtle) are of the world (the reality of which is physical), we must eliminate the possibility that the two realities don’t communicate or interfere. Now, if they interfere, either one of them is the ultimate reality of the other, or there is a third ultimate reality which is the substance of both of them. In all cases, there is an ultimate reality that is both the reality of our subjective experience of thoughts, feelings and sense perceptions, **which is precisely what consciousness is**, and of the physical world that we perceive. This implies that this reality-consciousness is all there is.

The case where there are not two distinct realities is trivial. In this case too, consciousness or subtle reality is all there is.

If you go deeply into this, the remaining questions will be easily answered. However feel free to ask again if you have any doubts.

Love,
Francis

On Love and Death - Francis Answers - 148

Location: california

Hi Francis...I would so much appreciate it if you could tell me how I can confidently know that the universe is composed of love, when sometimes, I experience peace and harmony, and other times I experience the contracted fear that comes with identification with body and form, yet the experience of this all pervading love has not yet revealed itself. Thank you so much for your time and wisdom!

Dear Rosemary,

When you believe that you are mortal you don't know love, and when you know love you don't believe that you are mortal. How do you know consciousness dies? In the absence of evidence, just stop believing it does.

Love,

Francis

All things in the universe are expressions of Brahman, including consciousness - Francis Answers - 149

Location: Philadelphia, PA

I “think” of Brahman as equivalent to a unified field of energy. That is, that all things in the universe are expressions of it, including consciousness. We, as sentient beings, have the “gift” of witnessing it and as such are Nature’s most forward expression of knowing itself. The more we pull away the separative fog of ego, the less conflict and more peace we shall live. Is my thinking in line with traditional Advaita philosophy and do you see any falseness in where I’m pointing.

Dear Paul,

You are not quite in line with it because you see “us”, sentient beings, as the witnesses of the Universe **and of consciousness**. This is not in line with your experience which is just the opposite: consciousness is the witnessing reality, not the witnessed appearance. It may be that you and I have different definitions of consciousness, so let’s clarify it. In my book, **real** consciousness is that, **whatever that is**, which is **really** aware of these words right now. It is the reality that truly perceives them, and it is by the same token the real “I” or self. For instance, we cannot say that the eyes or the brain truly perceive these words, for these organs, made of particles/waves are simply manifestations of a deeper underlying reality that interconnects them through the laws of Physics, and, through the same laws, connects them with all the other wave packets in this universe. This ultimate reality is not limited to or by the skull or the skin. It is in fact non-local. It is the **reality** of the body (the body which **allegedly** perceives), and therefore it is that which **really and truly** perceives, consciousness, our real Self (according to my definition). Now, if you were to disagree with my definition of consciousness, you can satisfy yourself that this wouldn’t make a real difference, since our disagreement would simply be a semantic one, and I don’t mind your using another word of your choosing to refer to the reality I call consciousness or Self.

When you say that “We, as sentient beings, have the”gift” of witnessing it and as such are Nature’s most forward expression of knowing itself”, you seem to take a risky leap; Nature is vast and full of surprises, and to make this statement would require an extensive knowledge of its breadth and depth, of the most distant galaxies, and possibly of many other universes, and possibly many other non quadridimensional realms. Unfortunately, our knowledge of it is limited and anthropocentric. To see sentient beings and men among them as the “kings of the universe” may be a little premature. Who knows what is God’s most forward expression of knowing herself?

Finally, you are right when you say that “The more we pull away the separative fog of ego, the less conflict and more peace we shall live”. I would simply use the expression “ignorance of our real Self” instead of the fuzzier word “ego”.

Love,

Francis

Does the individual have any choice about enlightenment? - Francis Answers - 150

Location: Maryland

Satyan Nadeen is quoted as saying that enlightenment is a lottery. My question is whether attaining a sustained awakened state has anything to do with intention, devotion, or earnest effort? Does the individual have any choice about it at all?

Dear Joanna,

Enlightenment is the result of our desire for it. The only obstacle to enlightenment is our desire for something else than enlightenment, something such as a state, an object of some sort. That which in us desires liberation is not an individual, but freedom itself. And freedom can choose anything.

Love,

Francis

What is this receptacle inside which everything happens? -Francis Answers - 151

Location: Mexico City

Hello Francis I have found great interest in your teachings, I wish you were my teacher, living teacher, not book or Internet, but I guess this forms of communication are the very next thing. =) My name is Carlo Mauricio, I am 32 years old, I was born in San Diego CA. an have always lived in Tijuana, and now I am living in the capitol Mexico City. Hope you can be over here some day with a lecture, or maybe I can catch one up north in California when I go up there again. This are my questions Francis: What is this receptacle if we can use that word where everything is happening inside of it, like form, inward outward, it looks like if it is some kind of limiting space where all the manifestations of form that I can be aware of happens. Is this receptacle the limit of our consciences? the limit of the mind? what is this receptacle can one go beyond? or is it just there to be held or to be it? Another thing that captures my attention is, and this my second question, all this inward forms, like thoughts, emotions, sensation etc, and all the outward like living things, people, etc, what animates all of this inward/outward, what is the energy behind that makes life go by move, be born, grow, perish etc. Sometimes I watch all this and get scared, some other times is just confusing. some other times is just joyful to behold it. some other times I don't see it at all. Is this how it goes? And one just observes and play along? thank you, please answer, best wishes 2010and always. your friend, Carlo M.

Dear Carlo,

Your first question is about the limits of our consciousness. How do you know that this receptacle in which everything appears is limited? If we are able to perceive its borders, it can only be because the borders we perceive are inside this receptacle; but, then, how could they possibly limit it? That which appears within consciousness doesn't tell us anything about consciousness, just as the story of a movie appearing on a TV screen contains no information on the brand, age, or size of the TV. Therefore that which limits this receptacle is only the belief you have that it is limited, a belief that appears within it. We cannot nor have to go beyond it, for this beyond is a mere figment of our imagination. Our problem is not that we cannot go beyond it, but rather that we believe and feel that it is limited, personal, subjected to birth and death. This receptacle is precisely what we call "I" when we say "I perceive", "I think", "I decide", "I feel", "I move", "I speak", etc. It is our real self.

Your second question refers to that which creates and moves all forms, both inwards and outwards.

The first observation we can make is that the subjective world and the objective world are connected: we think about external objects we perceive, and, conversely, our decisions (internal thoughts) through our actions affect the physical world around us. This interconnection between the inside and the outside realms implies that they belong to a greater reality that encompasses both, and, possibly, other realms. This common reality, because it is common, must also be the reality of the inner realm; therefore it must be our real self, the consciousness that really perceives, thinks, decides, etc. This statement, although arrived at through the use of reason, may seem at first sight preposterous, but only if we forget the conclusion we reached while examining your first question: there is no valid reason to believe that consciousness is personal and limited.

The answers to your questions fit nicely together: the first answer makes it possible, and the second, necessary, for consciousness to be universal rather than personal. Since it is universal, we all share it, and the name for this sharing is Love.

Love,

Francis

Is there a limit to the patience and forbearance of a spiritual teacher? - Francis Answers - 152

Location: Girona - Spain

Dear Francis: Here are Shankara's four pre-requisites to qualify for the spiritual life: 1. Discrimination; 2. Renunciation; 3. Earnestness (intense desire for liberation, and 4. A group of six attainments (tranquility of mind, control of the senses, cessation of senses, forbearance of the pairs of opposites, concentration, and faith). At the other end of the spectrum (and we are still at the phenomenal or empirical level), if in our midst we find someone exhibiting the following characteristics: pettiness, small-mindedness (the opposite of magnanimity), resentment, vindictiveness, insolence, passion and pride (we could call these the six counter-attainments), 1. Can a person with these character traits be still called a truth-seeker? 2. Can such a "person" be possibly redeemed? 3. Is there a limit to the patience and forbearance of a spiritual teacher? Thank you, Alberto.

Dear Alberto,

One who meets all of Shankara's prerequisites is either a sage fully established in serenity, or a great yogin who only needs the final glimpse of our true nature that will lead to his immediate establishment. In such a truth seeker most of the samskaras have been dissolved and only a thin layer remains that will be removed by the grace of the Guru. Sri Atmananda reports such a case, the case of a yogin who had visited him during his childhood and had cured him of a severe illness. Much later on, their paths crossed again. This time Atmananda was established in wisdom. In an instant, the residues of ignorance of the yogin evaporated. His mind was already so pure as a result of his yogic sadhana that his final realization was instantaneous. A nice way for Atmananda to repay his debt, if we look at it from the conventional standpoint :)

We have to remember that Shankara lived in a society in which almost everyone was a yogin of some sort, engaged in a sadhana on some progressive path. When the time was right, these yogins would meet a jnanin who would put an end to their seeking. We live nowadays in a very different society, one that seeks instant gratification; most of us don't even have the patience required to learn a musical instrument, or mathematics, or writing up to a decent level, which is nothing compared to mastering one's samskaras. That's where the direct path comes into play. This time the threshold is much lower. The only prerequisite is #3, intense desire for the Truth (not for liberation, which might be construed as a personal achievement at that stage). This desire brings about in due time the encounter with a sage. The wood meets the fire. The disciple becomes a jivan mukta whose establishment in peace is only a question of time, surrender, and cooperation with the self realization process that was initiated through grace. The drawback of this approach is that the seeker may stop at the first glimpse of truth. It will

be then up to Life to remind him/her that the job wasn't finished. Quite often, the seeker will stop even before having a liberating glimpse of truth, simply believing he had one. Even more laughable, this believer may begin teaching that there is nothing to be done because there is no doer, simply repeating like a parrot words he has heard or read somewhere.

I hope this answers questions 1 and 2. Regarding the patience of a spiritual teacher, it comes from the deep experience that there is plenty of time in Eternity.

Love,

Francis

Do objects have an independent existence of their own? - Francis Answers - 153

Location: India

Dear teacher, I see that if I see or perceive an object or a person with memory and my own prejudices it is a foggy , conditioned view not a total experience of “what is”. Objects have an existence which is not independent of awareness or consciousness and as you say they are consciousness itself. But I wondered then, Why do objects have unique properties if they are relative to perceptions. For eg: why are solids always hard, why does soap always give out lather, every time i perceive? This leads me to doubting as to maybe the objects do have an independent existence of their own? Please help me clarify this. Shiva

Dear Shiva,

When we say “objects have an existence which is not independent of awareness”, we truly mean “awareness”, not “mind”. Obviously, for any given mind, there are objects that exist independently from this mind. Francis’ thoughts and sense perceptions exist without appearing in Shiva’s mind, at least in most cases. They have therefore an existence which is independent from Shiva’s mind, but not from Shiva’s awareness, for it is the same awareness who is aware of Shiva’s thoughts and of Francis’ thoughts.

Be open to the possibility that awareness is not mind dependent, but that in fact the opposite is true: according to your own experience, mind is awareness dependent. There are no thoughts without awareness, but there is awareness without thoughts (during the interval between two thoughts, for instance). As a result, you will be open to the possibility that there is awareness without any mind, and that this awareness is the very substance every mind and everything else, stones, soap, etc is made of.

The fact that tangible objects have seemingly constant qualities is no evidence of their having independent existence. In fact, they, too, are subject to change. Even Arunachala mountain keeps eroding every year. Our thoughts just change faster than the mountains, but everything we perceive is impermanent. Only that out of which both our thoughts and the mountains are made is changeless.

Love,

Francis

Do we really have no control over anything? - Francis Answers - 154

Location: Maine, USA

Dear Francis, Why does Presence choose “to temporarily ignore itself by playing the game of ignorance”? Do we really have no control over anything? Blessings to all, Sattva

Dear Sattva,

Why do we enjoy watching movies or listening to music? Sharing tender words and gestures? Telling jokes? Should there be a narrow, rational or utilitarian explanation for everything we do?

Regarding your second question, the separate “I” who has allegedly control over our thoughts and over our actions is an imagined entity devoid of any real existence. A few moments of introspection should suffice to get you convinced of the fact that this limited “I” doesn’t control your thoughts because, if this were true, it could conveniently choose to have only happy, beautiful thoughts. That leaves open the question “In this case what am I, for I know I am?” The only satisfactory answer to this question, at least at the intellectual level, is that this “awaring I” must be universal. No matter how strange it may seem at first sight, as we reflect upon this, it becomes gradually clear that the reality that creates our thoughts, moves them and is aware of them and the reality that creates and moves this universe are the same reality. This understanding in turn brings about a shift in our existential experience. As individuals, we don’t live, we are lived. As this Presence, we are Life itself. Do we really have control over anything? No and YES.

Love,

Francis

What defines spontaneous action? - Francis Answers - 155

Location: New Delhi, India

Dear Francis, The defining characteristic of the way I now experience the world is spontaneity. I do things and have thoughts, but there is no sense of choosing. In your experience, is spontaneous action the normal way that humans behave in the world? Is the feeling that one is making a choice inconsequential and unnecessary? Sincerely, Brian

Dear Brian,

You asked two questions:

1. Is spontaneous action the normal way that humans behave in the world?

We must first agree on what we mean by spontaneity. I would say that a spontaneous action is one that is part of and in harmony with the universal flow, with the Tao. Spontaneous doesn't mean instantaneous. A reaction can be instantaneous and still originate from a sense of separation from the rest of Reality. Conversely, an action may be deliberate and delayed and still be harmonious. For instance, we may take a trip to provide assistance to a friend residing overseas. This requires some planning and some time, but still originates from love, from our fundamental oneness. Most of our practical daily routines would qualify as spontaneous: eating, sleeping, filling up the tank of the car, paying the bills, etc In addition to those, anything we do for the sake of truth, love or beauty also qualifies. Any action that can be traced back to the sense of being a separate entity doesn't qualify. That being said, yes, spontaneous action is the normal way for normal humans to behave. The problem here is that most humans are impaired by the ignorance of their real nature, which leads to abnormal behavior.

2. Is the feeling that one is making a choice inconsequential and unnecessary?

It depends on the nature of the "one" your question refers to.

If this "one" is a separate self, this sense of separation will distort the choice which will be biased in favor of this illusory entity, and conflict with the universe. Such feeling is unnecessary, but not without consequences. It will bring about conflict, disharmony, suffering.

If this one is the universal Self, or even simply this ordinary consciousness of ours, whatever it may be, without any superimposed limitations or absence of limitations, then the feeling that one is making a choice may or may not appear; if it appears, it doesn't have negative consequences and it was necessary. It is also part of the universal flow and in harmony with it, whereas the feeling of a separate chooser, although it is also part of the universal flow, opposes it.

Love,
Francis

Holding on to the sense of I AM - Francis Answers - 156

Location: Cork

Francis, my questions have to do with the sense of 'me', the sense of me is felt very easily and I have the feeling that it is the same sense of the 'I am', is it a necessity to distinguish between the two? Also, I have read Nisargaddata, and he recommends 'holding on to the sense of I AM'; if this is practiced, is it the me holding on to the me? And is there goal to this action? Wouldn't that make it a dual practice? Thank you so much, LLoyd

Dear LLoyd,

You asked the following questions:

1. The sense of me is felt very easily and I have the feeling that it is the same sense as the 'I am', is it a necessity to distinguish between the two?

There is no difference between I and I am, for we are both. "I" refers to a subject, a person, "am" refers to an action, that of being. Consciousness, our reality, our being-ness, is neither a person, nor an action: it is both and neither. The words at our disposal will never fully describe it. They are just pointers.

2. Also, I have read Nisargaddata, and he recommends 'holding on to the sense of I AM'; if this is practiced, is it the me holding on to the me?

The sense of "I Am" is a perceived object. Holding on to it is a spiritual practice that belongs to the yogic path. It requires effort and concentration. In this process, the I-thoughts and the I-feelings are seen for what they are, limited objects appearing in consciousness. This in turn de-identifies consciousness from these objects and temporarily puts ignorance on hold, making it possible at some point for consciousness to apperceive itself in its absolute freedom. If you notice a rattle snake in your garage, keeping your eyes on it makes it possible for you to reach the safety of your family room, just as focusing on the sense of me enables us to access the peace of our true nature.

Once this apperception has taken place, no matter how fleetingly, all efforts to visualize consciousness gradually cease. The self inquiry continues effortlessly, dissolving on its path all the residues of ignorance. The yogi has become a jnani. The mere thought or feeling of his true nature soon takes him straight to a glimpse of his beloved.

That which is holding on to the me is the desire for liberation, which is love seeking itself. The me which is held on to is an object, a thought or a feeling.

3. And is there a goal to this action? Wouldn't that make it a dual practice?

There is dual practice as long as there is the belief in an individual, separate, objective consciousness who seeks liberation through this practice. In this case

the goal is an object, a state to be acquired by this personal seeker. At some point, a shift takes place with the understanding that that which we are is not an object, gross or subtle, and we find ourselves open to the possibility that consciousness is divine and unlimited. As soon as we are fully open to this possibility, consciousness reveals itself for what it truly is, infinite intelligence, boundless love, absolute splendor, and puts an end to our misery.

Love,

Francis

Two kinds of seeking - Francis Answers -157

Location: Ojai, California

Dear Francis, First, thank you for taking the time and care to answer questions. It is a wonderful gift. I have been seeking for many years. And my question is about seeking: doesn't seeking perpetuate division, the belief in a separate self? I feel incomplete, un-whole. So, I begin seeking wholeness. I am here. And wholeness or liberation are 'out there'-in the future. It seems to me that liberation is either now or not at all and that seeking prevents the result I am trying to achieve. Yet I cannot deliberately cease from seeking. Trying to stop seeking would simply be a different flavor of activity by a separate self. So, it seems that I am well and truly caught on an exhausting treadmill that goes absolutely nowhere. Thank you in advance for any comment you care to make. Namaste, Ronald

Dear Ronald,

There are two types of seeking: seeking what is, and seeking what will be, what ought to be. The latter leads nowhere, the former ends with the experience of our true nature.

Love,

Francis

Do I have any choice but to live in a way that is unhealthy for my body and mind? - Francis Answers - 158

Location: London

Since attending a meditation retreat ten years ago and experiencing some very powerful energetic feelings which made me sure of being a part of the whole, I now have a constant inner sound like a distant whistle which increases when I shut my eyes. I also get pressure in my head and when I meditate I feel (or imagine) a cleansing process. Despite this I over eat (Binge) and still get tangled up in thoughts. It seems that I do not have any power to change my bad habits. Is the case that I am not an individual so I do not have any choice but to live in a way that is unhealthy for my body and mind?

Dear Ben,

As long as you believe to be a separate individual, do your best to live a healthy life. As a separate individual, you have still given yourself some relative freedom. Use it to respect your body as a creation of the Divine. But, most importantly, use it to apply most of your energy to the self inquiry.

Love, Francis

What do I do when I am not motivated to seek Truth? - Francis Answers - 159

Location: Belgium

I understand that one needs to be very motivated to find Truth. I sometimes think I am not motivated enough or not disciplined enough. What to do?

Dear Tom,

During these moments when you are not motivated to find Truth, you are motivated by something else. Enjoy it, for as long as it lasts. Seeking is not your primary duty, happiness is.

Love,

Francis

Follow up on Q. 159 - Francis Answers - 160

When the goal, happiness, is lost sight of, there is practice, work, “staying with”, “noticing”. Not a bad thing, for it eventually will restore the perfume of Presence, happiness. I sometimes give this advice to one who still believes to be a doer.

But this may take time, whereas the perfume is right here already, in the very desire of the moment, as its source. If at a certain moment I am not motivated to find the truth, but to watch a movie with friends, should I stay home and notice that thoughts arise and fade away, or should I join my friends at the theater? My advice is: stick to your happiness, your enthusiasm, your freedom, knowing that your happiness is not in the movie, but in your freedom itself. Follow your bliss and not the preacher who tells you to stay in his tiny church, for your church is bigger than this universe, and all the movie theaters are in it.

Your primary duty is to be happy, not to work in order to be happy.

Is intellectual knowledge necessary to experience our true nature? - Francis Answers - 161

Location: La Jolla CA

Comments:

dear Francis... thank you for your graciousness to answer any odd ball question, as I have seen on your website. Therein lies my question. I have been somewhat upset after reading some questions and answers. My true experiences of freedom are, of course, utterly simple, devoid of any knowledge about the intricacies of consciousness, awareness, etc. And in my life search for union, to meet the other, and lose the apparent separation, I have 'looked' for that state in others. Indeed, I have felt the absence of knowledge about spirituality in fact IS the space that allows for the knowing to enter. I have found it important not to encourage the mind from describing everything at any old time it wants. And it seems, the more knowledge it has, the more it wants to expound. Something I believe Alan Watts called "spiritual materialism." I believe I was born 'knowing' that money is an empty bowl, and I guess I would say now, that 'knowledge' is also. I have advised people that in the end, you must let go of all your knowledge. And though I believe every direction leads to freedom, and to be free in the moment does not require a trudge back, but can be the flip of the coin, nevertheless I must say that acquiring knowledge about the spiritual seems to me to be the most difficult path of all. Being a cruel murderer seems a much more efficient path. Perhaps your meditation is so profound, that it overwhelms your knowledge. Or one could say, your left brain does not run rampant. You are the master of your mind, as it should be. But, I believe, not so for some questioners. In evidence, such intellectual questions about awareness and consciousness even after sitting for an hour of meditation. So, my question: why do you indulge such questions? I have only read very little that you have presented. Knowledge may not be your emphasis. But I feel that it is 'contra-indicated' at any time for most. I have visited you once, some time ago. What I remember most, besides sitting in meditation beyond what was comfortable for me, was your graciousness and equality in your kitchen after. You stand at the same level floor as myself and all others, as it truly is. I honor you for that and all that you bring. Thank you for sharing yourself and, for this concern, any further clarity. yours, Jimmy

Dear Jimmy,

In your question, you just expressed your concern about what you feel are intellectual questions and answers. Different seekers have different questions. It is important for them to have them answered, as I hope it is important for you

to receive an answer to yours.

Freedom is utterly simple, true. But the road leading to it is meandering and bumpy due to our attachment to belief systems and feeling patterns. Why be attached to the belief that intelligence has no role to play in the discovery of our true nature? Understanding is always simple, once we understand. It dissolves the false knowledge we had about spirituality, the one we had acquired from hearsay, reading Alan Watts and others. You see, I agree wholeheartedly when you say that “acquiring knowledge about the spiritual seems to me to be the most difficult path of all”. In fact the path is just the opposite: letting go of all the knowledge we have about the path and about ourselves.

Sometimes many words are required to reach the silence that lies beyond them.

Love,

Francis

Does one retain a personality after enlightenment? - Francis Answers - 162

Location: Pakistan

Hi Francis, Thank you so much for answering all our questions. It is wonderful to read your answers and 'be pointed in the right direction', if i may call it that. I have a couple of questions (which are probably very silly, but have been on my mind for a while): 1. What is the difference between personality and ego? As I understand, one has to see through the ego or mind to come to a realization of our true selves. But most enlightened masters or sages do have their own styles, teaching way, mannerisms, etc. Does one retain a personality after enlightenment, and if so, what does it mean if one has no self and is only the ONE, consciousness, the Divine, whatever one may call it. 2. If we have no self, and are the ONE, then how does one get 'linked' to one form. I presume that even after realization of our own selves, we still have the sensations, thoughts, etc of one particular being, even though we have realized that we are all the same awareness. How is that? I would really appreciate your answers. As you can tell from my quesitons, I'm still stuck in my egoic mind. Thank you so very much.

Dear Chandi,

In my answers, and for the sake of clarity, I use on purpose the word "self realization" which is, in my vocabulary least, different from "enlightenment". Enlightenment is a full glimpse of our true nature. Realization is the final stage of the ensuing process in which the residues of ignorance have been dissolved and one abides permanently in the sweetness of the Self..

You asked the following questions:

1. What is the difference between personality and ego?

The personality would be the various qualities of a specific body-mind that make it unique. Ego is a word that I use rarely. I prefer the word "ignorance" which stands for ignorance of our true nature. In my vocabulary, ego would refer to consciousness (erroneously) identified with a personality.

2. Does one retain a personality after self realization?

The true answer depends on what is meant by "one" and "retain". If this "one" is consciousness, the answer is that one retains and lets go of all personalities as they appear and disappear in consciousness. If this "one" is a body-mind, it remains more or less the same with one important difference: there is no more the feeling or the belief to be a separate entity accompanying its manifestation. This explains why realized beings (which means simply here body-minds with which consciousness has ceased to identify) keep some of their mannerisms after

realization, just as they keep the same eye color, the same nose shape, the same ability to speak languages and to drive cars.

3. If we have no self, and are the ONE, then how does one get 'linked' to one form?

Your question assumes that the form exists independently of the One. How does the mirror get linked to the reflections that appear in it? The answer is that the One doesn't get linked to one form for something real cannot really get linked to an illusion.

4. I presume that even after realization of our own selves, we still have the sensations, thoughts, etc of one particular being, even though we have realized that we are all the same awareness. How is that?

As long as there is a body-mind in existence, there are sensations and thoughts. That which is not present in a realized being is the belief or feeling of separation, and all the suffering and sense of lack that goes with it.

Love,

Francis

In what way can one go beyond the empty state? - Francis Answers - 163

Location: California

Dear Francis, Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions, it is very much appreciated. During meditation I've come across a situation in which I relax deeply and I have almost no bodily sensations or thoughts. Then the question arises, Who am I? And the question seems to dissolve; it feels non-sensical, as if "I" was a concept with no real referent. I have heard you explain that this could be yet another object called emptiness (I thought this might be an example because the feeling of "I" comes back after a while). At other times, I have a quite spontaneous feeling of expansion, joy and satisfaction with no particular reason; it happens sometimes in nature; and also in that case there is no particular sense of I. I have two questions: 1) There is the experience (occasionally) of the dissolution of some artificial boundaries and a great opening, but not the affirmative feeling of "I am pure consciousness; this is what I really am." Am I getting stuck somewhere? 2) In what way can one go beyond the empty object (if that is in fact what is going on, I am not sure) during meditation? With gratitude, Eleonora

Dear Eleonora,

What comes out of your questions is that there is a residual sense of lack during your meditation. The experience of the true referent of I, which is absolute peace and fulfillment, is missing. The causeless joy and satisfaction that is occasionally experienced is much closer to the mark. Stick to the pure experience of this joy, wherever it takes you, without allowing any object or phenomenon to preempt it, being open to the possibility that it is a ray emanating from God's presence within, which is also your real presence.

The experience of being stuck in empty states is frequently encountered by yogins who practice meditation on their own or without the assistance of a true Karana guru. Not to many self taught violinists ever perform in our concert halls, and possibly fewer self taught seekers ever get established in their natural state, no matter what they say or claim. We live in an age of instant gratification, but self realization requires absolute dedication and earnestness. A few fleeting visits payed to several half baked teachers, or knowledge or even understanding acquired through books or on the Web will not suffice. I know from "personal" experience that the easiest way to go beyond the empty object is the presence of a guru who is well established in the Self. There comes a moment when the seeker is ready in this emptiness. Then something the teacher says, or the tone of his voice, or a smile, or a gesture, or a bird singing in the distance may be the final instrument of grace that resonates in the heart of the disciple and dissolves the remaining knots. Sometimes also there is not a transitional moment

the mind can remember. One finds oneself immersed in this immensity, nay, lost in and found as this immensity, which is also the source from which the teaching emanates. It is difficult to convey through words the sweetness, the perfume, the absolute certainty of this experience. Any lesser experience will leave the truth seeker dissatisfied, the fundamental lack having not been removed. Following this, the establishment of the disciple in the felicity of his true nature, with the assistance of the guru, is a spontaneous unfoldment.

Love,

Francis

Is it true that there is no one to whom anger occurs? - Francis Answers - 164

Location: Forest Hills, NY

Hi Francis, I'm a recently retired pharmacologist with more than ample time to indulge my decades-long interest in non-duality. The result has been a blur of books, websites, videos, and CDs running the gamut from Shankara to Wei Wu Wei to Douglas Harding, etc. My ultimate question remains, lo these many years "How do I bridge the (apparent) gap between a deep intellectual understanding of Oneness and my inability to realize the truth experientially. I've just finished "Eternity Now", and I'd like to pose a more specific, less grandiose question. My wife and I recently attended a meeting held by a teacher in London. Assuming you're familiar with his work, you understand that he is a non-dual "purist", as it were: No path, no traveler, nothing "for sale", and the vague possibility of self-realization by an act of grace. However, he made one statement that, upon reflection, seems progressively more unclear. My wife, who has no real interest in non-duality, asked him if he was suggesting that no one in the room was sitting in a chair. His response was, "there is sitting occurring, but to no one." He then went on to say that the same explanation applies to all perceived phenomena, including, let's say, anger. I think at this point my wife wanted a refund! : -) But seriously. how can an emotion like anger, which is entirely subjective in the sense that it's "felt" or perceived by an individual, arise in the absence of that person, i.e. "anger arises, but there is no one who is angry." Of course, I'd appreciate any suggestion for stepping outside my scientifically-conditioned mind, but, for now, I'd be interested in your thoughts on phenomena arising, but to no one. Warmly, Don

Dear Don,

You asked two questions:

1. How do I bridge the (apparent) gap between a deep intellectual understanding of Oneness and my inability to realize the truth experientially?

Find your teacher. If you have the desire for it, life will find him or her for you, and it will be a perfect match. He or she will be a sage whose presence reveals your own presence and makes your heart sing.

2. How can an emotion like anger, which is entirely subjective in the sense that it's "felt" or perceived by an individual, arise in the absence of that person?

There are two aspects to your question:

1. There is no individual, separate consciousness, to whom sitting or anger could occur. Whatever is perceived, anger or anything else, is always really perceived by the only real consciousness there is, which is universal and divine. It wouldn't be true either to claim that anger occurs to universal consciousness, just as it wouldn't be true to claim that the fire that occurs in the movie occurs to the screen onto which it is projected. Since there is no real entity, personal or universal to whom anger could occur, the teacher you met in London rightfully claims that in reality it occurs to no one. It simply seems to occur to a body-mind projected onto the screen of consciousness.
2. Anger is the result of frustration, a revolt against the flow of things. This type of reaction is a by-product of ignorance, which is the belief to be a separate individual, a victim. In that sense, anger cannot arise in the absence of ignorance, which could be expressed, somehow loosely, by the formula "If there is anger, there is still (the belief in) someone angry".

Things get more complicated when some pseudo sages try to justify their fits of anger (a behavioral pattern which show their blatant ignorance) by saying "there is no one to whom anger occurs". How convenient! Along the same lines they could also say "there is no one who borrowed your money, therefore there is no one who must give it back", or "there is no one who slept with your wife, why are you angry at me?" The truth is that sages don't get angry. Their equanimity reveals their realization. On rare occasions, they may exhibit outrage, an impersonal form of anger, or irritability, as a symptom of exhaustion or illness, but never do they manifest the most common form, ignorance based anger.

If a teacher attempts to justify his anger using the "there is no one defense", run away.

Love,
Francis

What is the difference between a corpse and a living person? - Francis Answers - 165

Location: Japan

Comments:

I am always confused about the difference between “consciousness” and “awareness.” Everything is consciousness. I understand that . . . I guess. It is said that consciousness is that which makes the heart pump and allows the eyes to see and sense the world. And when we die, what is left? The corpse has no consciousness. But everything is said to exist in consciousness/awareness. A stone. A plant. So why not a corpse. So what is the difference between a corpse and a living person. Both exist as awareness, no? But there obviously is some fundamental difference. A corpse has no possibility of realizing non dual awareness. . . . So does this all come down to understanding a distinction between consciousness and awareness? Have I framed the question wrong? Best wishes.

Dear Steven,

I use consciousness and awareness as synonyms. Consciousness is the reality of our experience, that which truly perceives it. If there is only one reality, consciousness must also be the substance of everything. I cannot prove to you that there is only one reality anymore than I can prove to you that there is consciousness. All I can say is that I am absolutely certain that there is consciousness perceiving the details of this moment, that this consciousness is the reality of our experience, and that there is only one reality that interconnects this consciousness and everything it perceives. If your experience is different, please let me know how.

You asked what is the difference between a corpse and a living person. If by “living person” you mean a living body, the differences are the well known vital signs: presence of a pulse, breathing, blood pressure, responsiveness to stimuli, etc. . . . If by “living person” you mean consciousness, the difference is even more striking: a body, dead or alive, is perceived and doesn’t perceive, consciousness perceives and is not perceived. As a result, neither a corpse nor a living body can realize non dual awareness. Only awareness can know itself in its limitlessness and in its timelessness, in all its glory and love and sweetness.

Warmest regards,

Francis

A follow up on Q. 165 - Francis Answers - 166

Dear Francis,

In response to Question 165, you state that

” Consciousness is the reality of our experience, that which truly perceives it. If there is only one reality, consciousness must also be the substance of everything”.

Can you please explain the logic here more clearly? Why can't consciousness experience something that is “physical matter”?

I can think of two ways in which we may arrive at that conclusion:

1. All we experience is not the “physical matter” itself, but the image/sound/vibration of the external matter as it shows up in our consciousness. However this by itself does not mean consciousness is the substance of all physical matter OR that there can be no physical matter in the universe?
2. If you make the statement based on discoveries in quantum physics that all “physical” matter is made largely of space - doesn't that not involve a concept or belief that is not our direct experience?

Please clarify.

Thanks

RS

Dear Rajesh,

You fail to see the logic of my argument because you have a different concept/belief of consciousness that implicitly sees it as limited and personal. I define it differently, as the Reality, the centrality of our human experience. Our human experience is mind, made of thoughts, feelings and sense perceptions of the external objects. The Reality of our experience is that which truly, really perceives it, **whatever that is**.

Now, I make one more logical statement before reaching the conclusion that consciousness is the reality, the substance of everything, namely that there is only one reality. I cannot prove that to you, anymore than I can prove to you that there is consciousness. However, if you accept these two statements:

- **A. There is consciousness, which is the reality of our experience, that which truly perceives it.**
- **B. There is only one reality**

Then the conclusion

- **C. Consciousness is the substance, the reality of everything**

is unavoidable.

If you don't accept C, then you must reject either A or B as false.

Having clarified this point, let's review your remarks.

1. I agree
2. I don't make this statement based on Physics, but on my direct experience. Whenever I use Quantum Mechanics, it is not to prove anything about consciousness and matter, but rather to "deconstruct" the ordinary and largely common view we have of reality, a materialist view we could call atomistic realism, by showing that this view is a mere belief which not only has no experiential basis, but which is also at odds with Q.M.

Love,

Francis

Death and liberation - Francis Answers - 167

Location: Sweden

Hello Francis, My question is short and concise: When consciousness leaves and the body dies, only the Absolute prevails. If the destiny of a jnani and a normal individual is the same - why enlightenment? If the idea of reincarnation is false, what is the use? Then there literally is no liberation in enlightenment; there is liberation in death. Thank you, /Pontus

Dear Pontus,

You say “When consciousness leaves and the body dies, only the Absolute prevails.” What do you mean and how do you know this? I assume that you mean that “there is liberation in death”. This would be logically true if the existence of the body was the cause of ignorance. Death would induce liberation in this case. But death doesn’t imply liberation, nor does liberation imply death. These are assumptions you made. Both death and liberation are mutually independent choices made by the Absolute. However the letting go of the body in death presents an opportunity for the realization of our true self.

The destiny of a jnani or of an ignorant is only a movie projected onto the screen of consciousness, and enlightenment or reincarnation seen as events happening to the main character in the movie are part of the screenplay. The questions “why enlightenment?” or “what is the use of the idea of reincarnation” can be asked from the vantage point of the movie or from the vantage point of reality. The question “Why did Othello kill his wife?” can be answered on two levels: “because he was jealous and betrayed by Iago” would be a possible answer on the level of the play and “because Shakespeare needed to write a new play to pay for his living expenses” could be the answer on the level of reality. Any answer on the level of the movie will be as illusory as the movie itself. On the level of reality, reality itself is the answer. There are no questions. We are the eternal living answer in which all questions dissolve.

Confusion arises when we mix these two levels, for instance when we try to reach a conclusion regarding enlightenment, which is the direct experience of the Absolute, based on observations made on the phenomenal level (the death of physical bodies).

Love,

Francis.

Follow up on Q.167 - Francis Answers - 168

Location: Sweden

I had been thinking about something similar, that is, if one does not achieve liberation during the “life” of the body, does it automatically occur upon death of the body and mind (brain). You answered the latest inquiry by saying: “death doesn’t imply liberation” and “the letting go of the body in death presents an opportunity for the realization of our true self”

That being said, if liberation upon death is not a given and upon death the opportunity for realization of one’s true self is not taken (you imply this possibility), what happens? Does the soul continue in ignorance, believing itself to be reincarnated, so to speak, into another existence (another role in yet another play)? Does the illusion continue beyond the death of the body and brain for the unrealized “person”?

Respectfully, Karen

Dear Karen,

For ignorance to continue, there has to be an object with which consciousness keeps identifying. This object is a continuation of mind. This possibility is rejected by the religion of materialism, for which matter is the ultimate reality, which implies that the end of the brain is the end of the mind. With the understanding that universal consciousness is the ultimate reality of both mind and matter, the continued existence of a limited mind after the death of the body remains a possibility, but not a necessity, just as the identification of consciousness with such a limited mind remains possible, but not necessary. Similarly, this limited mind may get reincarnated in a brand new body, or may not. As you can see, there are many possibilities open to consciousness to keep playing this game, or put an end to it. In Her infinite freedom and creativity, She tends to try them all. After all, why should She keep wearing the same shoes every day, having so many beautiful ones in Her heavenly closets? In the many-worlds interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, every time a measurement (observation) is made on the Universe, it branches out into as many subuniverses as there are possible outcomes for this observation. This could be understood as Nature wearing all of her shoes at once. As Jesus said, there are many rooms in our Father’s mansion. Love, Francis

What is the role played by beauty in relation to love, transcendence, God? - Francis Answers - 168

Location: Barcelona

You said in Barcelona that compassion is one of the aspects of love. I would like to ask which is the role played by beauty in relation to love, transcendence, God. Thanks

Dear Carolina,

The Garden of Eden, the transcendent realm, has many gates.

The way that leads to the gate of Truth is indicated by rational, logical, intelligent concepts. The street that leads to the gate of Love is paved with compassionate, all-including, non-judgmental feelings. The path that leads to the gate of beauty is adorned by harmonious, balanced, rhythmical sense perceptions. There are many more gates, such as the gate of Laughter and Humor, the gate of Creativity, the gate of Eternity, the gate of Peace. . . Some are highly visible from afar, others are hidden, known only by a few. Many gates, only one Garden.

Love,

Francis

Is mentation the product of ignorance? - Francis Answers - 169

Is mentation the product of ignorance?

Love, Chris

Dear Chris,

The answer is: no.

It is in most cases the product of Maya, which is the power of the Self through which, although alone, it appears to be multiple, thus making ignorance possible, but not necessary. In some cases, it is the product of Grace, which is the power of the Self through which it puts an end to ignorance, but not to Maya. For the sage and for the ignorant alike, there is Maya, seeming multiplicity. The difference is that the sage, unlike the ignorant, is not fooled by it.

In fact Grace and Maya are inseparable. They are like the two sets of lanes of a single freeway, one moving away from home, the other leading back to it. The same universe can be contemplated as a multiplicity of objects in its immanence or as Consciousness in its transcendence, just like a water color landscape can be seen as a collection of trees, stones, houses, birds, etc or as a single piece of paper.

Love,

Francis

If consciousness is non-dual, why the game of make-believe? - Francis Answers - 170

Name: Thalia

Location: Los Angeles, California

I'm stuck and I'm hoping you can help. Also, please understand that my heart and mind are as sincere in their longing for the answer to this question, despite my sometimes cynical or pessimistic undertone- it's not real. My aunt and I were discussing in a conversation- Why perfect awareness, consciousness would leave itself to play a game with itself whereby the appearances contained within it- would be completely ignorant of the nature of things, save and except a small few- giving us what's commonly referred to as "The Game of Life" where Love is the Truth and Suffering the byproduct of Misidentification- what's the point? Particularly if consciousness is nondual- why the game of make-believe? During that conversation, I understood as I still do that questions such as that would and could only be coming from an object inquiring of the subject. I also understand the immediacy of consciousness and how it is that which allows life to play out in it's entirety and only an appearance would want to make life Personal to their appearance, pretending uniqueness, individuality, the body and the world but I MUST HAVE SKIMMED OVER parts of the question cause it's back-just in a different way. Which means I didn't fully understand the first time-what'd I miss? If we are to use our mind and our intellect to conduct self inquiry then there should be a tool to point at the question of WHY perfect and absolute consciousness would play a game of imperfection and individuality with itself- or else it seems that a Fundamental piece of Inquiry requires FAITH as opposed to knowledge or inquiry- which I thought that self inquiry differed from the faith based religions based upon the qualities of experienceable investigation and discrimination. When I sit with it all I've got is a)because b)boredom a) sounds like the familiar touting of parents', "Because I said so. . ." and if the answer were simply, "just because" a greater reasoning is built into the answer, so what is it? b)which seems kind of like what a piece of something I've read that says, "pretty boring being perfect, absolute, everything and nothing" but that even insinuates a flaw of sorts with consciousness that it would desire(?), need(?), something to illuminate. If that were true wouldn't that make it flawed in some way? Objects aren't created by themselves, nor do they have independent realities and All things are Dependent upon Consciousness. It is also true that the notion of flawed, imperfection etc is simply a perception as are most things- but if Consciousness is truly, Actionless Nondual Awareness- it

seems to follow that UNConsciousness is Changing, Dual, Ignorance which seems to accurately describe the “unexamined or uninquiring” but that paradigm suggests a relationship of Interdependence and if that’s the case then Consciousness seems like it’s Not that which Precludes the Objective world of Appearances but that they would arise, abide and subside concurrently? Which makes it seem like Consciousness doesn’t have the Infinite nature the teachings suggest. It makes it seem like Consciousness needs us as much as we need it. That can’t be right. please help. And then lastly this is more just for fun but if you had to postulate- What would consciousness want from this experience? thank you for your words in advance Francis- I’m sending you my love.

Dearest Thalia,

Thank you for your thoughtful question.

It may be subdivided as follows:

1. Why is there creation, maya, names and forms?
2. Why is there ignorance of our true reality, suffering?

In turn, each of these “why is there”s can have two meanings:

- a. “What is the cause of”
- b. ” What is the purpose of”

Before I begin to try to answer these, I have to forewarn you that all my answers will be and must be logically unsatisfactory. The only logically satisfactory answer is this: in non dual reality there is no cause and effect, nor is there a fact and an ulterior motive for this fact. This precludes the use of logic as a vehicle to reach the absolute, but not as a tool to debunk false belief systems based on mere assumptions. We have the right to use logic to answer a “why?” question, in order to meet the question on the level from which it was asked. See that the questions you are asking implicitly assume duality. No wonder you end up being stuck with it. Start instead from the reality of your experience

The answer to 1a and 2a is straight forward: consciousness, reality, the Absolute is the only cause and substance of everything.

The answer to 1b is certainly not “to avoid boredom”, which would point to a deficiency in the Absolute, but rather “to express happiness”. The creation is the universal song or poem or “word” that originates from the bliss of our eternity. You may have noticed that our moments of creativity always originate from a joyful, silent place within, for instance when we sing in the shower for no apparent reason.

The answer to 2b is the one which usually encounters the highest level of resistance, because it hits right at the core of ignorance. Here it goes: we create and maintain ignorance because we enjoy it so much that the accompanying

suffering seems like a small price to pay for it. Ask yourself why we enjoy watching tragedies, drama, horror movies, thrillers, if not for enjoyment. Remember that ignorance, the belief that we are a limited consciousness, is optional, for there isn't a single shred of evidence that awareness is limited by space, or time, or mind. Ignorance is a self-inflicted wound. We are glued to our pet belief that we, pristine Awareness, are an object, a body-mind.

Love,

Francis

What makes one qualified/ready to guide others on the Direct Path? - Francis Answers - 169

Beloved Francis,

A short while ago I asked the following question:

When one is established in the impersonal Awareness, having gone beyond the distinction of teacher and student, but at the same time acknowledging the importance of it on the relative plane, what makes such a one qualified/ready to guide others on the Direct Path, as there isn't really a formal transmission involved, as far as I understand it?

Without a shadow of a doubt (as you like to say :-)) this Consciousness is recognized as Truth and Beauty itself, 'my' true nature.

This realization spontaneously stabilizes itself more and more in daily life.

However, when the duality of teacher/student and seeking/realizing (or unfolding) gradually falls away with it, maybe I first have to ask if there exist the possibility of ignorance or delusion in this process?

Then, there is the further curiosity about when, according to your experience, someone can genuinely and without self-delusion guide others on the Direct Path?

You already mentioned speaking from own experience, and to be totally honest and earnest. I think there is a lot to share on this topic, but maybe you can point out some other important aspects? As it is sometimes confusing what teachers say and do concerning this, and it therefore is certainly not without reason why Dennis Waite wrote the book 'Enlightenment, Path through the Jungle'.

I understand you have a lot of questions coming to you and may have limited time and availability, but as I find your clear understanding and explanations highly valuable, it would be most supporting to stay in touch by email or skype to be able to ask you a question.

With patience and gratitude I am looking very much forward if you can clarify some of which I wrote, in order to shed all ignorance away!

Most affectionately,

Jerome

Dear Jeroen,

Don't think you are the only one asking this question. Many ask the same question, and many more don't, because they want to start teaching to satisfy

their ego, and they are afraid that my answer would demonstrate their unpreparedness. So they start teaching and join the increasing crowd of half-baked teachers teaching half baked truths.

You can guide others no farther than to where you are. If you are not established in peace and happiness, guiding others will be a distraction preventing further progress, unless you do so under the umbrella and the guidance of a karana guru. I did this for fifteen years in France and in California, conducting meditation sessions, answering questions, but my friends were always send to my teacher to become his disciples. That's how I learned how to teach.

Many sages are not teachers, and an even more teachers are not sages. What do you want to be? a teacher or a sage?

How would you prefer to be: happy, fulfilled, without teaching, or unhappy and teaching? Think about this: because a sage has mastered the fulfillment of his desires, there is no need for him to teach to make a living. Therefore teaching is not a profession in the usual sense, although it may appear to be the case.

Don't count on teaching to make you happy. Get happy first, no matter whether you teach or not. Then teach, if you want to, out of this happiness.

You could ask: how do I know that I am unshakably established in peace and happiness?. Well, in case the meaning of these words is not clear enough to you, here are a few hints:

You should at least have mastered the following issues:

1. relationships with friends, supervisors, employees, clients, parents, children and spouses should be harmonious.
2. there should be financial abundance due to the discovery of the universal law of infinite supply. Any professional activity should be performed not out of the necessity to make money, but out of the joy it brings about.
3. more generally speaking, all desires should spontaneously materialize due to the absence of attachment.
4. fear of death should be absent.

In addition to these absolute prerequisites, teaching requires the following;

1. A vocation: the love, the enthusiasm, the passion for teaching (also an absolute prerequisite)
2. Highly developed communication skills, both at the intellectual and at the feeling levels. (Intellectual skills are required only for the path of knowledge).
3. Pedagogical skills acquired (among other things) through many years of steady attendance of the teaching sessions of a karana guru.

Skills 2 and 3 are not absolutely mandatory, since they can be developed “on the job”. The efficiency of the teaching will improve as these skills improve.

And, yes, last but not least, since you can only teach what you are, you can only teach from your own experience, not from hearsay, not from memory, and, of course, always with absolute honesty

Love,

Francis

What is the difference between the waking state and the dream state?- Francis Answers - 171

Dear Francis, I have been listening to your satsangs and am quite happy to be in contact with you. I read quite a lot of Sri Ramanamaharshi's works. I have one question that has been bothering me lately. Hope you can take some time to answer.

I understand that my life is an extended dream. But one thing that I am trying to understand is that my dreams always consist of the same or similar surroundings. (same faces, same workplace etc). Whereas my night dream consists of a lot of variation. Is there any explanation for this or should I even bother about these at all?

Thanks a lot for your time,

Hope to see you in person sometime..

Regards,

Sridevi.

Dear Sridevi,

the world is like a dream in that sense that it doesn't exist independently from consciousness. However, it is not like a dream in that sense that it does exist independently from any individual mind.

Love,

Francis

Do we owe something to our parents? - Francis Answers - 172

Dear Francis,

Can you tell me... Do we owe something to our parents? My seeking very often 'hurts' them. When I say I am going to a hermitage or to see a teacher: they worry, especially my mother. It seems that the right thing for me hurts them. Often, I think about moving away, quite far. In truth (I have very much guilt about thinking this) I would very much like to be apart from them, and not hear from them, and get rid of many of my possessions. There is absolutely no way that I could tell them this straight without causing a great disturbance. What do you think the right thing to do is in a situation like this?

It's strange... family relations are so complicated. To elaborate on my first question, 'do we owe something to our parents' can I ad: Why are families different, why is the relationship between father and son or mother and son different then that of a friend or even a lover. It's like somehow we are BOUND together, it's like there is no escaping this at all.

Thank you for all your previous answers,

Dear Friend, From our parents, we should take the love and ignore the rest, the desire to control us, the fear, etc, hoping they will do the same with us. We cannot turn them into truth lovers. We should understand their limitations. There comes an age when we don't see them as parents any longer, but as friends. It is much easier to accept the shortcomings of our friends than those of our parents. They are often a tough but efficient yoga exercise designed to take us to true adulthood, wisdom. We then become the parents of our parents. Love,
Francis

How will I ever know what is the right path? - Francis Answers - 173

Dear Francis,

I am living in a very different world where the lives of everyone else make no sense, yet my life makes no sense to me either. I feel completely separated from my mind and senses, yet not in control of any of them. Mind and senses desparately cling, and tightly clutch random things, yet I feel no attraction nor repulsion to them.

Dear Francis, I have no answers, no solutions. . . I desparately ask you this, why is my mind acting so weird, why can I not have control over the very things I want to say and do?

xxx

Dear xxx,

Be open to the possibility that everything, I mean absolutely everything that happens, be it in the world or in our mind, is in fact a cosmic event not very different from the wheather or the revolution of the planets.

Love,

Francis

Dear Francis,

There have been thoughts of death, ego death that are repeatedly going on in my mind. I have been reading the tibetan book of the dead repeatedly and I wanted to ask you if you have ever been through something like that, if its even real or just another glamorized spiritual concept. I do everything I can to run away from all advaita teachings and create distractions purposely in my world such as tv., music, daydreaming, games, hanging out with friends, etc, because its too darn painful to look at myself and search for the Truth within myself.

I dont want to run away from the truth, but at the same time, i feel like its the end of my journey. . .and that i would never be able to face the next step whatever it may or may not be.

Im sick of myself and the way i have set up this life around me. . . I want to leave, I want to go home. But how will i ever know whats the right path?

Thanks,

xxx

Dear xxx,

It is not the end of your journey, and you will be able to face the next step, whatever it may be. Stop judging yourself for what you do or don't do. Understand that everything that happens is just the way the universe is unfolding at that moment, at that location. And there are many beautiful, interesting things waiting to happen. I am glad to hear you hang out with friends. It is normal to have your own circle of friends in addition to your family members. That is part of you becoming an adult and a free, independent being. There is no happiness where there is no freedom, and we have to conquer and assert our freedom to become a real truth seeker, for a truth seeker is in fact a freedom lover.

The first freedom we need to achieve is within our own mind. This freedom can be absolute. It is the freedom of our thoughts and of our feelings. This freedom is achieved through clarity, which comes as a result of not denying the facts, not judging oneself or others for anything, welcoming everything that arises within us with benevolent indifference. Achieving this freedom is not dependent on external circumstances. One can be in a jail, or subjected to intense psychological pressure by others and still be free inside through simply seeing the facts as they are. Freedom is the most precious of your treasures, and it is also your most fundamental right. With this freedom comes true love, which is love for the consciousness in all beings.

Love,

Francis

A follow up on Video Answer 33 on Vegetarianism

Dear Francis,

Thank you for taking the time to reply to my inquiry. I appreciate it very much.

I still have a feeling that there cannot be any 'should' or 'should not' as if and when we believe that everything is manifestation of the consciousness, and this world with its 'good' and 'bad' and 'right' and 'wrong' is only an illusion, is it not the consciousness itself that it is consuming flesh through another manifestation of consciousness to experience itself?

I read this book called, Verses on the Faith-Mind by Seng-ts'an (Third Zen Patriarch) and if you have not and interested, I can send you an email copy of the verse.

In a section, he says:

“For the Realized mind at one with the Way
all self-centered striving ceases.
Doubts and irresolutions vanish
and the Truth is confirmed in you.
With a single stroke you are freed from bondage;
nothing clings to you and you hold to nothing
All is empty, clear, self-illuminating
with no need to exert the mind.
Here, thinking, feeling, understanding, and imagination
are of no value.
In this world 'as it really is'
there is neither self nor other than self.”

In any case, I know that holding a vegetarian diet could lead to more compassion if the intention is there, as you and I both know that many people are vegetarian and yet, have not compassion whatsoever:-) Like Hitler or the Hindu who killed Gandhiji and many many more. . .

Thanks again and hope to meet you in person sometime soon.

With Love,

Nushin

Dear Nushin,

There is no contradiction between my answer and the verses.

There is a logical mistake in your reference to Hitler: even if vegetarianism were a necessary condition for wisdom, it would still not be a sufficient one.

The point is not that holding a vegetarian diet leads to more compassion, but rather that it is more compassionate to be a vegetarian, if compassion is understood as applying to all sentient beings, and not only to humans.

You share an intellectual (mis)understanding of the way which is often found in many neo-advaita teachings, a misunderstanding according to which nothing is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, intelligent or stupid. If we share this point of view, we shouldn't see any difference in value between Buddha and Hitler, vegetarianism and the mass murder of cows, love and hate, tolerance and racism, a painting by Rembrandt and a centerfold of Playboy magazine, etc. This is obviously total non sense. Those who share these views should logically be able to eat garbage (or, close enough, dead animals:)?). Why not, since, according to Advaitic fundamentalism, there shouldn't be any distinctions?

On a more serious note, here is the logical explanation for your misunderstanding: when we make a statement, we should always be aware of the level at which the statement is made, which can be absolute or relative.

At the absolute level, everything is unfolding as it should. This "unfolding as it should" includes the fact of ignorance appearing in the world, along with its train of cruelty, ugliness, disharmony and stupidity. However, **at the relative level, at the level where there is black and white, day and night**, wisdom doesn't make one blind and unable to distinguish between ignorance and wisdom, cruelty and compassion, ugliness and beauty, stupidity and intelligence. The sage sees these distinctions at the relative level even more sharply than the ignorant. The difference here is that he/she doesn't see an ignorant **individual**, or a cruel one, or a stupid one, and that he/she remains unaffected by ignorance and its manifestations, knowing perfectly that "everything is unfolding as it should". He/she follows the inner light of Presence and, like the Buddha Gautama, Ramana Maharshi, Ananda Mai, Jean Klein and many others, acts from that intelligence, from that love, from that beauty, and not from some theoretical view of non-duality. The intellectual **thinks** non-duality, the sage **is it, and, from being it, thinks it, feels it, perceives it and puts it into action.**

I hope you'll see the fallacy of your view before we meet, a meeting I look forward to. If you fail to see it, I suggest you spend some more time with meat eating people (especially teachers) until you miss the perfume of love.

Warmest regards,

Francis

Guided meditation - The Silence of the Heart -Ottawa, 2000

Sunflower of the Heart

Francis Lucille

Ottawa, Canada

2000

Our silence in meditation is not the silence of the mind.

It is the silence of the heart.

A silent heart is a heart that is turned inwards towards its source and keeps facing that direction, like a sunflower tracking the sun.

Our hearts are tracking the sun of all hearts inside.

How we do it is a mystery.

It is our love for truth that keeps the heart turned towards the right direction, towards the Kaaba.

The true prayer is when the heart is oriented in the right direction.

It doesn't matter where the truthlover is at any moment as a bodymind, provided the heart is constantly in prayer.

And the prayer isn't necessarily something religious; it is not at all religious, in fact.

There is no obligation. It expresses itself freely depending upon the circumstances.

It varies from one truthlover to another.

Some pray to God with their intelligence, thinking about the truth.

Others pray to God with their feelings, loving the Absolute.

Others pray to God with their sense perceptions, loving beauty. All of those are guests inside God's tent, guests at the celebration.

If the sunflower of the heart has tracked the sun once, it will spontaneously go back to the direction of the sun at any moment, provided we leave it alone.

It will go back if we liberate it from concerns, from thoughts, from fear, from desire, from doingness.

True prayer, true meditation cannot be manufactured.

It happens by itself.

All that needs to be done is to relax, to surrender everything which is not the meditation, everything which is not that prayer.

All we have to do is to surrender the useless agitation of the mind and of the body.

Even the word 'surrender' is not completely correct because it suggests a loss, it suggests a renunciation. All we have to do is *to offer*

the tensions in the body, the fear at the level of feelings, the concern or dynamism at the level of thoughts to the Presence in which they arise.

Leave it up to this Presence, at its own pleasure, to maintain all those phenomena or to transform them or to dissolve them.

It's not up to us as bodyminds.

As bodyminds there is nothing we can do.

We are just moths flying in the night.

Don't try to figure out what it is.

Just open your heart to it, because it is sharing itself right this moment.

Just open your heart to the Presence. Don't ask: What is it?

Where does it come from?

We'll never know.

If you want to get drunk and somebody pours wine in your glass, don't ask: What kind of wine is this?

Where did it come from?

If you really want to get drunk, you say nothing.

Who cares about the bottle?

If it feels dry to you, it means you haven't dug the well deep enough to find the source. To dig the well means to let go of the concept of a personal

consciousness, of a personal existence. You don't have personal existence.

Get rid of this pet thought.

There is only impersonal existence.

Find in you the place from which love originates, love for anything.

Take anything you love, whatever you love the most—it can be an object, it can be a person, whatever—and once you feel the love, try to find the place from which the love originates.

That's the place.

That's the Black Stone, invisible.

And then forget everything.

Forget how you got there, forget your thoughts.

When we are in love with love we are mysteriously in contact with all of those who are in love with love, be they still in this world or in other worlds.

This connection knows no time boundaries.

We are in touch with Rumi and Buddha and Christ and Moses.

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Francis Lucille

2000

Note: The **Black Stone**

is a Muslim relic, which according to Islamic tradition dates back to the time of Adam and Eve. It is the eastern cornerstone of the Kaaba, the ancient sacred stone building towards which Muslims pray, in the center of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Wikipedia

On Politics - Francis Answers - 176

Hello Francis,

Where should one stand on political issues?

I'm from Toronto Canada, and they're holding the G20 summit here; there is so much talk about it. It's pretty scary at times. Both sides are getting armed. When I watch the news reports you can see the hostility beneath all the propriety. The counter cultural side even uses words like: Press for Truth. They talk about educating police, and awakening them to the truth. But to me, that's not the truth at all, it's their version of the truth. When you watch the mainstream media it's the total opposite; it's the counter cultural side that needs to be educated. Does one have to take a side and make a stand?

Nicholas

Dear Nicholas, This is a very tough question. In our decisions, we should always follow intelligence, love and beauty. There is usually very little of it in political activism on all sides. Don't hesitate to change your mind as required by these three masters and by ever evolving circumstances. Listen to the opposing views and see the positive elements in them. Most people agree on the goal of politics: for all people to live happily, at peace, in health, freedom, and abundance. They only differ on the means and are often ready to kill each other because of their divergent opinions. The means to achieve this goal are in part practical (freedom, health, and abundance) and in part spiritual (happiness and peace). There is a lot of confusion out there, the belief that happiness can be achieved through practical means. On the other hand the spiritual (the three masters) must always guide us in the choice of these practical means. Love, Francis

Is it enlightenment? - Francis Answers - 177

Dear Francis,

many things happened to me since I wrote you last time. I'm not sure where to begin, there are many things that cannot be really named.

I guess I had the experience of enlightenment, of nothingness. It is as if I look at the world, including me, that comes from nothing. I don't know how to call it, nothingness is about the closest to a word I can find. But it is not dark and dead, it is alive.

If I now go through some teachings I used to read and follow, I can see how it might be pointing to this, but it has nothing to do with the experience.

It's like there is now way to express it.

The reason why I write you because I am absolutely confused. I feel as if I am fading away, yet becoming more alive. I'm not sure if I have "attained" enlightenment, because many teachers describe the experience as if full of joy, bliss, peace and I don't know what. I am a bit more calm than I used to be before, but that's about it. It feels sort of I got cheated on :) but I guess that joy and bliss is not what's in it for me.

I have really some concerns about how I can function in this world. This concern doesn't originate from fear, or anything like that, but I don't know how to honestly talk to people. If I talk, it's at most just some nonsense that I don't really believe in, just a game, an act, nothing more. There is little to talk about, because most of talking people make, is just complaints and judgement and all that. It's weird.

I don't know what to do. Every action is equally enjoyable, and equally... unnecessary.

What I am most surprised at, I still have a mind, a chatterbox that is inside me. But there is no belief in anything that it says as being real. It's sort of a tool, like hands. I can use it if I want, or I can put it aside for some time, but not quite absolutely, sometimes it just comes back. It's not a big deal though, like a child playing in my head :)

Yours sincerely

Dear Michael,

A glimpse of our true nature (if that is what your experience was) only rarely leaves us established in peace and happiness. It marks only our entry on the

path. The support of a teacher established in this equanimity is in most cases necessary to facilitate our establishment. Only the peace and the joy that reign towards the end of this sadhana are the sign of the authenticity of the glimpse.

If you had the choice between absolute peace and happiness on the one hand and enlightenment on the other hand, what would be the smart choice?

Love,
Francis

Reply to a comment on Video Answer 66

The point is that the reality of consciousness, that which is perceiving these words right now, which is also that which perceives everything we know, is beyond the shadow of a doubt. Whatever we perceive is less real than or at best as real as the consciousness that perceives it.

If we assume that the perceived world that apparently surrounds us is real, its reality must be the same as the reality of the consciousness with which it interacts in the act of perception, for if the world and consciousness didn't share the same reality, such an interaction would be impossible.

If we agree so far that consciousness and the world share the same reality, the next step is to investigate from our direct experience of consciousness (the only experience of it there is) the nature of its reality, until we get the absolute and experiential conviction that consciousness is its own reality.

How does “being it” fully flower into the experience of Ultimate Reality? - Francis Answers - 179

Francis, To quote Ramesh Balsekar ” Seeing it is none other than being it”. My question: How does “Being It” fully flower into the experience of oneself as the ULTIMATE non-dual Consciousness? It feels so common place “so ordinary” How does it unfold in the body-mind vehicle? How did it happen for you?? i realise that each individual body-mind mechanism is a unique expression of consciousness and unfolds accordingly but is there any general progression?? Is being present in the conscious waking state enough?? How do the higher steps of Patanjali’s Yoga fit in here? (e.g. pratyahara, dharana, dhyana). Currently my non-effort of Beingness is only in my full conscious waking state allowing consciousness to move as it will. thank you, Francis

Dear Rochelle,

It’s all about giving up our belief systems and our resistances. Years of practice cannot make it happen, one single moment of total letting go will.

You can visit my website to have the answer to your question about how it happened in my case:

http://francislucille.com/#awakening_enlightenment

That was not the end of my sadhana, but the very beginning of my new life as a free being. As a result, and with the help of my teacher, Jean Klein, the peace of the background of Presence gradually permeated all realms of my phenomenal experience.

The only practice I would recommend is welcoming, or releasing. The release of belief systems related to ignorance is experienced as deep understanding. The release of resistances and contractions at the feeling level is experienced as liberation from a burden and relaxation.

The prerequisite for this final liberation is an overwhelming desire for the truth. We often overestimate our desire. If it was as strong as we believe it to be, we would instantaneously awaken. Here is an example: often people tell me that they have a strong desire, that I am the teacher they feel the most attracted to, but that unfortunately they have no time to visit, or that they are afraid of flying, or that they have spent their money buying a new house and cannot pay for their travel expenses, etc. We fail to face the fact that our desire is simply not as strong as we believe it to be. To see the facts without distortion is the first step to welcoming.

This desire will grow at its own pace. It is already in us. When our quest for the Truth TRULY becomes our priority, liberation is around the corner.

With Love,
Francis

Follow up on Q.179 - Francis Answers - 180

In my case, I am handicapped by the what I call as broken brain, two stroke like incidences, as I informed you earlier makes it difficult to visit my teacher. As you said earlier, the teacher appears sometimes unannounced. J. K was my first eye opener after the nervous breakdown in 1979; and your logic and pointers hit some marks inside of me, I having a logical scientific mind that also is moved by grace.

All my glimpses happened while contemplating, in satsangs or in chantings. Somehow the Guru aspect that is a part of my upbringing never took a place in me. This often leaves me in deep questioning of the belief system we have. I even from my child hood had this deep understanding, this life as it happened did not affect me deeply, happiness or unhappiness. I have this great deep heartfelt feeling everything is OK . Even then I am frantically seeking. I have met spiritual teachers there is always a but on my surrendering. Any advise with humility

Ben

Dear Ben,

That which matters is the intensity of the desire for truth, not the circumstances that allow for or prevent us from visiting our guru. One should be touched by much more than the logic in the presence of one's guru. The logic and all what is said in satsang is almost irrelevant at some point. The surrender is both to the Presence within and to the Presence in the guru in whom it shines. Sometimes, the perfume of the Presence within seems to be lost. Being in the presence of our human teacher puts us on the path again. That was my experience. The "but" to our surrendering may have two causes: 1. ignorance in us. 2. ignorance in the guru that we somehow detect. We should always surrender to the human guru in the former case, never in the latter.

With Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 181 - On the dark night of the soul

Dear Francis, 3 years ago, I read through a Jean Klein book and was taken by a love with the truth shared. I've been reading your answers and watching the videos. I am grateful for all the beauty of the answers, which ring true and carry me into a selfless space. I am 26. My sincere spiritual journey began 5 years ago, and has carried me through many interests. At this point I feel disillusioned with all of them, except maybe these teachings. The following paragraph may sound very dim and bemoaning but I want to describe where I'm at. In the last two years, I feel like I am losing a zest for everything. I used to be naturally inspired to help people, to change the world, to make beautiful films (being a filmmaker as my profession). As the teachings began to settle in, I've begun to lose interest in these passions. Now, I've never been so disinterested in my life. My efforts at fitting into my relationships with loved ones, friends, and family are mediocre at best. My filmmaking, which was pretty successful, has fallen to a subsistence medium. It isn't that I don't like it but I'm not filled with that passion anymore. Yet I'm not left with anything to replace it! (It sounds so horrible. . .) And sadly, I've felt myself becoming disillusioned with the active pursuit of helping people, which was a lifelong passion. None of these notions of pursuit make full sense anymore. The clear understanding shared by yourself, Jean Klein, and many others is really the only thing that inspires me - the only sure passion I have. I worry that all my zest for the teachings may have thrown my mind out of balance - conditioning my mind in a overly critical and antisocial way. Maybe this will wear off as the truth naturally arises? From the conventional perspective, I am losing all worth to society - and I'm worried because in my own life, I've been driven by my interests - and without any, where will I go. I don't really get inspired by much of what's said in social arenas any more, and I feel somewhat of a mopey character being that, aside from a few other small tangents, I'm largely only interested in these teachings. Haha! I have to laugh at the sound of all this. Nevertheless, it's true. Even in my high moments, my natural interest doesn't reach far. I worry that maybe I will end up sitting around doing nothing all the time, pondering senseless truths. And I must admit, I'm afraid that people around me don't understand me - I feel like I'll lose connection with my girlfriend and anyone who "has a life." I've already lost so many connections. I've read about a "dark night of the soul" in the teachings. . . I'm hoping that you could shed some light on what I may be going through and offer any advice that you feel compelled to. with love and gratitude, Roger

Dear Roger,

The symptoms you are describing are absolutely normal. The name of the illness is Love. There is no known cure, and the ten year survival rate for the ego is low. The good news is that after some time, the symptoms may evolve towards a state of peace, creativity, enthusiasm, harmony and happiness. The assistance of a special kind of specialized physician (loosely called spiritual teacher, although the full technical name is karana guru) is in most cases required for this evolution to take place. In all cases, the disappearance of the physical body at the time of death puts an end to the disease.

With love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 182 - How can we be sure not to fall again into ignorance?

Location: Istanbul, Turkey

Dear Francis, This long question relates to Enlightenment and Knowledge. Few of the last words of my previous teacher, Dan Eltzroth, before he passed away were, "Bedri, you are already enlightened." It is indeed my direct experience that "Awareness that I AM" knows Itself, and when there is living in surrender to That Truth, to that Silent Knowing that I AM, instead of living in belief to thoughts/feelings that sometimes claim the contrary, I would agree with Dan that Enlightenment is my natural non-state because the Knowledge of Who I Am cannot be forgotten and is eternally present. Thus, I am always in Light, is what I truly Know. Given this, I experience puzzlement as to why there is relapse at times back to ignorance and there is thinking, feeling, and acting as if I am a separate and limited Consciousness consisting of a body/mind! It is as if I go back and forth between enlightened and ignorant states of Being. Does this imply the final glimpse that Consciousness is Universal and Divine has not yet happened, or could it be a part of what you call as the post-enlightenment path, where old tendencies are coming to the surface? How would one know the difference? It is not important for me to be enlightened and It is not what I seek, and yet, it is utterly important for me that I do not accept my mind telling me that there is a "lack" in me, that is, I am missing the experience of Enlightenment, which would be in contradiction with the Perfume of Peace I feel and know, certainly pointing at Wholeness within that nothing is truly missing. Taking the Perfume of Peace as my guidance, I have to accept Enlightenment is a Knowledge already present in me to which I surrender to, or that I choose, rather than an experience that I will attain at some distant time in the future. Is this correct? However, there is then the conflict in me as to why I do not recall a radical Awakening experience such as the one you have described on your web-site when you experienced Enlightenment during meditation in your living room with two of your friends. I sometimes wonder if it is the lack of such radical experience to be the reason of my alternating between 2 worlds of Enlightenment and Endarkenment? But to accept that option is to accept a lack in me, which is unacceptable. :) And if Enlightenment is indeed such a radical experience, it would mean that it is not available to everyone at any moment, even though the simple Knowledge of I am Awareness is available to everyone NOW? However, Dan has also spoken of his holy experience that he had at the age of 22 as the following radical event: "it was so holy that I realized everything I experienced until that moment was unreal and that moment was my

first real experience, and with that I realized what God was, and the fear of death and all sense of insecurities has left my mind forever.” And yet still, at the moment of his Awakening, there appeared an inner guide, who told him that this experience would not last. Indeed, his experience of enlightenment seemed to disappear some 20 years later, to which he remarked as “I accepted one illusion, and all other illusions of suffering came with it,” and after that he found himself being a seeker for some time. I, myself, do not recall any such radical experiences but only a simple Knowledge I got up from one of my meditations that revealed Peace of God as the only Truth there is, and is always in me, only and simply, awaiting my Choice, or my Surrender to It. The point I am making is if Enlightenment were an experience, rather than a Knowledge, would it not have a beginning and end, and would it not be subject to forgetfulness as all experience is of memory and of the past. In fact, I must have been totally free in Perfect Knowledge of my Being prior to my identification with this body/mind, and so if I fell asleep to ignorance during childhood, what guarantee is there after my Awakening that I will not relapse back to ignorance yet one more time, or perhaps many more times? To summarize, if Enlightenment is a state, then it can be forgotten, and if it is Knowledge, then it can be ignored as It was ignored before. So then, what quality of Enlightenment would guarantee that It is there to stay permanently? Is Enlightenment perhaps a Knowledge to which we will learn, by new habit, to surrender to, and that would involve training the mind to remember to make that choice over and over again? And yet, if the mind is involved, we also get the uncertainty that comes with it—and thus no apparent guarantee for a final resolution or stabilization. . . . I would be most grateful if you can shine Light to resolve the apparent conflict above? All my Love, Bedri Cetin

Dear Bedri,

Does this imply the final glimpse that Consciousness is Universal and Divine has not yet happened?

No

Could it be a part of what you call as the post-enlightenment path, where old tendencies are coming to the surface?

Yes

How would one know the difference?

If the final glimpse has happened, there is no fear of death. There may be some residual fears, but the pure existential fear has vanished.

I have to accept Enlightenment is a Knowledge already present in me to which I surrender to, or that I choose, rather than an experience

that I will attain at some distant time in the future. Is this correct?

Yes

I sometimes wonder if it is the lack of such radical experience to be the reason of my alternating between 2 worlds of Enlightenment and Endarkenment?

No. In my case there was a similar alternating for some time even after the experience you referred to.

And if Enlightenment is indeed such a radical experience, it would mean that it is not available to everyone at any moment, even though the simple Knowledge of I am Awareness is available to everyone NOW?

It is available to everyone, but not everyone is open to it, wants it.

“it was so holy that I realized everything I experienced until that moment was unreal and that moment was my first real experience, and with that I realized what God was, and the fear of death and all sense of insecurities has left my mind forever.”

That carries the perfume of a final glimpse.

I got up from one of my meditations that revealed Peace of God as the only Truth there is, and is always in me, only and simply, awaiting my Choice, or my Surrender to It

We have to make this choice and surrender once and for all, then death is no more. The revelation of the peace of God is an important step that paves the way to the dissolution of ignorance in that peace but is not necessarily this dissolution.

The point I am making is if Enlightenment were an experience, rather than a Knowledge, would it not have a beginning and end, and would it not be subject to forgetfulness as all experience is of memory and of the past.

This would be true if enlightenment was a phenomenal experience taking place in time, with a beginning and an end in time. This doesn't apply to a noumenal, timeless experience. From the vantage point of the mind, this recognition seems to take place in time, whereas in fact it is a visit paid to the timeless Presence. There is no return from there. The mind cannot understand an experience or knowledge that is beyond its scope. You are right regarding the possibility to forget the phenomenal circumstances that surrounded this apperception. But the apperception of the Reality is always present, beyond the mind, beyond forgetfulness. Your objection is based on the assumption that liberation happens to the mind, is a change of mind. But although the body-mind may and will undergo a change as a result of this glimpse, the glimpse is not of the mind or by the mind, but rather of the Self and by the Self.

In fact, I must have been totally free in Perfect Knowledge of my Being prior to my identification with this body/mind, and so if I fell asleep to ignorance during childhood, what guarantee is there after my Awakening that I will not relapse back to ignorance yet one more time, or perhaps many more times?

Who is asking this question, whose problem is it? The Self is not asking this question, for it is not his problem, he has no worries about it. Therefore it is ignorance who wants to make sure that it will never lose a Knowledge to which, as it turns out, it never had nor ever will have access.

To summarize, if Enlightenment is a state, then it can be forgotten, and if it is Knowledge, then it can be ignored as It was ignored before. So then, what quality of Enlightenment would guarantee that It is there to stay permanently?

We must make a distinction between enlightenment, which is not a state, and the enlightened state, which is the natural, stable state of human existence. Human existence here means consciousness perceiving through a human body-mind. Ignorance is an unnatural, unstable state of human existence. It maintains itself through ceaseless activity. Once stability has been reached, it would require effort, activity, desire to leave the natural state. Since the desired goal has been reached, there is no incentive to leave the state during the rest of this human existence. There is only celebration of Presence.

Is Enlightenment perhaps a Knowledge to which we will learn, by new habit, to surrender to, and that would involve training the mind to remember to make that choice over and over again?

Yes, it may look that way from the vantage point of the body mind. After enlightenment, the body-mind unlearns the old patterns of ignorance by surrendering again and again to the newly rediscovered Presence. That is the post enlightenment sadhana. It eventually leads to the establishment of the jnanin in unshakable peace. The assistance of a well qualified teacher (karana guru) is required in most cases.

Sweet to hear from you.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 183 - Can we see the impersonal via reasonableness?

Location: Indiana

Dear Francis. In direct experience of Void (if this can be called experience, since what was then called consciousness could not go there), great curiosity and great fear were also experienced. Seeking was the result for awhile. Now there is “this” unmoving space which cannot be doubted, yet there remains unnecessary “reaction” to all the constant movement of that which at core is unmoving, ha, and a second later there is the seeing of the reaction that was unnecessary. Everyday life is constant presence of unmoving space, plus unnecessary reaction, along with the yearning/calling toward what is unknown, while it is known there is no time-space that could even be called ‘toward’. There is fluctuation between no identity as this person any more, then the conditioned reactions just continue; the controller persists in fixing-efforts, purely by virtue of conditioning and one supposes also from remaining ignorance-fear. Presence, utter aliveness, and beauty are tangible. Surrender is surely reasonable; reasonableness is evaded somehow. Love is that there is such Presence at all when there could easily not be. The personality somehow persists in resisting with horror the grand impersonality of “this”. It might be helpful to see the impersonal via reasonableness. It is not so difficult to give over to what is reasonable, once that is felt-sensed.. Your expression of presence and directness with words/pointers of that which is reasonable, bring a deep “stop’ here, so it is felt this one might be able to listen if you could talk a bit about the vast impersonal as reasonable. Much love, Patricia . . . and much gratitude. Thank you for listening .Namaste

Dear Patricia,

There are limits to what can be accomplished verbally over the Internet. There was recognition of the Void, but not dissolution in the Void, as evidenced by the great fear that was experienced. The dissolution of irrational feelings and beliefs cannot be entirely the result of reason. Find your teacher, the best one according to your heart and your intelligence, and use him or her as tool of surrender. Overcoming our resistance to having a guru is a first step to total surrender, which is the only requirement.

Love,

Francis

On the various stages of realization - Francis Answers - 184

Name: Jay

Location: Albuquerque

Dear Francis, Thank you so much for readily taking questions, especially ones that can be long, like this. My question involves a dilemma that has bothered me for a long time, almost for the entire time I have been on the spiritual path. It is this: among those persons who are what we call “self-realized,” are there varying levels of self-realization (as in, partially realized compared to fully realized, for example) and do certain lifestyle choices imply certain levels realization? My struggle started when I read about the four levels of enlightenment in Theravada Buddhism—stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner, and arhat. Each is said to lead to progressively greater levels of renunciation and abandonment, until finally, at the final stage, the arhat must leave family life if he or she hasn’t already because at this stage he or she has perfectly eliminated all attachments, thus rendering him or her unable to carry on with the responsibilities of family, household, career, etc. In this tradition, one generally becomes a monk, leaving behind the family, etc, before the arhat stage. Those who are enlightened are taken to be somewhere on this hierarchy of enlightenment. Like this system, I catch my mind reflexively judging and ranking spiritual teachers and even other individuals, placing them in hierarchies of greater and lesser degrees of realization. For example, I think to myself, “Well such-and-such spiritual teacher meditated for twenty years and did not have a wife and children. He is therefore more realized than such-and-such other spiritual teacher who lived with wife and kids and had a job. Only one who has abandoned such things could be fully realized.” This thinking causes me a great deal of anxiety because I worry that I must eventually abandon everything (my family, job, etc) if I am to reach final enlightenment. On one level, I recognize this thinking as egoic because it involves a goal that is to be attained in the future through great effort. Some teachers, such as Ramana Maharshi, do not seem to feel that abandonment of one’s family is necessary for complete self-realization. Others, like the Buddha, seem to have said that such abandonment is necessary to abide in the highest levels of enlightenment (the arhat). This debate is all just mind chatter, I know, but it really gets me sucked in sometimes and causes me a great deal of anxiety and judgement toward myself and others, regarding who is more realized than who, or who is less realized than who. I simply do not feel capable of leaving my family like the Buddha did, and on some level, I feel that it should not be necessary

for complete realization. But I dwell endlessly in this debate of what constitutes “perfect,” “final” realization and what it means in terms of life style for those who have it. What is the truth that can put an end to this? Thank you, God bless.

Dear Jay,

I hope my answer will relieve you from your burden. No, definitely no, monastic life or celibacy are not necessary to reach enlightenment and self realization. In fact the only prerequisite for it is an overwhelming desire for the Truth, which leads to a total surrender of our belief and feeling to be a separate entity. THAT IS ALL. Those who say otherwise don't speak from experience but from some kind of self serving religious dogma. If they need more young monks in the monastery to chop the wood and carry the water, their doctrine will prescribe that to live as a monk is the only path to Nirvana! Fundamentalism, attachment to religious doctrines is in fact a major obstacle to the realization of our Buddha nature.

Now, there is some value, on the relative level, attached to the traditional distinctions among various spiritual stages. The following is the most straightforward classification:

- Stage 1: total ignorance, no interest in the Truth, the existence of the bull is ignored, the mountains are mountains = the belief and the feeling to be a separate consciousness remain firm and unquestioned.
- Stage 2: mitigated ignorance, truth seeker on his way to the path, the traces of the bull have been discovered or its existence has been heard of, the mountains may not be mountains after all= the belief or the feeling to be a separate consciousness begins to be under suspicion, the self inquiry has started. The guidance of an awakened guru already advanced on the path towards stabilization is usually necessary at this stage to facilitate the awakening of the truth seeker.
- Stage 3: enlightenment, satori, final glimpse, mukti, liberation, nirvikalpa samadhi, awakening, entry on the path, truth lover on the path, Jivanmukta, the bull has been seen, the mountains are definitely not mountains, but pure emptiness = the belief and the feeling of being a separate consciousness have been dissolved, and will never return. Old patterns and habits created by ignorance are still running, but their momentum is wearing off. The fruit of liberation is not fully enjoyed at that stage due to the residual samskaras. The guidance of a karana guru (one who is knowingly established in universal consciousness) is usually necessary at this stage to help stabilize the realization of the awakened disciple.
- Stage 4: self realization, sahaja samadhi, sagehood, establishment in our true nature, buddhahood, arhant, buddha, the end of the path, the bull has been tamed and the sage is back to the village, playing with the children, the mountains are mountains again = the old patterns are silent,

equanimity, peace and joy are the continuous experience of the sage.

I hope this helps.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 185 - How to practice self-inquiry/self-abidance?

1. How can I be absolutely sure that I am doing the self-enquiry/self-abidance/awareness watching awareness practice right? For me the best 'practice' to date is a mix of sitting still, being silent, being aware of ordinary awareness, "do not think about being, you are" (Ramana Maharshi). There is not one way and a sure way supposes external validation which by definition is relative. Therefore the 'sure' way is that of Faith, silence, stillness, abidance along the way. Correct?

Here is what I suggest as a self enquiry and abidance practice: find whatever experiential evidence there seems to be, either at the level of thoughts, or of feelings, or of sense perceptions, that confirms that your ordinary consciousness, meaning that which is perceiving these words right now, is limited in any fashion or form, either in space or time. If you carefully examine such evidence, you will soon convince yourself beyond the shadow of a doubt that it doesn't support at all the limited or confined consciousness theory. That will leave you in a state of not knowing who you are. Abide in this state until you notice that you have again begun to think, feel, perceive, or act from the perspective of being a limited consciousness. At this point, resume the same investigation, which should be much shorter this time, and lead to the same state of not knowing. Abide in this state for as long as it lasts. And so on, and so on. At some point, as you stabilize in this state of not knowing, the light of your own presence, the "I-I" of which Ramana Maharshi speaks in his talks, will reveal itself in his limitlessness and immortality, beyond all doubts. The guidance of a teacher is however in most cases necessary to initiate and facilitate the process, failing which you may find yourself giving up after a few first attempts, or shifting to a different type of practice..

2. How can I be absolutely sure that what I have identified as Awareness is that which is referred to by books?

How do you know that you are conscious? Do you know it because you have read it in books, or do you know it from direct experience? And if you know it from direct experience, do you have any doubts about being conscious? This seemingly ordinary consciousness or awareness is precisely THE awareness all the sages talk about. It knows itself by itself, even in ignorance. The only difference is that in ignorance we believe it to be limited, whereas in wisdom we know it for what it truly is.

3. Same answer to previous question, correct? - How can I be absolutely sure that the mind is not tricking me?

Do you seriously believe that consciousness is not real, that it is just a trick of the mind? Is it not your experience that consciousness is always real, never a trick, even when that which is experienced by consciousness is an illusion, as is

the case in the dream state?

With Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 186 - On predestination

Name: John

Location: Lincoln, NM

Dear Francis, Since the beginning of my spiritual quandaries several years ago (I have mainly followed the teachings of Ramana Maharshi), I have noticed some gradual though powerful changes in my life. My question for you involves predestiny, or as Maharshi puts it, prarabdha karma. (My practices have been contemplating the sense of “I” daily, enquiring “who am I,” and choosing to surrender the outcomes of my actions. I do these whenever I can, and am not overly strict about it. I am a young person, newly graduated college, and am embarking on a career in publishing.) My question is, is my body’s every action preordained according to my past karma? Is this so for everyone? I ask this question because it seems that once one engages in spiritual practices, one’s life circumstances change (gradually or suddenly), thus implying that we as the individual “I” have the power to alter our destinies. I know for a fact that I behave differently now than I did before I began my spiritual enquiries, and as a result my life has changed for the better. These changes are subtle yet apparent in my relationships with others, with myself, etc. Had I not chosen to enquire spiritually some time back, I feel my life would have turned out quite differently than it has. Therefore I feel that I bear the responsibility to engage in these practices and to ensure that my life continues improving. But I am confused, because if what Maharshi and others have said is true—that everything is predetermined—then “I” never chose any of these practices. Indeed, I was already predestined to choose them. And I don’t need to do anything now, because everything will happen as it must and “I” have no say in it. So what then is the role of my sense of free-will, and of my ability to put effort into what I choose? (I intellectually understand that the sense of “I” is an illusion and that therefore I “have” no life to fix or improve, for there is only life, and no individual entities. But concepts of this stuff do not assuage my doubts, quandaries, fears, etc.) If this is simply a matter that results from too much thinking and will resolve itself with further spiritual practice, then I need no substantive answer. I find myself dwelling on this alot. With deep gratitude, John

Dear John,

It is true that you as a separate individual never choose anything for the simple reason that you as a separate individual don’t exist. Of course you exist, and you choose, and you have freedom, but not as the separate entity you believe to be and have never been. Therefore it is you, the real you who chose those practices, the same you who had chosen ignorance, the same you who feels he has free will, the same you who is the consciousness aware of my words in this

very moment.

It is also true that Ramana, Jean Klein and other sages have said that everything is predetermined, but the same sages have also said that time is an illusion. The illusory nature of time is incompatible with predestination envisioned as some kind of a blue print for the sequence of events of a human life, as a plan both designed by God in His eternal abode and inflexibly actualized by Him in time, because such a predestination would be as illusory as the timeline in which it unfolds.

Therefore, either these sages were inconsistent, or they meant that predestination is an illusion, or they meant some different kind of predestination, a timeless form of predestination in which everything is re-created in, by, and out of the timeless Presence from eternal moment to eternal moment. In their experience there is no time, each moment, and its creation, is a moment of eternity, eternally new, eternally free. There is no real succession of moments, they co-exist in timeless potentiality. The succession of moments is an illusion created by memory. Karma is linear or mediated causation, conditioned by time: event A causes event B, which in turn causes event C, and so on. Linear causation is as illusory as the time on which it depends. There is only non-linear immediate causation: one single Presence, itself a non-event, which is the Ultimate Reality of all things and beings and the cause of itself, is the single cause of all events/moments: Presence causes Presence, Presence causes event A, Presence causes event B, Presence causes event C, etc

This Presence is not without similarities with the vacuum of modern physical theories out of which and as a quantum fluctuation of which the Big Bang event arises, creating our universe, space, time, mass/energy, momentum, entropy, etc. The fundamental difference however is that the vacuum of the physicist is a concept used in a mathematical model of reality, whereas the Presence of the sage is the direct experience of his consciousness. There is one single moment, the eternal moment.

Just as the succession of moments is an illusion created by memory, the multiplicity of minds, and therefore of individualities, is an illusion created by selective memory. There is one single mind, the universal mind.

The universal mind and the eternal moment are nothing else than Presence

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 187 - Is there evidence of a limited consciousness?

Name: Peter

Location: Santa Ana California

Comments:

Dear Francis, Whenever you ask us to examine being/consciousness, you say that there is no evidence for it to be limited, and that, in truth, it is unlimited. This is where I seem to fall off the cart! I am still convinced that consciousness is limited to the body-mind. The consciousness that is typing this now does indeed seem to be very limited. I can't read minds, I can't see x-rays, I don't know what is happening to my relatives unless I use body-mind communication. And I know that to imagine myself to be unlimited or immortal is just mental fantasy. So what do you exactly mean you say consciousness is unlimited? As far as I know, being what I know myself to be, ends when the body ends. I know of no consciousness that isn't associated with the body-mind, yet I still feel there is some greater truth that eludes me. Even after decades of intensive study of advaita, I still can't be sure of what I really am. Help! Peter

Dear Peter,

In order to learn or know anything about consciousness, we need to perceive or experience consciousness. We cannot know anything about something we don't perceive at all. There is a distinction to be made between the experience through which we perceive an object, for example a chair, and the experience through which we directly experience consciousness, for example the experience that leads us to answer the question "are you conscious?" with a non-equivocal "yes". The former (experiment 1) tells us everything we may know about the chair, and nothing about consciousness, except perhaps that it exists. The latter (experiment 2) tells us nothing about the chair, but tells us everything we may know about consciousness. Therefore only a type 2 experiment can tell us anything about consciousness, in particular whether it is limited or not. Our mistake is to believe that type 1 experiments can give us some knowledge about consciousness that type 2 experiments couldn't provide. This is a fallacy.

The arguments you use, "I can't read minds, I can't see x-rays, I don't know what is happening to my relatives unless I use body-mind communication" refer to objective phenomena that appear in your consciousness, to type 1 experiments. They are fallacious. **Any object that appears in consciousness cannot tell us anything about the subject, consciousness, in which it appears.**

By the way, if you are really interested in those matters, why not drive to Temecula on a Saturday or Sunday and ask all the questions and follow ups you may have. I wouldn't have to one-finger-type those answers, and you may find

out that the answer is not really in that which is said, but in the Presence in which it appears.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 188 - What is the next step to being your student?

Name: josephine

Location: Holland

Dear Francis, When i listened to your video's i recognized the same deep silence beneath your words, what you call Presence, also when i heard you play the flute so purely on a video i felt a deep resonance and recognition. A week or so ago, mind was quiet and with inquiry a vortex of love, beauty and truth started to pull me in, unfortunately mind became active because it knew this was going to mean its death. So attention was pulled back into the body/mind. Strange to me was, the vortex seem to contain your essence somehow. As if self was using your form to bring it self home. My question is the following, what is the next step to being your student? I have limited funds to travel but a deep longing for guidance. Being in Satsang with you and being in your Presence is also something i long for but is it also necessary and how do we/you do it? In our time it is almost impossible to spend years in close contact with a teacher the way it used to be. Thank you for your answer.

Dear Josephine,

Being with the guru in your heart is more important than being in the presence of a teacher. However, if your heart tells you to be with a teacher, do your best and let the universe do the rest. It is not more difficult in our days than it used to be in 10th century China. The obstacles (money, time, distance, etc) are only Maya. When the desire is strong, they evaporate. Regarding he experience you described, it was begging you to let go, to let yourself be pulled in. You will be invited again, perhaps in a different context. In fact, the invitation to let go is always present in some form. If we RSVP to it, we will be pulled in again. The ball is always in our court.

With Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 190 - Inquiry and “Primary I”

Name: Patricia

Location: Indiana

Inquiry and “Primary I” – Dear Francis, reading a posted question about inquiry and your answer, it is just too difficult not to ask this question regarding my own seeing, or lack of. Primary I has just always seemed to have simply appeared from nowhere, from void, or whatever it is most proper to call this. Void is this which is Source but without any felt/seen/detected qualities “at all” , not even consciousness, or truth, or love (which continues to pull out emotions object or energies of deep angst. Everything else is now sensed as being rooted in/from void. So much for the old “truth quest”! Primary I is experienced as verrrry dry, while ever present. Primary I also seems to be another object somehow. Is this so? Now recently, there is the experience of unmoving space (for wont of other words), and this does not seem to be questionable at all. It is not difficult here to look as or from this unmoving space, be it in the midst of daily life, or sleeping night. It is not known what I truly is other than this unmoving space now that is also never absent. So ok, abidance is simple enough and most likely, it would be impossible not to consciously abide, now. Is this unmoving space some variation of the primary I, or is it beyond/before the primary I? And that which is vaster than the words vast or immense, that which is felt-sensed Presence, you have just stated in a recent reply is the universal mind and the eternal moment. Whew, that was an abrupt “stop” here. You do that to this one all the time, even just via videos and this wonderful space of posted questions and your replies. Just a stop. . . and the unmoving space is unmovingly alert. This unmoving space does move while it never moves, or that’s how it seems, but anyway, about this unmoving space – I don’t ‘need’ to know, but I need to know, Francis. Oh gee whiz, ignorance is very tiring and confusion just keeps the mind going. If there is any reply, I thank you for it! If it were possible to arrive in Temecula, I’d already be there by now. The ‘stopping-ness” experience is like a calling, you see. Five years of such radical falling apart of career and well ,everything other than such calling, is most assuredly not any individual’s choice. Meanwhile there is knowingness that this ‘stop’ experience is not imaginary; it is very concrete, and still and thick and deep .. Much love, Confused Patricia

Dear Patricia,

Your mind may be confused about this “stopping” experience, for it has no access to it, but your heart certainly isn’t. As long as the mind tries to abide in Primary I, it creates a limited image of it, an object in the flow of time. The

liveliness, the perfume of the “I” experience eludes us, until “stopping” happens. Then, seemingly gradually, the perfume of the glimpse begins to permeate our ordinary experience, in the presence of thoughts, feelings and external sense perceptions. Glimpses occur repeatedly and more and more frequently. Our getting established in the peace and happiness of our true nature is only a matter of patience and letting it happen (in most cases under the guidance of our guru).

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 191 - Should one give up all desire except the desire for liberation and strive for it?

Location: NM

Dear Francis, I have a question for you about desire. Please forgive the length. I notice that whenever I feel fear, it is the result of the possibility that some desire I have will not be fulfilled, be it a small desire for some sort of pleasure, or a large or instinctual desire, such as my body's desire to avoid pain or death. Through following various teachings, I have had several powerful experiences of sensing that the physical body to which "my" eyes belong is not truly me. This has led to feelings of peace in which I find that my desires do not seem as strong. After these experiences I notice that some desires are even fulfilled effortlessly. Yet I eventually always sense numerous desires returning, and with them pleasure and pain and fear—the byproducts of desire. I feel so much confusion over desire and what to do with it, and I hear so many seemingly contradictory messages in various teachings. I have thought that one solution would be to strive to eliminate all desire through intensive meditation and renunciation, yet such an effort would ironically stem from more desire, specifically the desire to eliminate desire. This seems to be an inherent contradiction (desiring not to desire), and I sense that striving to eliminate one's desires would cause them to fight back with equal strength, though I could be wrong, as so many Buddhist monks seems to suggest. I have also read statements by Ramana Maharshi (a sage with whom I feel a deep connection) that the jnani's desires become "pure," thus implying that the jnani still has desires, but that they somehow do not cause him or others suffering. At times I have felt that I have discovered such "pure" desire, only to realize that I had begun to suffer because of the desire. I have also read statements specifically made by teachers aligned with advaita who say things like, "there is no doer," "all is the will of God," and "all sense of personal choice and free will are illusions." With the exception of a few great teachers, many of these teachers get accused of unethical, harmful behavior, and often point to such teachings to defend themselves. I do not know whom I can trust! I have also read teachings that seek to allow one to "manifest" or "attract" all that one desires. But through trying these teachings, I have found that they offer no peace, for no matter how many self-centered desires one brings into reality, one always seems to want more and to fear losing what one gained. So my question is, what am I to do with desire? I have tried to run from it, and to fulfill it, and neither seems to offer the highest. I am afraid to wholeheartedly pursue my dreams because

I feel that I may simply be setting myself up for endless cycles of pleasure and pain (what so many sages say are the inexorable results of desire). One's dream's are, after all, desires. Yet dreams entail some true happiness, and to sit idly and deny them seems to produce as much suffering as pursuing them. Should one give up all desire except the desire for liberation and strive for it? What does such a decision look like in real life? With deep gratitude, Jay

Dear Jay,

As separate individuals, we don't have the freedom to give up our desires. There is nothing we can do when a desire arises, since we don't have control over our thoughts. If we did, it would be easy, we could choose for instance to have no desires, or to have only those that we can fulfill easily. All the techniques aiming at such a control require an effort upon the cessation of which the desires come back with a vengeance. You ask: "Should one give up all desire except the desire for liberation and strive for it?" One should give up the desire to control our desires, which should be easy due to the understanding that such a control is an illusion. The good news is that such a control is not necessary. Follow instead your interest, your enthusiasm. At some point it will naturally focus on the search for your Reality. Nurture your love for the Truth, whenever it invites you. As your energies get spontaneously transferred from the world to the Self, the causeless joy that emanates from your Presence will become more and more overwhelming. The desires for objects will become pale in comparison, just as the rising sun obliterates the weaker light of the stars and causes their seeming disappearance. To put it in a nutshell: always follow your main desire, the one which takes you to the Truth. Regarding the lesser desires, fulfill them if you can, and if they are harmless to yourself and to others.

With Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 192 - What is a glimpse of Truth?

Name: Theresa

Location: Toronto, Canada

Dear Francis, I have been a keen follower of your teachings for the last several months and I would like to express my gratitude to you because your teachings have cleared up many of my misunderstandings about practice and enlightenment. In your answer to the question "Is there evidence of a limited consciousness?", you said there are two types of experiments: the experience through which we perceive an object (type 1) and the experience through which we directly experience consciousness (type 2). If I understand your teachings correctly, we know that we are conscious (knowing) and we know that consciousness exists (being). That is, being and knowing always co-exist. However we cannot point to consciousness because it is not an object (i.e. consciousness cannot be objectified). Further, we know that consciousness is unlimited because no matter what we experience, it is there. We cannot separate consciousness from experiencing. From our own direct experience, we know that consciousness has no boundary and we know that nothing can exist independent of consciousness. In fact, our own experiences tell us that there is no subject-object, there is only experiencing (which is consciousness). We are fooled by thoughts because the mind misappropriates the experience and claims that there is an "I", an entity, that experiences an object. We believe that consciousness is limited to this body-mind because we identify this body-mind as "I" while everything else is "non-I" when such division is purely conceptual and does not exist. Is this what you regard as type 2 experiment? If it is not, could you please explain what a type 2 experiment is? Is the direct experience of deep sleep a type 2 experiment? Much appreciated. Theresa.

Dear Theresa,

You are right in your conclusions up until you say "Further, we know that consciousness is unlimited because no matter what we experience, it is there." Well, it is always there in our experience, but it could still be limited to our individual body-mind. Then you say "We cannot separate consciousness from experiencing," which is true. Then "From our own direct experience, we know that consciousness has no boundary and we know that nothing can exist independent of consciousness." Well, it depends on the kind of experience you are referring to. Our ordinary experience cannot give us the knowledge that consciousness is unlimited. Only enlightenment, satori, nirvikalpa samadhi, in other words a total glimpse of our true reality can reveal this knowledge.

A type 2 experience (I don't like much this terminology I created for a specific

answer) would be a partial or total glimpse of Awareness (or Intelligence, or Love, or Beauty). A partial glimpse reveals an element of Truth, whereas a total glimpse reveals Truth itself. If we use the traditional Advaitic analogy of the rope and the snake, a partial glimpse would reveal something true about the rope, for instance its length, or its color, or the fact that it is not a cobra, without however revealing its true nature. A total glimpse reveals that the object initially thought to be a snake was in fact a rope.

The experience of deep sleep is not a type 2 experience. More over, although enlightenment is a type 2 experience, most type 2 experiences are not enlightenment, which is the direct recognition that awareness is the eternal reality of all minds and of the world. A false enlightenment would be the misunderstanding that our mind is the reality of the world, whereas in fact it is only the apparent reality of our perception of the world. This mistake is quite common in Western Advaita.

With love,
Francis

Francis Answers - 193 - Should I mind my own business or keep trying changing the views of narrow minded people?

Location: VIRGINIA, USA

I daily deal with people full of hate for anyone that is not the same color or religion as them. Most of these people are set in their ways and have a do not bother me with the facts attitude, my mind is made up. I have tried to get some people to look past their narrow view of the world but with little success. As an individual, should I mind my own business or keep trying?

Dear Tom,

The short answer is: mind your own business. The truth cannot be imposed upon those who are not open to it. Don't answer questions that are not put to you. You don't have to save the world. The true seeing is Robert Adam's seeing: all is well and unfolding as it should. Their desire to stick to their narrow view originates from their freedom which is also our freedom. We have to respect it, although we may silently and respectfully disagree with their view. Your silence and your deeds will be more intriguing and challenging to them than your words. They can close their ears to your words, but they cannot close their eyes to your actions or their hearts to your benevolent presence. At some point they will come to you. What you do then, or don't do, or say that comes from your Presence will have the power to open their eyes, a little bit at least.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 195 - I cannot find a real I

Name: Rogelio

Location: Spain

Hello, Mr. Lucille, Thank you for your time. I feel I'm seriously stuck in a loop, so any comment would be greatly appreciated. My current experience is not one of finding a real "I", but one of complete disappearance of a "subject". Scary situation. I'll elaborate: When I look at any "object", let's say a tree, I have the certainty that there's nobody looking at it from "here". No subject at all. The tree is arising in consciousness and it does it on its own accord, so to speak. Of course, there are lots of thoughts related to my this body/mind, but if a thought appears claiming the ownership of the perception, it is obvious that the thought is just another perception. There's this magical display arising in Consciousness, a whole world of short-lived subjects and objects, but it feels like I'm watching a movie. I don't feel there's a crystallized "I" inside of it as an actor, nor outside as an observer. So right now, all there is is Consciousness appearing to "nobody". Quite frightening, to be honest, since there's nothing to lean on. Then, when I step back and look at the source of all this arisings, I obviously find that all of them only appear in the waking state, so I've been following the old Ramana/Nisargadatta kind of practice, you know, abiding in the "I Am feeling", (and by that I don't mean watching the "contents" of Consciousness, but the pure feeling of existence or beingness that arises with the waking state and disappears during deep sleep). The results are even more strange: I feel that this waking state sensation, the "I Am" feeling, is like a floating ghost too. I mean, I don't feel that I am that sense of beingness at all. This sense of beingness is clearly a perception too! One that appears in the waking state and disappears in deep sleep. . . But (and this is the main problem) I cannot say I perceive this sense of beingness, because in my present understanding, even this sense of beingness is arising in front of nobody, since I cannot find an ultimate observer to this sense of existence. In other words, when I pay attention to the I Am, I know what I am NOT, but I don't know exactly what I really am. I could say that I am that which is aware of the "I Am feeling" and of its disappearance in deep sleep, but those are just words, they don't clearly explain what I really am, (if I really am something. . .) I don't want to repeat like a parrot that I Am Turiya, Awareness, the Ayn, or whatever term I may use. That'd be second-hand knowledge and I'm done with books and other people's relates. Again, I'd be very grateful if you could shed some light on this questions.

Dear Rogelio,

Let me first congratulate you on the discoveries you have made so far. They show that you are earnest and smart in your quest.

Now, obviously, there is consciousness being aware of the I-thought, but also of the I-feeling and everything else. And this consciousness is obviously you, since you are the one who is aware of those, it is not somebody else who is having these perceptions. The fact that you cannot locate or perceive this I AS AN OBJECT, as frightening or disappointing as it may be, doesn't mean you cannot perceive it AT ALL. You have to get used to it, awareness has no shape, no contour, no components, and cannot be assigned a position in space or time, which doesn't imply it doesn't exist. . . or rather yes, it doesn't exist, IT IS, which is much better, for that which exists can go in and out of existence, whereas that which IS never ceases to be.

That which you can derive from your investigation so far is that there is no evidence and there cannot be any evidence that consciousness is limited in any way, or conditioned by space or time. That opens up the possibility that it isn't. For this possibility to become your experience, a total surrender of everything you know or want or hold on to will be required. This experience is the revelation of eternity, love, splendor which puts an end to the misery of becoming.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 196 - How to practice self-inquiry.

Location: Maryland

Hello: I am not sure how to practice Atma Vichara or Self Enquiry. Do I keep asking myself the question "Who Am I" or "What am I" everytime I lose the I-I conciousness?

Do that every time you believe to have strong evidence that you are a limited consciousness, or a body-mind, simply by looking at the evidence you have, be it on the conceptual level or on the feeling level.

Do I practice this technique in meditation in the morning and the evening or do I try to practice all the time?

When I practice a little while, I feel peace, but this only lasts a short time. Do I practice the "What Am I" like a mantra or just when I experience more of body comciousness or Ego conciousness?

Practice only when you feel dissatisfaction, a sense of lack or of misery. If you are at peace, don't try to fix it.

Does this practice help attain extinction of the ego?

Yes. It is the first step. It has to be continued until you truly think and feel that you don't know that consciousness is limited to or by your mind-body.

I am afraid not to practice spiritual discipline because the discipline usually makes me want to experience conciousness at a more intense level. I know Ramakrishna said a devotee's desire to experience God or truth should be as intense as a man who has his head held underwater desiring to breathe air. Doesnt the desire to experience truth grow with the practice of spiritual discipline?

Yes, it does, but only in so far as the practice leads to glimpses of our Reality. These glimpses are the real "desire boosters". Don't think of your inquiry as a practice such as japa, but as an investigation. You don't need to repeat "what am I?", "what am I?", "what am I?" like a parrot, but rather to be genuinely interested in finding out your real self, just as a detective is using all means at his disposal to find a criminal, which he does without waisting his time constantly repeating "who did it?"

I feel very glad to have found your guidance and like you very much.
Walter Newell

Nice. Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 197 - What has to happen for the knowing-presence that I am to recognize itself as everything?

Name: Marco

Location: Italy

Dear Francis, after some years of seeking my true nature, at the beginning of september I had a very clear glimpse of what I am. Suddenly it was clear that I'm awareness, I am knowing-presence. Before this realization I was convinced of being the knowing-presence, but I was still waiting for some kind of confirmation. I was waiting to "perceive" this knowing-presence that I am to be sure of being that!! Suddenly it was clear what now sounds really obvious: I cannot perceive the knowing-presence that I am, because I AM THAT. Everything I can perceive cannot be the knowing-presence that I am. So now the feeling is that I'm the presence in which everything is present. I'm the no-thing in which every-thing appears. The search for my true nature has dramatically reduced, because now it is clear that I'm that in which the search itself is happening, but there is still the feeling that something is missing. There is still a sense of separation between what I am (knowing-presence) and what is perceived by what I am. I'm no-thing perceiving every-thing, but there is not the feeling of being every-thing. I'd really appreciate your point of view on this situation. What has to happen for the knowing-presence that I am to recognize itself as everything? Thank you very much!! Marco.

Dear Marco,

You have taken an important first step discovering that you cannot perceive as an object the presence which you are. However, this doesn't mean you cannot know it or experience it at all. In fact, you already have some experience of it since you "know" somehow that you are consciousness.

The first next step is to see clearly that since everything you know and will ever know appears in this presence, and only in this presence, there is not and there won't ever be any evidence, on any level, that this presence is limited in any shape or form. When this understanding is complete (which may take some time for it to affect all your belief systems and permeate all the cells of your body), you will find yourself in a state of total unknowing about what you are, not knowing that you are a human being or a universal being, a finite or an infinite awareness, an ignorant or a sage.

You will be completely open, on all levels, to all possibilities, innocent and empty of all knowledge. You will be Meister Eckhart's "poor man", knowing nothing, owning nothing, wanting nothing.

In one instant, a single flash of eternity, your true love will recognize itself, in this innocence, in this emptiness, in this Presence.

This will be the end of your sense of lack, of your misery, and you will discover that your misery was only the sweet figure of Grace showing you the path to the Kingdom.

Love,
Francis

Francis Answers - 198 - What is God to the non-dualist?

What is God to the non-dualist?

Dear Ryan,

It depends on what you mean by “non-dualist”.

If you are referring to an individual, one who sees himself as a “non-dualist”, as different from one who is a “dualist” for instance, I have no clue about what God is to that one, we would have to ask her or him.

If your question to me is “What is God?”, I would say:

God is the reality of all things and all beings, it is the awareness which is truly perceiving and understanding these words right now, it is free from time and space, and it is time and space and everything in it.

We know it first as the Intelligence in our understandings, the Love in our relations, the Beauty in our contemplations, and the Happiness in our experience.

Then it reveals itself as the eternal reality of our human experience, as the awareness in which and to which it appears. At that moment, our mind-body becomes knowingly, willingly and happily the servant of this Presence.

Later we begin to recognize this Presence in and beyond everything we come to see, hear, taste, touch, smell, feel or think.

We were lost, and now we are found.

And we are the Finder and the Found.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 199 - On free will

Location: Spain

I saw your fascinating interview on conscious TV. My question is on free will. I agree that we can't control our thoughts, for example only thinking beautiful thoughts, and I understand how that points to us having no free will. My question is this: If you ask me to think of a most beautiful moment in my life, or to think of a beach, I can do it. I don't know how long I can sustain this "beach imagery" in my mind, as the longer I try to do so the more stress will come up as my mind will naturally drift elsewhere. So would you say we have "partial free will"? It seems as though we have a muscle that can force the thoughts to go somewhere, if only for a limited period of time. Thank you very much for shedding light. Sincerely, Philip

Dear Philip,

In the example you chose, the beach imagery was not originated by your free will, but by somebody else asking you to think of it, which triggered the automatic evocation of an image in your mind. The fact that you cannot sustain the image shows that you are not in control of your thoughts, and therefore not in control of your decisions, which are thoughts.

Now, to fully answer your question, when you try to force the image of the beach to stay, this attempt originates from a decision you made: "let's keep this image in mind!". This decision itself is another thought, distinct from the image. Did you choose this deciding thought, or did it come to you unexpected, like the rain or a cloud in the sky?

The more we investigate this, the more convinced we become that **as a separate individual**, we have no free will, meaning we are not the master of our will. Our will, are decisions, like any of our thoughts, are cosmic events. It is the entire Reality that conspires and converges to locally create this thought, this decision, seemingly in this specific body-mind, just as it conspires and converges to locally and from moment to moment create, sustain and destroy this very same body mind.

Love,

francis

Francis Answers - 200 - What is the best practice?

Location: Austin

Dear Francis, Are meditation disciplines like focusing on one's breath for sustained periods useful for self-realization? I ask because I have had several sustained periods of the Absolute state, or rather, non-state. These came about through my sadhana of focusing on the space between thoughts whenever I can in my daily life. I know that this was the Absolute state because there was no entity to analyze it or to assert it as being the "final" state. It just was, undivided. But I now find my mind constantly wandering. I still have some sense being the witness consciousness, rather than any object within it, yet there has returned a sense of limitation an individuality, and thus worries and fears. One thing I have never done as sadhana is a highly regular, daily meditation practice, such as samatha or zazen. I have read sages such as Ramana Maharshi and Krishna Menon suggest that such practices can be useful in stabilizing the mind and preparing it for constant abidance in the Self, but that such practices must eventually be given up. I have never really started such practices. Aside from the witnessing of thoughts I do in my daily life (which I am very devoted to and serious about) and reading and contemplating the words of sages, I have no other practices. I don't want to become locked in a place of subtle, though still present duality, through formalized meditation—in other words, adding to my ignorance through effort. But at the same time, these sages (especially Ramana) seem to suggest that such practices improved the mind so that it could remain in the Absolute state for longer and longer periods of time. Is such a practice necessary to aid in the stabilization of the Absolute? Would such a practice help me to make the free state, the state beyond my mind and effort, permanent?

Dear Thomas,

It is a good start to read sages such as Ramana Maharshi, Jean Klein and Krishna Menon, and to try to understand what they said and to follow the practices they suggested.

The problem is that they were not writers, but teachers, who were very adamant about the fact that the highest form of teaching or transmission was through the presence of the guru. They never wrote books for reading only. Whatever they wrote was to be used by their disciples **who already knew them** as a reminder of the light they had received through their presence. The other function of these writings was to act as magnets to attract to them those who were ready to become their disciples. They were never meant to be the core of the teachings, which is essentially about surrender, a surrender of which the living guru is the instrument.

Therefore the practice or method which is good for you is not the one you choose, but the one your guru suggests for you.

I am fully aware that these words may be hard to accept, for they are not neo-advaitically correct. However, if you think about it, they are hard to accept only for ignorance, the dissolution of which is precisely the aim of those practices.

It would be a great mistake to believe that liberation can be achieved through books or internet connections alone. An intellectual approach may be or even has to be part of the liberation process, and this part can be communicated through verbal interaction, or through non interactive means such as books or videos (which is more difficult).

But this part is a tiny fraction of the transmission. The most important part cannot be conveyed through words.

The practice I would suggest to you is to keep doing whatever you are doing, seeking the Truth effortlessly, until it becomes clear to you that you need to find your guru; then visit with teachers until you find one you truly resonate with. Follow his or her advice as coming from the Absolute, and do so for as long as the mutual trust remains and increases. Don't hesitate to change gurus if this trust evaporates. Your allegiance is to Truth and to Truth alone. At some point, your karana guru will take you home.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 201 - If consciousness is universal, how is it that my emotions and thoughts are personal to me, and yours to you?

Name: Gordon

Location: Wales

Dear Francis, You write in Answer 164, 'There is no individual, separate consciousness, to whom sitting or anger could occur. Whatever is perceived, anger or anything else, is always really perceived by the only real consciousness there is, which is universal and divine.' I know this is the crux of your teaching (and of all non-dual traditions), and, after decades of contemplating it, through thinking and meditation, I am still not sure what it means. I have read your books and watched you talk online, and your teaching speaks to me as no other. I have no doubts whatsoever that you are "the real deal" and I know you welcome intelligent questioning and do not shy away from logical argument (as many other "teachers" do), so I do hope you can help me. My problem is in getting past the obvious fact that all human perceptions, from anger to enlightenment and self-realization, occur to individual, separate body-minds. Many people might listen to the same music together, for example, yet their perceptions are unique to themselves, however similar. So: since perceptions are individual, in what sense can consciousness be one and universal? And if consciousness is literally one and universal, how do you account for perceptions being individual? Does "one and universal" simply mean that the consciousness which knows anger or enlightenment in each individual case is identical, in the kind of way that, say, the chemical elements that make up one body are identical (qualitatively) to those that make up all others, whilst being individual (quantitatively) to each and every body? If so, problem resolved for me. If, however, you intend "one and universal" to be taken literally, consciousness being like one big mirror rather than many individual mirrors, as your answer above would seem to indicate, then how is it that my emotions and thoughts are personal to me, and yours to you? One universal mirror would surely reflect all of our mental events for all of us to witness, and there would be no private, individual experiences as such. Secondly, the fact that this isn't the case, and our thoughts and emotions are personal to each one of us (even to the Self-realized who has seen through the illusion of the person), would seem to suggest that in talking of consciousness as one and universal, you are going beyond the directly known/experienced into the realm of belief/theology. However universal the sage's experience of consciousness might feel to him, in presenting it as fact, would he not really be merely extrapolating? (The "divine" epithet raises no problem for

me since it is purely an evaluative rather than a factually descriptive term.) Love, Gordon.

Dear Gordon,

First I apologize for the delay (due to an overload) in answering your question. I also greatly appreciate the clarity with which you formulated it.

Yes, I intend “one and universal” to be taken literally.

That being said, your first objection is “how is it that my emotions and thoughts are personal to me, and yours to you?” Well, it depends on what “you” and “me” mean. If you mean two different, separate perceivers (which I believe you do), you are making the (not so) implicit assumption that that which perceives is limited and separate, which is what your argument allegedly proves. This is a fallacy, since you use your conclusion (there are two different perceiving entities) as your point of departure.

Your second objection is “One universal mirror would surely reflect all of our mental events for all of us to witness, and there would be no private, individual experiences as such.” You are absolutely right on this point. There are no private, individual experiences as such. Privacy is an illusion, consciousness is not private, but shared by all. Now, I cannot prove that to be true based on phenomenal experience, but I can prove to you that your own experience is not at odds with this possibility, contrarily to what your objection seems to imply. The fallacy of your argument resides in the fact that whatever is phenomenally observed in and by awareness cannot give us any information on the observing awareness, just as a landscape being perceived in consciousness doesn’t tell us anything about the consciousness perceiving it (other than that it exists), for instance whether this consciousness is mortal or not. The limitation of your mind is phenomenally observed. This doesn’t imply that the observing consciousness is limited.

I have to reiterate here that I don’t pretend to logically prove that consciousness is universal rather than limited, but to show that there is no valid evidence that it is not, which paves the way to the ulterior, non-phenomenal revelation that it is.

Warmest regards,

Francis

Francis Answers - 202 - If there is only Oneness, and separateness is illusory, how can the illusion of separation exist within the Oneness?

Location: South Korea

Question 1: Dear Francis, I lead a Nonduality discussion group. Recently there was a discussion on the illusory dualistic world, and I came upon a question I've been turning over in my head ever since: If there is only Oneness, and separateness is illusory, how can the illusion of separation exist within the Oneness?

Dear Zach,

The illusion of separation exists within the Oneness just as it exists within the night dream. Upon waking up, it becomes obvious that all the apparently separate entities of the dream were nothing else than one single consciousness.

Question 2: I'm wondering if you would ascribe certain activities as being harmful to self-realization? Do certain activities create an investment of ego which thereby strengthen the illusion of separateness? For example: weight training and other forms of aggressive exercise or sport, business practices that depend in large part on deception, or simply listening to and watching certain violent forms of entertainment.

Jean Klein used to say that we should live in beauty: surround ourselves with beautiful friends, listen to beautiful music, read intelligent and inspired books, visit museums, be interested in architecture, etc. There is a way to practice sports which is in line with Jean's suggestion. It is not necessarily about which sport we practice, but rather how we do it, and why. What matters is our deepest intention. If we are in love with Truth, Love, and Beauty, there are things we won't eat, movies we won't watch, deals we won't try to make. But violence by itself is not the problem, ignorance is the problem. Shouldn't we watch Shakespeare's plays because they are violent?

Question 3: On Finding a Teacher. I live in South Korea, and while I don't know of any Advaita Vedanta teachers here, I have an opportunity to do some extensive traveling in this part of the world fairly soon. My attempts at locating such a spiritual teacher, while thus far limited to cyberspace, have been fruitless. What would be your recommendation as to the best way of finding a spiritual teacher? Kind Regards, Zach

When you are ready, the teacher appears. In my case, I changed jobs and places to have the freedom and the possibility to spend time with my teacher. I never regretted it. If there is an ardent desire for a teacher, the universe will make possible that which seemed impossible, provided we do our part. What is

important is to find a teacher you resonate deeply with, not a teacher near you.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 203 - Is a guru necessary?

Name: Bhasha

Location: Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Dear Francis, I really ask myself this question: Don't you perpetuate of looking for realisation, enlightenment, truth, love - in the future, when you suggest that a guru is needed to realize one Self? Is it not only possible right here right now? I love your expression of truth and thought I needed to meet you, but is that so? Loving you
Bhasha

Dear Basha,

Liberation is possible right here, right now. Our true nature is not hidden, it is the infinite Presence to which these words are appearing in this very moment. You are That.

The human guru is plan Nr 2, just in case plan Nr 1 didn't work, which is often the case. Isn't it nice to have a second chance?

With Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 204 - I would like to receive a new name from my guru.?

Location: italy

Dear Francis, in my heart I know that any name is but a concept. So my first name, Viola, is also a concept that my parents passed on to me out of their mind. I know my first name is just a name for my social identity, which I didn't even choose myself, so it is not even my concept! Yet, paradoxically, I would like to receive a new name from my guru, just to remind me and others of my true nature my impersonal nature Absolute Consciousness. Of course this is an ego's desire but nevertheless I feel it could help to be who I truly am and to communicate with others on the personality level about our common true impersonal Self. What is your feeling about this desire?
Love and Peace from the Heart, Viola

Dear Viola,

I find beautiful the Indian tradition of giving a child of truth a new divine name. Every time someone calls her, it reminds her of her true nature. This desire in your case comes from your love for the Truth, not from your ego.

Of course, since we live in the West, the drawback is that an exotic name gets noticed. Be prepared to answer questions when you meet new people and tell them your name.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 205 - Should I identify with awareness?

Name: Alan

Location: Washington DC

Dear Francis, About 10 days ago I had an awakening experience when I saw that the “I” is a just a conjured up mind-sensation. I knew this for a long time intellectually, but somehow didn’t seem to ‘take it seriously’ before. Now I see that it is almost ridiculous to think there is a ghost entity behind living. However, I am still puzzled. I don’t know what “this”, which is what is left, is. Various Advaita teachers talk about this is “Awareness”. I do not have the sense of “this” being awareness. Nor do I understand why the talk about identifying with this “Awareness”. I have just disidentified with an imagined entity. Identification with Awareness feels like going back to the identification business. Do I have to identify with something, either the ego self, or the capitalized Self? I have watched some of your videos and feel that you might be able to help. Thank you very much. Alan

Dear Alan,

By all means no! Don’t identify with anything! Be “this” and only “this” which you are. The rest, awareness, consciousness, whatever, is only semantics.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 206 - On focusing on the Heart

Name: ganesh

Location: holland, alkmaar (near amsterdam)

Dear Francis, I have a question about meditation. In your book 'the perfume of silence' you write: "Don't let your mind rest upon any object. In this sense, meditation requires a kind of vigilance. The only place to rest is the Self. When we create a sensation in the body to rest on, we create a pseudo self, a pseudo 'me.'" In my experience there is often a comfortable, burning sensation in the area of/near my heart. Almost naturally the attention is drawn there; then there is peace, the attention doesn't go to thinking. (And still something is aware of the sensation in the chest.) I 'use' this sensation often as a guide 'to turn within'. Like the mind rests in the Heart. But still it is a bodily sensation. As I read your book, I think that I maybe miss the point. That my way is not 'the way' to rest in the Self. Could you please comment on this? with love of Ganesh (I was several times at your satsang in Amsterdam and I am very happy with your explanations on the internet and reading your books)

Dear Ganesh,

A sensation in the chest is still a sensation, an object, and not the experience of our true nature, consciousness. However the peace, intimacy, joy, happiness, love that may accompany this sensation is the experience of our true nature filtered by the presence of object, just as the light we perceive through a semi-transparent curtain is the light of the sun filtered by the threads of the fabric. The darker the threads and the higher the thread count, the less intense is the light that comes through. The darker and denser the thoughts, the lesser the peace and happiness.

Stick to the peace, not to the chest feeling.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 207 - Can a jnani fall back into ignorance?

Location: CO

Dear Francis, Is the jnani perfectly free from thoughts? Or does he still have them from time to time? Does he occasionally get caught up in the world, and then have to stop and allow his true identity to return? Or is he free permanently, no matter what happens? Thank you for speaking words of Truth. Kindest regards, Franklin

Dear Franklin,

Yes, the jnani is perfectly free from thoughts but yes, the jnani has thoughts. One can be free from thoughts in the presence of thoughts. For instance, in this moment, as I am answering your question, thoughts are appearing, and their appearance is my answering, but I am free from them, in that sense that I am not affected by them in any way. They just flow by. The only problematic thoughts are those that originate from the ignorance of our true nature, from the belief that we are a limited entity.

Let's now consider the second part of your question. First, we have to define a jnani: do we mean a liberated one, a jivanmukta, or one who is knowingly established in the peace of his true nature, a sage? (of course, we are speaking here at a relative level, for in reality there never was nor is anybody who could become liberated or established in equanimity).

Having clarified this ambiguity, we can say that the jivanmukta may occasionally get caught up in the residual habits and patterns of thought, feeling and activity left over by ignorance, without ever returning to ignorance itself, and then has to stop and drop the habit to revert to enjoying the peace of his true nature. While being under the spell of the residual habit (vasana, samskhara), he/she temporarily fails to enjoy the fruit of his/her liberation. These relapses become less frequent and shorter as the jivanmukta gets incrementally established in self-knowledge. At some point they become insignificant and the jivanmukta has become the sage. She/he is free permanently. Of course, I say "the" sage because there is only one sage.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 208 - When you see A hurting B, what are you going to do?

Location: Carlsbad

Dear Francis,

When you see A hurting B, what are you going to do?

1. Tell A to stop or ask A why?
2. Call the police?
3. Leave them to take care of whatever issue themselves?

I wonder what is the “right” thing to do, if there is such thing. . .

Thanks. Heesoo

Dear Heeso,

There is no “one size fits all” answer to this question. In most cases, especially in the case of two lovers arguing, I would choose 3.

If there is a disproportionate physical abuse, an adult beating a child or a woman for example, I would choose 2 first, and then 1, telling them that the police are coming and that they should stop.

If we are talking about psychologically hurting others, I would talk to A and B or perhaps just to B.

In all cases my line of conduct would be guided by the circumstances.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 209 - About the sense object, the arts, and the search for truth

Name: Jay

Dear Francis, My question is about the sense object, the arts, and my search for truth. I am wondering, how should one relate to sense objects while still upholding Truth, and is it even possible to engage with sense objects while one is indifferent to them, like a sage is supposed to be? In the world I find so many opportunities to indulge desires for sensuality! I, for one, listen to much music, and have good knowledge and understanding of jazz and several other genres. Are the desires to listen to music, or say, to watch a movie, or to play an instrument, necessarily desires for sense objects that one must become “indifferent to?” Does it depend on the music or the movie? How does one reconcile such activities with the strident passages in the Gita and elsewhere about controlling one’s senses? How does one reconcile desire for such sense objects with the statements of sages like Ramana and Nisargadatta, for example, who state that pleasure and pain, and desire and fear come from the mind’s relationship with sense objects? How can a true sage be established in the Highest, and still participate in activities like art or music, which produce sensory pleasure, or perhaps even in less “noble” sensory activities? I don’t mean to sound like an ascetic here. I just notice that my mind lusts after sense objects and that it makes me feel like limited and fearful. Is it actually possible to be free of sense objects, and yet also to partake in them with one’s body? The arts have been a great source of inspiration in my life, especially music, and I am trying view them in the light of my ongoing search for Truth. With love and gratitude.

God bless.

Jay

Dear Jay,

How do we control the senses? Not by effort, as we all well know, but by becoming more and more interested in something higher than the senses. Trying to harness a sensual desire only exacerbates it. When the love for the Ultimate takes birth in us, the ordinary desires may still be there, but they gradually become irrelevant in comparison with our overwhelming desire for the Truth. This process is effortless, it is the result of grace. All we can do is facilitate it, welcome it.

A true object of art is one that reveals Presence. Either art is spiritual, or it is not. As such, although an object of art is comprised of sensorial elements (sounds, images, etc), it doesn’t leave us at the sensorial and physical level. It

is an object which by design points at That-which-is-not-an-object. Far from diverting us from our essence, it shows the way to it.

Love

Francis

Francis Answers - 210 - I have screwed up my grades. What should I do?

I am having a problem , I am a student and I have screwed up my grades ..if I think about future I see that I have to work hard to get a job or something ..but I am unable to do so ..I am driven by feelings and habits ...so the habit of postponing and not giving attention to studies may lead to be harmful for me.

what should I do?

Try to find something that you are truly interested in, and find a way to make a living out of it, study some more, if necessary. Academic achievements are not the only path to a nice profession. Vocation, love for some type of activity, is another. If you love it, you will become good at it, and if you are good, you will make some money from it. We already have plenty of lawyers, engineers, business people, doctors, etc. . . Why not try something else? Life has put you in this situation for some reason, Life has something in the works for you. Just follow your creativity, your enthusiasm.

Love,

Francis

A poem by Thayumanavar

In all people, as soon as the ego-sense known as 'I' arises to afflict them,
the world-illusion, manifesting as multiplicity, follows along behind.
Who might have the power to describe the vastness
of the ocean of misery that grows out of this:
as flesh; as the body; as the intellectual faculties;
as the inner and the outer; as the all-pervasive space;
as earth, water, fire, and air; as mountains and forests;
as the multitudinous and mountainous visible scenes;
as that which is invisible, such as remembering and forgetting;
as the joys and sorrows that crash upon us, wave upon wave, in maya's
ocean;
as the deeds that give rise to these;
as the religions of manifold origin that [try to] put an end to them;
as their gods, as their spiritual aspirants, and as the methods
described in many a treatise that bear witness to their practices;
and as the doctrinal wrangling amongst them?
It is like trying to count the fine grains of sand on the seashore.
In order to teach me to discern the truth
of how all these woes, impossible to measure –
which spontaneously accumulate, multiplying bundle by bundle –
were insubstantial, like the spectacle of a mountain of camphor
that disappears entirely at the touch of a flame,
he associated with food, sleep, joy, misery, name-and-place,
and wearing a bodily form similar to my own,
he came as the grace-bestowing Mauna Guru
to free me from defilement, in just the same way that a deer
is employed to lure another deer.
Coming thus, he claimed my body, my belongings, my very life

as his possessions, and teaching the path of rejection, he declared:
'The five senses, the five elements, the organs of action, and all the
rest,
you are not. You are none of these.
Nor are you any of the qualities that pertain to these.
You are not the body, nor are you knowledge and ignorance.
You are chit, the real, which is like a crystal,
reflecting the qualities of whatever is placed before it,
and yet having no connection with it.
It is my inherent nature to enlighten you
when I find that you are ripe for it.'
If you desire to gain the vast, supreme reality
that is the temple of refreshing grace,
inseparable from all that is, becoming pure consciousness
and obtaining the indestructible state whose nature is bliss,
listen as I explain to you the proper means:
May you live long, winning in your heart
the reality that is devoid of all qualities!
May you attain the state of bliss-consciousness,
so that all the dense accumulation of ignorance disappears!
May you liberate yourself from bondage!
Through his grace, he imparted to me the state of mauna,
the true knowledge in which bondage is abolished:
'For that state, there is no thought, no "I" sense,
no space, no time, no directions, no pairs of opposites,
nothing lost, nothing other, no words,
no phenomena of night and day,
no beginning, no end, no middle, no inner or outer.
Nothing is.'
'When I say: "It is not, it is not", this is not a state of
nothingness.

It is pure identity; it is the nature that eternally endures,
 a state that cannot be expressed in words.
 It is the swarupa which engulfs everything,
 so that neither 'I' nor anything else appears.
 As the day consumes the night, it consumes ignorance entirely.
 Easily overcoming and swallowing up your personal consciousness,
 it transforms your very self, here and now, into its own Self.
 It is the state that distinguishes itself as self-luminous silence.
 'Other than the nature that is its own Self,
 it allows nothing else to arise.
 Because there is no other consciousness,
 should anything attempt to arise there
 it will, like a camphor flame, vanish.
 The knower, devoid of both knowledge and objects known,
 falls away, without falling, since it still remains.
 But who can tell of its greatness, and to whom?
 By dint of becoming That, one exists only as That.
 That alone will speak for itself.
 'If we call it "That", then the question will arise, "What is
 That?"
 Therefore did Janaka and the other kings
 and the rishis, foremost among whom is Suka,
 lived happily, like bees intoxicated with honey,
 entirely avoiding any mention of "That".
 Remain in this state.' Thus did he speak.
 Grant me the abundance of your grace
 so that, in the nirvikalpa state of total tranquillity,
 I may know and attain the condition of supreme bliss,
 in accordance with your rule.
 I shall not sleep or take up any other work
 until I attain this state.

The unique source [tan], fullness [purnam],
prevailed within, in my Heart
so that the 'I' which deemed itself
an independent entity
bowed its head in shame.
Conferring matchless bliss,
consuming my whole consciousness
and granting me the state of rapture,
it nurtured in me the condition of mauna.
This being so, what more is there to be said?

Source: from our friends James Hurley and Greg Goode.

Francis Answers - 211 - The Direct Path doesn't work for me

Location: Istanbul, Turkey

This is a critical question on the "Direct Path." Dear Francis, I have much love and respect for you as a spiritual teacher and friend, as well as your teaching that points to "surrender." And I trust you will not be offended if I told you that it is my impression that the so-called "Direct Path" does not deliver its promise, because its foundation is flawed. For one thing, if the "Direct Path" implies that there can be a direct method or investigation leading to the Final Understanding (or Enlightenment), then such method is suggesting that there can be a "short-cut to" or "substitute for" the full and total surrender of Consciousness, but this is not possible because such total surrender comes only as a result of Consciousness maturing through life's events and deciding that the ego (ignorance) no longer serves It (Self). I feel that the lessons, through which Life prepares Consciousness to see that the ego system does not work so that it can be surrendered, cannot be brought about by mere investigation (at the level of thoughts/feelings) alone. Because ego is like the evil-clown; it never ceases to promise fun and instead inflicts mostly misery and suffering, and I don't think that any investigation of this clown at the level of thoughts and feelings are sufficient to drop his false mask, life with all its events (with perceptions, miracles and miracles-in-reverse) itself is the investigation and there are no short-cuts to this and to when and what life reveals. However, the reason I think that the Direct Path is flawed is the following. Direct Path claims that the sense of lack associated with the ego has its origin or cause in the identification with the body/mind, or in thinking and feeling to be a limited and separate Consciousness, which is then forever seeking to be whole in the phenomenal/dualistic realm. But, to assume that Consciousness—for no apparent reason—one day decides: "I had enough with my divinity, wholeness and peace, from now on I want to identify with this body/mind so that I can experience separateness, conflict and suffering as this may be more fun," does not make too much sense to me. My own investigation shows that identification with the body/mind is not the original source of the "sense of lack," but this sense of lack was there prior to such identification, as follows. . . I think, while Consciousness is with the body but not yet of the body (i.e., not yet identified with it), around the age of 1 or 2 years old, Consciousness feels that physical pain is not Okay, thus uses its freedom to "resist physical pain" and starts holding onto and believing in the bodily perceptions/memories in order to better "cope with" the sensations/feelings of physical pain or discomfort. By doing so, Consciousness perceives that it

has better control over pain/discomfort/etc. and identifies with the body, thereby creating the ego-based mind—with one major tradeoff—it has now the burden of defending the newly born mental identity, and thus induces the potential for psychological pain while trying to cope with the physical pain. In other words, “resistance to pain” eventually leads to the identification with the body/mind, and the sense of lack is there prior to this identification because the moment of original resistance (not Okayness) to pain already implies a sense of lack. Since “resistance to pain” precedes the “identification with the body/mind” as the Primary Cause for the sense of lack (ego), the investigation into the bodily identification (a secondary cause) alone, i.e., that checks if there are any evidences that support Consciousness to be limited and separate (as suggested by the direct path) does not reach the core of the ego, and thus cannot uproot it. The investigation at the level of thoughts (I am not this, not that) is too intellectual to have any effect, and the investigation at the level of feelings/sensations and the associated welcoming—to my experience—brings much peace but not the Final Understanding, and devoid of the final Understanding—this peace does not last. To be more specific, for years, I have investigated this at the level of bodily sensations (sometimes 5 uninterrupted hours a day) where both my mind and body would relax fully with no slightest conscious contraction any-where and full peace abound, but this has never led to the promised Final Understanding and the subconscious well of the ego keeps rising back the next day, if not right after the meditation. It occurs to me that as long as Consciousness is with the body and with potential physical pain, the only cure to its “resistance” to “feeling physical pain (due to body)” or “feeling psychological pain (due to mental identity/identification with body)” is “moment to moment surrender,” but I have lost my faith that this resistance can be uprooted once and for all by an experience called Enlightenment, nor am I inclined to believe that there is a short-cut or substitute for this required on-going surrender by a direct method. It seems to me that my Freedom to resist or surrender is available at each moment and this freedom cannot be favored or converted to an automatic surrender by a Final Understanding. And Francis, while I made this letter look like a critical statement to the Direct Path, my main purpose was not to criticize the Direct Path, but instead to lay down my thoughts/opinions and to ASK you to please shine some Light and guidance on my misperceptions, if any, so that I can see truly. I am willing to reconsider all my thoughts. . . With love & gratitude, Bedri Cetin

Dear Bedri,

First, for the record, what you call the direct path is not the direct path, but rather the path of self-inquiry (Atma Vichara), also known as the path of

discrimination (Viveka) between the reality and illusion. I will use from now on the more appropriate term “self-inquiry” to refer to the path you described in your message. There are some misunderstandings in your letter about this path that I will first try to clarify. I will later on define the direct path.

1. You make an artificial distinction between self-inquiry and the events of our life: “I don’t think that any investigation of this clown at the level of thoughts and feelings is sufficient to drop his false mask, life with all its events (with perceptions, miracles and miracles-in-reverse) itself is the investigation and there are no short-cuts to this and to when and what life reveals.” That shows a definite misunderstanding about the path of self-inquiry, which is not an abstract, intellectual investigation, nor a practice of looking at our feelings from 6 to 7 am in the privacy of our bedroom, but rather an active investigation of our true identity throughout life with all its events, which are precisely designed to reveal ignorance in all its aspects.
2. According to your view, pain and resistance to pain are the cause of ignorance. Assuming you are right, we have to investigate the cause of pain, which is the body, and the cause of the body, which is God. We reach the same conclusion: Consciousness, God, the Absolute is the primary cause of everything, and the primary cause of ignorance among all other things. However, your premise is not true: if pain and avoidance of pain (a mechanism of self preservation programmed in the genetic package) were the cause of ignorance, sages should be in ignorance since they experience pain and immediately remove their hand from a hot sauce pan they inadvertently touch.
3. You say “(The self-inquiry method) is suggesting that there can be a “short-cut to” or “substitute for” the full and total surrender of Consciousness”. Where did you get that from? Have you ever heard any sage make this statement? Self-inquiry is in fact a method of surrender for those who qualify for it (under the proper guidance of their guru). That which gets surrendered is the totality of the false identity. It is not the only method available, but it is a very effective one because it gets right to the core of ignorance.
4. Let’s now revert to the direct path. The disciples who are ready realize here and now through the grace of their guru that their very consciousness is universal and eternal, that their real Self is the reality of all things and all beings, and get liberated (enlightened, awakened). They become jivan muktas, liberated while alive. Under the guidance of their teacher, they eventually cooperate with the dissolution of the residues of ignorance accumulated both on the intellectual and somatic levels and get established in peace, equanimity and happiness. This is the direct path, in which liberation comes first and directly, and is followed by a stabilization process which may take many years. In contrast, the gradual path first proceeds with the elimination of the obstacles (vasanas) and is followed by the final

liberation imparted by the karana guru. Since the vasanas have already been eliminated, the establishment in peace is immediate. In practice, even with a karana guru, most students begin on the gradual path until they are ready for the direct path and the subsequent post-liberation stabilization process.

Final thoughts: I feel that your approach is too conceptual, and your distancing yourself from a path perceived as too intellectual is a good thing. I would suggest a more experiential path: allow yourself to think, feel, perceive, and act from the possibility that consciousness is eternal and shared by all, and see the changes and miracles this new attitude brings about.

It was sweet to hear from you.

I wish you my best.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 212 - Follow up on answer 211 (The Direct Path doesn't work for me)

Francis

This is a follow-up question on the “Direct Path.”

Dear Francis, thank you for your clear, enlightening and specific answers to my rather abstract questions.

However, your previous comment, “. . . your premise is not true: if pain and avoidance of pain (. . .) were the cause of ignorance, sages should be in ignorance. . .” shows me that I have been misunderstood with what I meant with ‘resistance to pain,’ which I like to clarify below:

With “resistance to pain,” I do NOT merely refer at the “physical reaction” of the body while it is subject to an external painful stimulus, as in the “fight or flight” response, which we share with the rest of the animal kingdom. There is no doubt in my mind that this genetically programmed protective mechanism of the body is pure “maya” and there is no ignorance or ego involved at that level.

Actually, I was referring at Consciousness incorporating a “mental reaction” on top of the “bodily reaction” in order to (apparently) better cope with “anticipated pain” associated with and projected by “memories of pain.” Consciousness would then identify with the body by holding onto the bodily perceptions and memories in order to make use of defensive thinking via patterns to achieve a “feel good.” Thus a “mental identity” is made with the assumption that the body and its innate instinctive mechanisms in themselves are not sufficient to alleviate potential future pain or discomfort. When this happens, Consciousness continues defending itself even in the ABSENCE of the physical painful stimuli, but from the presence of “memories” that anticipate and induce painful feelings or discomfort. This is what I meant when I said “resistance to pain.” It is not accepting—resisting pain and aiming to control it via holding.

I feel that This is the point when Consciousness exits maya and enters ignorance.

To give an example, it is true that the sage would move his finger when burnt, but the ignorant would think and wonder in one thousand ways how to avoid future burns by holding onto his memories that feel bad. In this sense, “resistance” is “not okayness” with “what is” (pain or discomfort). It is Consciousness assuming a “sense of lack,” which inherently is not there, and thus leaving Truth into ignorance via inner dishonesty.

1. Under the above light, I wonder if your response to my suggestion on the original cause of ego would change? I don't see any other reason why Consciousness, in Its Right Mind, would leave Infinity, Wholeness and Peace behind in exchange for something so finite and limited such as the body!?
2. I understand that a total surrender is 'necessary' in order for the Direct Path to consummate itself to the Final Glimpse, but is presence of the living guru 'sufficient' for this total surrender to manifest itself, which the seeker is unable to do thru his own efforts?

Dear Bedri,

1. My response ultimately doesn't change. You didn't address my arguing that the original cause for ignorance is God, Reality, Consciousness. Please reconsider this, because all the other arguments you and I may give are on the relative level.

Regarding your theory of ignorance, even the sage makes use of his mind and of memories of past experiences of physical pain to take appropriate action: correcting one's diet, avoiding sunburns, walking on the sidewalk, driving on the right side of the road, etc... The sage may be cautious, but not fearful. Caution comes from intelligence, fear originates from ignorance. One can be cautious without creating a "mental identity". One is simply the manager of the body, not the body. You say: "Consciousness would then identify with the body by holding onto the bodily perceptions and memories in order to make use of defensive thinking via patterns to achieve a "feel good." I find this to be a confusing statement, for consciousness can "hold onto the bodily perceptions and memories in order to make use of defensive thinking via patterns" without necessarily identifying with the body, as in the case of the sage.

You say: "I don't see any other reason why Consciousness, in Its Right Mind, would leave Infinity, Wholeness and Peace behind in exchange for something so finite and limited such as the body!?"

You are making the assumption that Consciousness needs a reason to choose ignorance, a choice for which you find no good reason because you believe that ignorance is a bad thing. Your logic is similar to the following: "there is no good reason to watch Hamlet, because murders are committed in this play." The sage would say: "I have news for you, nobody gets killed, because it's a play."

2. May be I wasn't clear in my formulation: the Direct Path doesn't consummate itself to the Final Glimpse, the final glimpse is the beginning of the direct path. In most cases, the mind doesn't recognize right away that ignorance has been fatally wounded by the glimpse that was achieved in the presence of the guru. Sooner or later, it will become clear to the mind, in hindsight, that the tremendous shift experienced by the mind-body can only be the result of the glimpse.

Now going back to your question: “is presence of the living guru ‘sufficient’ for this total surrender to manifest itself, which the seeker is unable to do thru his own efforts?”

The presence of the living guru is ‘sufficient’ for the glimpse to take place, provided the disciple is willing to completely surrender, even for only a short moment. Up until that moment, the guru will be instrumental in leading to this surrender, but the disciple cannot be dragged kicking and screaming to the ultimate sacrifice. The issue depends only on the intensity of his desire for Truth.

Love,
Francis

Francis Answers - 213 - Why did the fly come back?

Name: Patricia

Location: Indiana

Waiting. Waiting without waiting. Waiting with out waiting but also with tension when the fly lands on sticky paper..lol. Oh joy, Reading the poem by Thayumanavar, this one cannot but wonder, when having stepped away from not wondering of course, why it is that having experienced the non-experince, god, godhead,whatever, life itself really, and also the container of life, this that's always nothing and everything, finding no object anywhere, unless of course sticky paper is acknowledged.,wondering how it could be so that as nothing is happening, the fly still flies and wonders, as it waits with or without tension? Why was this one spit out from the Absolute to wondering again? Truthfully, there was no consciousness to surrender as timeless Nothing, and then consciousness was again in a world, and fought mightly only for the continued and sporatic appearance of sticky paper. What choice has a fly really, that even isn't and yet also is? LOVE, Patricia

Dear Patricia,

This fly didn't want to merge with the Absolute yet, it only wanted to be submerged in it and, as a result, it had to re-emerge from it. The bad news is: the fly has no choice. The good news: you are not a fly.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 214 - Does psychological suffering completely disappear with self realization?

Name: Murray

Location: East Aurora NY

Dear Francis, I know myself as consciousness. Although I don't live in constant recognition of this it is true that I can turn attention to this consciousness whenever it occurs to me to do so, and it occurs to me to do so several times a day. I am deeply grateful for the Grace that has brought me to this. And within this I find that sometimes the taste of consciousness is very sweet but at other times it is quite neutral; there is almost a deadness to it. Also I quite frequently experience psychological pain— usually triggered by seeing the suffering in others, particularly in my daughter. You speak of permanent abidance in peace, equanimity and happiness. While I can always find peace, I often find it along side the psychological pain noted above; the presence of peace does not cause the disappearance of pain. (Although pain does come and go.) While I would say that I can always find peace, I would not say that I can always find equanimity and happiness. Furthermore, I suppose I feel that it is appropriate to experience pain in the recognition of the suffering of others, and I'm not really sure I'd want to eliminate my own pain fully in circumstances where this pain seems appropriate. (I would note that I make a distinction between psychological pain and suffering, the former being a natural response to certain circumstances, the latter being an unnecessarily exaggerated version of the former.) And so the question arising for me is, when you speak of constant abidance in peace, joy and happiness, is it a peace joy and happiness that at certain times also includes pain, or is your experience completely and always free of psychological pain? If you could comment on the sometimes neutral or dead quality I find in attending to consciousness I would also appreciate that. With Love, Murray

Dear Murray,

You asked two questions:

1. “When you speak of constant abidance in peace, joy and happiness, is it a peace joy and happiness that at certain times also includes pain, or is your experience completely and always free of psychological pain?”

I am reluctant to answer this apparently simple question because it is not easy to answer from the relative, personal, phenomenal level from which it is asked, and also because my answer may create all kinds of false impressions on the mind of our readers.

A first answer would be to say that in most cases, over the years following a total

glimpse of our true nature, the experience will evolve from being dissatisfied, unhappy or agitated 99.99% of the time to being happy and at peace 99.99% of the time, with an exponential decrease in psychological suffering (more than 50%) occurring during the first couple of years. We could say, using a scientific analogy, that the half life of the residues of ignorance averages two years after liberation. The ups and downs of phenomenal events affect us less and less, just as physical pain seems to be extremely remote and insignificant under the influence of morphine. The world and its phenomena become more and more dreamlike as reality gradually shifts away from them and back to Presence. Oops! I have said it, I have uttered the word “gradually” in the church of Advaita. What a shame! If the Advaitic Police gets hold of me, please bring some Haagen Das coffee frozen yoghurt to my jail cell!

2. “If you could comment on the sometimes neutral or dead quality I find in attending to consciousness I would also appreciate that.”

Neutral or dead quality is bad news. It points to a mind created blank state. No juice there. Stay away. SEEK FREEDOM!

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 215 - On heaven and hell

Name: Robert

Location: The Netherlands

Dear Francis, I was raised up in the sixties in a Christian surrounding and when I was about 15 years old I became heavily scared by the idea of the existence of hell. I've done nearly everything to escape from that horrible idea and fear. So I 'became' an atheist, I visited mediums, read hundreds of spiritual books and finally I discovered Advaita. The fear became a little less, but it never disappeared completely. For example, I recently did an experiment. In the local library I picked up a book of Hirschi Ali (who criticizes the Islam) and I said to myself: I open the book on a random page and the text on that page will say something important about my (future) life. And guess what, the text was about hell. A normal person would laugh about that and say: okay the chance that you will pick up a page with a heavy text about heaven or hell in this book will maybe 1:400, probably far less, so what is your proof that this is a sign of God or in this case Allah? Seen in a rational way that is perfectly true. But my anxious mind began to chat, is it coincidence, or really a sign from God, or . . . is this Consciousness 'saying' to me you are still busy with fairy tales and if you don't find out who you really are, you will never live in joy and peace . . . Francis I hope I may ask you this question: Can you give me some advise about how to handle with (this) fear? Yours sincerely, Robert

Dear Robert,

This world is hell when we live in ignorance, and heaven when we live in wisdom. There is no point being afraid of hell, since you are already in it whenever you believe to be a separate, limited, human consciousness. All forms of fear, including yours, can be traced back to this belief. Who, if not a limited, separated consciousness or "soul", could be subjected to damnation?

The way out of it? Investigate the truth of this belief. If you cannot do it, find a teacher who will teach you fearlessness.

Here is a story about heaven and hell. This gentleman was given by St Peter, the realtor of the after life estates, a tour of the various residential areas. They first visited hell. There was an out of this world gourmet buffet, all you can eat style. Unfortunately, the available forks were all six feet long, and the unfortunate residents, in spite of all their efforts, were unable to put the delicious food into their mouths. Eternal starvation was in this case their eternal damnation.

Next they entered heaven, the next building, which was in fact an exact replica of hell: same heavenly food, same long forks. The only difference: the residents here were using the forks to feed one another, enjoying the food, the company,

the laughters, and the love.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 216 - On the blank state

Name: Michael

Location: Chicago, IL

Dear Francis, Could you please clarify today's answer regarding a mind created blank state? I'm not sure if I have found myself in such a state, as I seemingly have lost interest in everything, and events just seem to pass by without any kind of reaction on my part. I frequently notice that blocks of time have passed by without me even being aware of them until later when the mind seems to come back and no matter how hard I try, I can't even remember "being there" during that period. If this is a mind created blank state, how do I get out of it? With love and gratitude, Mike P.S. If I ever run into you, I'll make sure I have some Haagen Das coffee frozen yogurt for you if you answer this question. :)

Dear Michael,

If it is a happy state, there is no hurry to get out of it. If not, boredom will sooner or later get you out of it. In both cases, there is nothing to do, and nothing to worry about.

Now, a blank state is a mind object, a mind created nothingness or void, like a blank wall, or a white page, or a dark night. It is still a perceived image or concept. It elapses in time. It has no flavor and doesn't deliver the perfume of Presence we seek, which is the only cure for our longing for eternity. This perfume manifests as joy, tranquillity, enthusiasm, eagerness, love, humour, freedom, ease, absolute comfort, unshakability, and a few other nice aromas (such as Haagen Das coffee frozen yogurt, one of my sponsors, just kidding). When it manifests, we know it.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 217 - On the blank state, again

Name: Gary Bramley

Location: Orlando, FL

Dear Francis, Thank you for this virtual satsang! Follow up to question 214: The second question was poignant. It asks: 2. "If you could comment on the sometimes neutral or dead quality I find in attending to consciousness I would also appreciate that." Neutral or dead quality is bad news. It points to a mind created blank state. No juice there. Stay away. SEEK FREEDOM! This is all too familiar; however, I have been with it long enough to realize that this blank state is itself, recognized. I am clear that anything that consciousness is aware of, no matter the subtlety, is not IT. In short I "See" the blank state. So I stand at that understanding, and now see it as yet another refined tease. The important recognition being that fundamental principle that recognized this state, Consciousness itself. For know I hang with that. If this is amiss, please clarify. Much Gratitude! Gary p.s. Thank you for this question, Murray!

Dear Gary,

You are right, you are "that fundamental principle that recognized this state, Consciousness itself." However to recognize this is not sufficient to liberate us from ignorance, although it is necessary. What is needed is the recognition that consciousness is eternal, infinite, universal, and real. For this to happen, it doesn't suffice to see that there is no evidence that it is mortal, finite, human, and dependent on something else (such as a body) to exist. This certainty can only be delivered by Reality itself. The price to pay: total surrender.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 218 - How do you work with a student who does not live near to you?

Name: Lana

Location: Madison Mississippi

Hi Francis: How do you work with a student who does not live near to you? Thank you. Lana

Dear Lana,

True students are not students of a human teacher, but disciples of Truth. There is only one quality that makes one a true disciple: an overwhelming desire for Truth, which is unconditional love for the Absolute. There are many truth seekers, but few real disciples. For a real student the question you are asking is irrelevant. Distance will never be an obstacle. She/he will travel, move, do whatever they feel is appropriate to come closer to the flame that attracts them. Distance is just a bench mark for the intensity of their love. Although the universe may seem in the beginning reluctant to help them, once they have ascertained for themselves the strength of their true intention, the cosmic forces miraculously cooperate with their endeavors.

On Christmas day 1982, my teacher unexpectedly suggested that I move to the US. My professional situation in France was very comfortable, my family, children and friends were there, I didn't speak English, and I had no intention to move. But my teacher was calling, and it took two seconds for me to irrevocably decide to move. I never regretted my choice.

What we are talking about here is old fashioned surrender, not to a person but to our love for the Truth that has been calling us from the depth of our being. All the talks on non-duality are only a preparation for this surrender. Without it, they are just wind blowing in a desolate street.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 219 - What is impersonal desire?

Name: Jay

Dear Francis, I have a question for you regarding something you told a questioner during a satsang that has been made into a video under the title, “The Perfume of Peace.” In answering a question about whether it is possible to be aware of one’s true nature as consciousness during daily activities, you say, “all impersonal desires strangely manifest.” After much meditation and self enquiry, I began frequently experiencing states of enthusiasm where I saw my desires and yet remained minimally attached to them. I noticed how, because of the lack of attachment, I was able to act much more effectively in fulfilling them. Some even seemed to come effortlessly. BUT, bit by bit, I would become more and more attached to my desires. I would have thoughts like, “Wow, using this will really help me to become a great lawyer,” or “Now I’ll get all sorts of dates” etc, etc. I began feeling excited about how my spiritual learnings would bring me such success, and how enlightenment was simply becoming prosperous and famous effortlessly. Now, however, after an extremely deep experience of awareness and its true, impersonal nature, I have seen that these desires still seem to be personal. It seems as though the only desire that can be truly impersonal is one that is strictly, and I emphasize, strictly, made of pure love, without even a trace of desire for personal benefit. But such a desire isn’t even a desire at all, but rather the movement of Truth itself, the movement of reality overcoming ignorance. Therefore the sage is truly desireless. What exactly do you mean by “impersonal desires”? I still have some desires for worldly success. Are these harmful? Of course they should not be suppressed, but I now sense that true enlightenment never comes in the form of getting all of what you “want,” for the wanting itself comes from the ego. Is this correct? Or is enlightenment, in fact, a way to manifest one’s worldly desires? Surely not. (By “worldly,” I mean desires for things like success, pleasure, fame, etc.) I have often been motivated by a powerful, recurring desire for worldly success in all areas of life—attaining distinction in one’s career, finding an attractive and intelligent mate, etc. But now I sense that if I am to live completely and perfectly from Truth, I must be willing to completely give up even all of these sorts of aspirations. This does not mean jumping to some other extreme such world denying. But I feel that true non-attachment means that I must be truly indifferent to whether or not I get my worldly desires. I must be truly surrendered to whatever happens, which means giving up all preferences for the future and knowing only the present. Is this in keeping with Truth? Is true surrender having no (personal) preferences for the future? God bless and happy holidays, Jay

Dear Jay,

What an interesting set of questions!

1. What exactly do you mean by “impersonal desires”?

An impersonal desire arises out of truth, love, beauty, fullness. It comes from happiness and stays in happiness. A personal desire arises out of lack, envy, greed, sense of separation. It comes from misery and stays in misery. The pure desire for peace and happiness, without any object or form attached to it, is the archetype of impersonal desire.

A personal desire originates from the belief to be a separate self, a human being, a body-mind structure. An impersonal desire is one which is free from this belief.

2. I still have some desires for worldly success. Are these harmful?

It depends on whether they are personal or not. For instance, the desire to be successful in one’s business in order to provide for one’s children may be impersonal, if it comes from love.

3. The wanting itself comes from the ego. Is this correct? Or is enlightenment, in fact, a way to manifest one’s worldly desires?

Ignorance is the problem, not the ego. Our wanting comes from ignorance when we believe that our happiness depends on its fulfillment.

Example of desire that comes from ignorance: I feel miserable. I don’t like it. I want to drink some champagne to get out of my predicament. The liquor store is closed, I feel even more miserable.

Example of desire that doesn’t come from ignorance: for no reason whatsoever, I feel happy and lighthearted. I have this friend visiting me later today. It would be nice to celebrate friendship with some champagne. The liquor store is closed. No problem, it was just a nice idea, my happiness is not affected. The door bell rings: my friend appears, holding a bottle of champagne to celebrate the reunion.

4. Is true surrender having no (personal) preferences for the future?

Yes, among other things. I like Meister Eckhart’s formula, which would be my definition of surrender: to know nothing, to own nothing, to want nothing.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 220 - On the causal body

What is the causal body?

The causal body is the divine spark, the light of consciousness. From the vantage point of the mind, it appears as a blind spot, like the spot on the retina where the optical nerve converges. It is the most essential point of the eye, but it doesn't record any image. It seems to be part of the mind and limited by it, but it isn't, just as the blue sky appearing on the wall through the window is not part of the wall and is not limited by the opening.

Let's take this analogy further, assuming there is a tv screen in the room, and we are outside, looking in through the window. The images appearing on the screen would correspond to the external sense perceptions, through which the gross world, including the physical body, is known, just as we perceive images from New York, Paris, etc from our living room in Temecula. We have to remember that there are many cities in the physical world besides the ones that appear on the screen. The objects in the room correspond to the subtle body made of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. We have to remember that "there are many rooms in our Father's mansion", that there are many subtle bodies in the subtle world.

The Father stands outside this room and all the rooms as the Cause that perceives and creates all things, the Mansion, His creation.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 221 - I was a pupil many years ago of John Levy, we did no Yoga or meditation but worked in a group, have you anything like this?

Dear Hilary,

I was a pupil many years ago of John Levy, we did no Yoga or meditation but worked in a group ,have you anything like this?

Different traditions and different teachers within a given tradition teach in different ways. That which matters is the Truth, the authenticity of the teaching, the honesty and sincerity of the teacher and, most importantly, the intensity of the desire for the Truth in the student. I didn't know John Levy, nor his way of teaching. I have great respect for the teachings of his guru, Atmananda (Krishna Menon).

If by group you mean a sanga, a spiritual family of friends, yes, there is such a group, and the sanga is one of the three pillars of the teaching. However the dharma, the way the teaching is imparted, is different here, with an equal emphasis on meditation and on the investigation into the true nature of our human experience, an inquiry which involves the three realms of thoughts, bodily sensations and external sense perceptions. One commonality you may find is the importance attributed to beauty and art in the teachings. John Levy was a good pianist and, as such, a student of beauty.

With love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 222 - How can one even know that one is in the absolute state?

Name: Jay

Location: NM

Dear Francis, How can one even know that one is in the absolute state? Such knowledge remains relative, for it exists only in contrast with its opposite, the relative state. Thus it seems that the absolute state is somehow a non-state, for it can have no opposite. It also seems that it cannot be gained anew, for what can be gained anew would still have an opposite. If it cannot be gained anew, what is the use in pursuing it? Is such pursuit necessary to realize that indeed there was nothing ever to pursue and to gain? Is such knowledge, such firm conviction, true liberation? Thank you, Jay

Dear Jay,

One is always in the absolute state, knowingly or unknowingly, for there is nothing else. To be knowingly in the absolute state means to be happy, content and at peace without the slightest restriction. What is said here has to be understood experientially, not theoretically. Theoretically, you are right. The use in pursuing a state? No use at all. The use in pursuing the truth about our real nature? Happiness, plain and simple. The firm conviction that “there was nothing ever to pursue and to gain” is not liberation, as long as there is the slightest sense of lack. However, it is an important milestone on the path to it.

With love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 223 - What is the difference between you and me?

Name: Javier

Location: Vitoria

Dear Francis, first sorry for my English, I love the path you teach and a question comes to the mind. what is really the difference between you and me? it is true that when a negative thought comes you simply disidentify with it and welcome, taking clear that it is only a temporary manifestation of the consciouness, a form arising? love.

Dear Javier,

There is no difference whatsoever between you and me, if by “you” and “me” you mean the consciousness which is perceiving these words right now.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 224 - When you die if you are not aware of the Greater Self, what then does your consciousness experience?

Name: charlotte

Location: Rochester, NY

When you die if you are not aware of the Greater Self, what then does your consciousness experience?

Dear Charlotte,

At all times, consciousness experiences whatever it wishes to experience. That is also true when the body dies. Consciousness may then choose to continue to experience ignorance, or to realize its infinity.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 225 - Where do thoughts originate?

Name: Katherine

Location: Buckingham, VA

Dear Francis, Where do thoughts originate? How do they come to appear in this mind that the seeming I experiences? With love and thanks, Kathy

Dear Katherine,

They originate in you, exist in you, vanish in you. But whatever appears in you cannot limit you. Since everything you will ever know has to appear in you, you can never know that you are limited. Therefore your belief that you are a limited consciousness or “mind” is without foundation.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 226 - Is consciousness different than our ego or do we die to a greater consciousness?

Is consciousness different than our ego or do we die to a greater consciousness?

Thank you

Randy

Dear Randy,

There is no difference between our ordinary consciousness and universal consciousness. That which dies is the feeling and belief that the former is not the latter.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 227 - Follow up on Q. 222

Name: Jay

Location: NM

Dear Francis, Thank you for your very clear answer. I don't mean to belabor this point. I understand very well what you say about the importance of experiential as opposed to theoretical understanding. The reason I ask this question is because it seems that no degree of happiness lasts forever, even when ignorance is not involved. I notice a continual cycle of opening and contraction, opening and contraction. Opening is marked by enthusiasm, joy, energy, and love. It follows a sustained trajectory of varying intensities before giving way to contraction. Contraction entails a mild sense of desolation and loneliness, though not fueled by any object or lack thereof. It eventually gives way to a new opening. Without such contractions, or some reminder of pain, how can one know one's state as happiness? If one were to remain in a permanently happy state, how could such a state even be distinguished? It would require at least the slightest opposite to give it contrast, and thus definition. I am young, and still given to many enthusiasms and ardors and intensities. Perhaps age alone entails a greater evenness of experience. Yet I know from experience that no spiritual experience results in permanent ecstasy. So many times after a powerful glimpse of Truth I have thought, "I've finally arrived." But I now do not believe there can ever be one such final glimpse. The Truth seems to be ever as it is, but not one's understanding or experience of it, which is a great paradox, because ultimately one is not at all separate from the Truth. Thank you once again, Jay

Dear Jay,

In ignorance, the background of our experience seems to be misery and lack. On rare occasions, we seem to be lifted above this level by evanescent sparks of joy, but a sense of impending doom remains, poisoning the joy which is never pure, free, absolute. In wisdom, the background is fully revealed as peace and satisfaction that fuels the flames of joy, love and celebration. My friend Yvan Amar said it beautifully: "Peace is joy at rest, and joy is peace in motion".

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 228 - what am I to do Francis?

Location: Florida

Dearest Francis, before I knew of the truth, I was someone who lost her identity thru much suffering from a misdiagnose which left this body partially disabled, not only was my identity gone but so were my attachments, I knew nothing of spirituality until 6 months ago, one day as I woke up I noticed that everything around me was peace, not just around me but in me and everywhere, I had no senses except for eyesite, everything that my eyes set on was there but they had no names to them, I felt as if my body was light as a feather, nothing hurt at all, after this happened I was lead to some books, and one was Ramana Maharshi, Papaji and the outmost loving sages of India, after reading these books I realized this experience was of truth, now from this I realized that I am God, and that he is the one doing the doing, nothing is me, last week the center of my chest opened and this love was unlike any words here on earth, is was so very big!! Francis I feel stuck, why is it that I am still stuck in this dream? or is it not a dream? from the above experience I was still here but yet not here, did I loose this thuth because I was unaware of it? I moved from Boston to Florida 1 1/2 yrs ago to save my life for I could not walk, I needed to surround myself with water so I could get in a pool and move my body, I am well now and able to walk short distances so this worked, I have been living in this state where I do not know one person, it is myself and my dog, I have NO ONE I can talk to about this, if I try people would think me to be nuts!! my family thinks I have lost it and that I am depressed, I can't even go out of my home now, I do not want to talk to anyone, I am shut off from so much, I have not one desire but my true reality and that is it, but so desperatly need help!! what am I to do Francis? I did not seek any of this, it all just happened, I spend so much time going up and down with my feelings and crying, this can not be healthy... please help me, with much graditude and love ~janice

Dear Janice,

You have realized that God is doing the doing, which is good. You now have to realize that He is perceiving the perceptions, thinking the thoughts, and feeling the feelings.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 229 - Could you help me understand consciousness?

Name: Martin

Location: Dublin, Ireland

Hi Francis, I wonder can you help me understand consciousness. I have listened to J Krishnamurti on dvd many times talking about consciousness. My understanding of what he is saying is that consciousness is not mine or yours or anybody's, but it is universal. I also understand that he states that this consciousness is chaotic as we look at what the way the world is today. When I listen to what you say, it appears that consciousness is the truth and the absolute and when it is operating in or through me this is the oneness and this is what non duality is. Could you help me to understand this question of consciousness please. Many thanks, Martin

Dear Martin,

Consciousness is that, whatever that is, that is perceiving these words right now. Since it is you, Martin, who is perceiving, it follows that consciousness is you, your real self, operating through a body-mind called Martin. In other words, there are two Martins: the perceiving Martin, the true Martin, Martin1, consciousness, on the one hand, and, on the other end, the perceived, limited body-mind also called Martin, which we will call Martin 2 for the sake of clarity. Our education, our parents, the culture in which we live don't make any distinction between the two Martins. Since Martin 2 is obviously limited and separate, and because of the absence of distinction between the two Martins, we believe Martin 1 to be also limited and separate. This belief and absence of distinction is called ignorance in the advaita teachings and is the source of all psychological suffering.

The way out is through the distinction or discrimination between the two Martins, which puts an end to ignorance. This process usually requires the guidance of a teacher established in peace and happiness. This discrimination has to be applied to all realms of our experience: thoughts, bodily sensations and external sense perceptions until we are established in peace and happiness. Neo Advaita teachings tend to limit the application of discrimination to the sole realm of concepts, stopping the process before reaching full liberation. This may be due to the fact that many of the neo advaita teachers have derived their partial understanding without the proper supervision of a competent guru, and genuinely believe that they have reached the goal, whereas they only had a glimpse of it from afar. They too play an important role for some Truth seekers, taking them to their level of understanding.

However, a sincere truth seeker should never forget that the final goal is unalloyed peace and happiness and never call off the search before having reached it.

Love,

Francis

P.S. In order to clarify the distinction between neo Advaita and Advaita, it could be interesting for our friends and readers to read the chapter “Guru and upaguru” of the book “Initiation and spiritual Realization” by René Guénon on the subject of the various types of teachers.

This text is available on Google books by performing the following Google search:
rene guenon Initiation and spiritual realization “guru and upaguru”

Francis Answers - 231- I am afraid of loosing my normal functioning abilities.

Name: John

Dear Francis, When it is said that the jnani is free from the notion of "I," can he be said to have any sense of personal continuity, or are all notions of the "I" thought perfectly dead and gone to him? I have had an experience that is completely beyond all words. I mean completely. To even call it "spiritual" or "Truth" or "consciousness" is insufficient. No words applied and no concepts can describe it, not even those of spirituality. At times I feel that I might go crazy, and the very fact that I even report an "experience" or fear of going crazy reveals that there is an "I" that is desperately attempting to maintain some form of continuity. I have a very strong (daily) fear of losing my normal functioning (the abilities to work, interact, and speak) and of going crazy or insane, and yet I have kept it together somehow. Can the Guru be of any help in this situation? Is this fear of going insane yet another branch to cling to? Thank you, John

Dear John,

This fear of going insane is insanity. Psychological fear is insanity. It always originates from ignorance, no matter how grand and spiritual our experiences are, they are not liberation unless they liberate us from fear.

A French philosopher (I believe it was J. Maritain) coined this beautiful definition: "The goal of philosophy is to liberate us from fear through the use of reason".

I would say:

"The goal of the Guru is to liberate us from fear through all means"

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 232- IWhy did you choose the Advaitic approach?

I find your thinking very interesting, the best i found in the new gurus. I would like to know why did you choose advaitan approach, negating krishnamurti teachings on no authority, no teachers, or remaining alone.?. . .

Dear Jorge,

I didn't choose Advaita. It's only one way, and there are many ways. More important than the way is the teacher that life chooses for us. When I met my teacher, I soon realized that his teaching was free from two inconsistencies in K's teaching that bothered me, and, moreover that there was in his teachings a creativity, a freshness that I didn't find in K's. But most importantly there was a silent transmission, beyond words, that I hadn't experienced in K's presence, and which was for me the sign that I had found my teacher. By the way, his teachings weren't limited to the advaitic tradition. He also recognized many other traditions, Buddhism, Sufism, Kashmir Sivaism, Taoism, etc.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 233- How does consciousness perceive itself?

I believe I have heard you say that the mind cannot perceive consciousness, but that consciousness can perceive itself. I am confused about this. If consciousness can perceive itself, then this seems to imply that a part of my experience is the perception of consciousness. If this is so, which part of my experience is it? Also, I have had “glimpses” where apparently I was perceiving consciousness, or where I appeared to “know myself”. In these glimpses (if I remember correctly) there was still a focal point from which I appeared to “view” the qualities of myself, which was consciousness. Was this an instance of consciousness perceiving itself? Would you please expound or clarify this for me?

I don't think so. Consciousness perceiving itself is experienced as peace, happiness, clarity, love, beauty, humour. Sometimes just a brief glimpse of it, which eventually “bleeds” during the presence of thoughts and sense perceptions. There is no focal point in the glimpse, there is only Eternal Presence.

I believe I have heard you say that witnessing is not an effort. At the same time I often find myself wanting to investigate resistances that I perceive in my body-mind. Sometimes I do this by directing my attention towards the resistance. The attention I am directing towards the resistance seems to come from my head, where there is something like a “spotlight” of attention which I can direct at various inner and outer objects. This spotlight is also the place where thoughts seem to come from. At other times when I notice a resistance I ask myself “who knows this?” and I direct my attention towards that in which the entire perception appears. Would you please speak about this, and let me know if one or both of these methods are correct? And should I direct my attention deeper and deeper into a resistance? When is that efforting itself a resistance, and when is it useful?

The latter is better, provided we know that the mind has no access to consciousness. It leaves us in a state of not knowing. Regarding the former, the resistances that appear shouldn't be resisted against, they should be ascertained for what they truly are, bodily sensations and concepts, and, immediately thereafter, let go of. Don't spend too much time with them.

The spotlight that seems to generate and perceive the thoughts is itself a bodily sensation. A bodily sensation doesn't think or perceive. It is perceived.

With Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 234 - Is a sage awake during deep sleep?

Dear Francis,

A question that has been on my mind for a number of years and which I asked a number of teachers and (so-called) enlightened people is: are you aware in the deep sleep state?

My notion of full realization, when one is fully cooked, full cirkel so to say is when one is aware in the deep sleep state, also during the day. Ramana calls it susupthi.

You yourself describe in the perfume of silence that in deep sleep awareness is there. There is no conking out, the light does not go out in deep sleep.

The reason I got interested in this is when there was an awakening in 1990 of my true nature I was, as awareness awake for a couple of weeks in susupthi, during the day and also during the night.

After these few weeks this non-experience subsided and I felt that realization had not pulled through, so to say. You know my story.

I find that the majority of advaita teachers and self-proclaimed enlightened ones are not fully realized, while they claim to have reached the summit. So, I asked them: are you aware in the deep sleep state? Most of them got annoyed by this question, or some of them would throw out an advaita plattitude.

I understand well the distinction between enlightenment and realization, the way you explain it. So, my question boils down to this: is it correct to say that realization is complete when susupthi is 24/7 the case?

I feel that most of the pseudo advaita people are fooling themselves and along with that other people. There is in their writing looks and speech something which is not quite true or of the mark.

It amazes me that almost 99% of the spiritual people don't see this. Why is that? And why don't they feel that the cirkel is not 100% fully round.

I would appreciate if you can tell me if I'm seeing something wrong here or what. Maybe I'm not quite clear on this but it feels important to me.

Love, JohnDear John,

24/7 waking doesn't imply full self-realization, but self-realization implies 24/7 waking, which progressively emerges as an after effect of a complete glimpse of the

Self, during the stabilization phase that follows the glimpse. The most reliable evidence that the goal has been reached is abidance in peace and happiness at all times (or at least 99% of the time). We shouldn't call off the search unless we are fully satisfied.

The tricky thing about 24/7 waking is that the mind may not recognize it right away: when we realize that we are always awake, even in presence of the deep sleep state, we may discover that this condition has been in effect for several years already, unnoticed by the mind. Although it was triggered by the glimpse, and was already somehow in effect from that moment on, it reaches its full effect gradually, just as a headache leaves us after taking some Aspirin. Just as we are not able to pinpoint a precise moment when the pain disappeared, we may not be able to pinpoint a precise moment when we stopped sleeping.

Atmananda (Krishna Menon) says somewhere (I am paraphrasing a little): “after a glimpse of the Absolute, the superimposition of limitations during deep sleep ceases and we remain awake at all times.” At the end, the two states of waking and deep sleep merge in the natural state of the sage, who is in deep sleep while awake and awake while in deep sleep. He simultaneously enjoys the peace of deep sleep and the alertness of the waking state.

With Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 235 - IsWould it be possible for one to be a sage, yet to act in ways that violate notions of justice and moral conduct?

Name: Jay

Location: Gadag, India

Dear Francis, I hope my questions do not sound poorly thought-out. Since there is, in fact, only one doer, can a sage be distinguished by his or her actions in the world? Judging from outward appearance only, it seems to me that literally anyone could be called sage, since ultimately only the one doer exists and does actions. Thus one cannot distinguish between sage and non-sage. Yet it is difficult to see a great evil-doer as a sage. Would it be possible for one to be a sage, yet to act in ways that violate notions of justice and moral conduct? Of course, even “evil,” “justice,” and “moral conduct” are relative concepts. But they are undeniably important on the relative level. I ask these questions because I feel a background of bliss constantly growing in my life. Oddly, however, I find that my behavior in the world is not uniformly ethical or righteous, and I feel in an odd way that this feeling of bliss and peace may facilitate such behavior. Examples include no longer holding reservations over offering opinions about someone even when they are not present, what would normally be called “gossip.” Also, fear regarding pursuit of the opposite sex and their feelings has almost completely disappeared. I do not mean to convey the wrong impression, that I am somehow out of control or deliberately doing these things. But I have sensed these changes quite clearly. Thank you and blessings, Jay

Dear Jay,

“Would it be possible for one to be a sage, yet to act in ways that violate notions of justice and moral conduct? ”

In theory, yes, in practice, in most cases, no, because the actions of the Sage flow directly from the Absolute, and not from the belief to be a separate person. However, they will not always conform to social norms or moral values or to other people’s expectations. That which is ethical in the US may be unethical in India and conversely. However, in most cases, the actions that come from wisdom will conform to societal values. Therefore, in practice, the Sage can be distinguished by his behavior which is always in line with Truth, Love and Beauty.

“Offering opinions about someone even when they are not present” is ignorant behavior if we truly believe that there is a separate individual out there who decides and performs actions. If we don’t share this belief, we can still judge

an action as appropriate or not, just as we can differentiate between black and white on the phenomenal level.

We live in societies where sexuality is often seen as a creation of the devil. If we see it as part of God's creation, our attitude towards it may change. However, the bedrock of our relationships should be the recognition of our partner as being the very same consciousness we are. That is the Love bond, the eternal bond. The pleasantness of the relationship arises as a celebration of the Love, and the sexual pleasure as one of the possible components of the pleasantness.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 236 - I want some advice about living practically.

I want some advice about living practically, having realized the truth about the Self and the limitations of the me-self. The separateness is still abound, but the belief is wafer thin. The bundle of thoughts carried are also light.

I listen to your videos and other Advita ones till the deep reverberations are there. There is cognizance of the thoughts of separateness that are here now that disturb the peace and simplicity.

I want some advice about living practically. What one does in this situation- to live it?

Ben

Dear Ben,

Since we already know each other, the videos, CDs, and texts are good reminders of the Truth. Listen to these or read them whenever you feel like it until the deep reverberation manifests. Then just enjoy the perfume and do whatever life requires or suggests in the spirit of this moment.

Also, whenever you feel like it, remember the yoga sessions you have attended during our retreats and do the same practice (if we can call it practice), mostly allowing for the bodily sensations to float freely in unbounded space, while the body is performing the asanas and other exercises.

The (at first) hidden benefits of this approach will gradually and effortlessly become apparent in your daily life.

With love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 237 - Who is talking? Who is hearing?

Name: janice

Location: Florida

Beloved Francis, I know that I am one self, the seed that contains all, through my self realization, the self shined forth by itself to itself without seeking my own self, there was only movement and seeing, nothing had a meaning to what was seen because the mind vanished! now the mind came back, knowing now I am not the mind or this body, I am the eteranal self, from the return of the mind confusion has set in, to whom does the talking? and to whom am I talking to when talking happens? I see this world as the seed of myself, I am the seed that was never born, this is very clear, what is not clear are the above two questions. Love Beloved Janice

Dear Janice,

The mind is made of perceptions: thoughts, bodily sensations and external senses perceptions. That which perceives the mind is obviously you, consciousness, because only you are conscious, and that which is perceived isn't, because that which is perceived doesn't perceive. Mind cannot affect you, just as reflections appearing in a mirror cannot stain or damage it. The return of the mind is never the problem, the return of the belief to be something else than consciousness, something such as a body, a soul, a personal and limited consciousness is the problem.

To whom do we talk? Obviously, to the one who can perceive our words, and since only consciousness perceives, we are talking to consciousness, not to a body or to a mind.

Who is talking? Obviously, the one who is talking is the one who creates and perceives the thoughts that get subsequently enunciated as words, therefore the one who is talking is also consciousness.

The problem arises out of the belief that there are two consciousnesses, the one who talks and the one who listens. Find out whether there is any evidence that supports this belief.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 238 - On doubts and beliefs

Name: Jay

Location: Gadag, India

Dear Francis, I know this question follows very closely to my last. I must preface it briefly. It is about doubt, specifically doubt after the Truth has been seen in full clarity. After many smaller experiences, Truth revealed itself as my true identity beyond all doubts and remained there, effortlessly close and real. This unshakeable state persisted for six days, until I became very ill physically. It then waivered and left. I have recovered entirely, but the solidity I thought was final left. The sense of finality and sureness left. Doubts have returned about my role as a doer and a decider. I think of Jesus's doubts later in the Gospels regarding his sense that he had to die as the will of the Self, the Father. After prayer, as the narration goes, he seems to come to terms with his fate. What touches me is that Jesus seems very human with doubts, though clearly not unable to resolve them. I also read many Zen teachers who say that the true difficulty comes in maintaining one's practice enduringly, both pre and post-enlightenment. That there exists a final, lasting state of self-realization free from doubt seems entirely beside the point. I know that you teach enlightenment as leading to eventual establishment in self-realization, which I assume is unshakeable. My question is, does this state entail any practices to maintenance it or to return to it if it is seemingly lost, and is such practice how sages remain doubt free? (I know that it can never be truly lost, for it is the truth of what we are.) I sense that so long as a human body exists, certain samskaras will surface irrevocably, perhaps most commonly doubt. Indeed, I find that I still have a few recurring mental habits that come from ignorance, even though I have seen that they are ultimately false. These habits involve doubt surrounding my true identity. Sometimes, of course, they seem more convincing than at other times. Is the final state an ongoing journey, or a perfectly solid sense of Truth, or both simultaneously? And is it free from doubt? Thank you for your words of wisdom and Truth. Blessings, Jay

Dear Jay,

A doubt exists only in reference to a belief, doubt and belief are like the two sides of a same coin. What is the use of a belief? Can we live without beliefs? If we live our life from the belief that we are a separate, limited consciousness, we experience misery. If we live from the belief that we are universal consciousness, we still experience doubt, which is also a form of misery, for the possibility of being separate has not been eliminated.

We have to see clearly that the mind by itself has no access to Truth, and, for

that reason, cannot reach certainty. Certainty cannot exist as a concept, only as an experience of Truth, which resides beyond the mind. We think: “If only I could be certain, then it would be the end of my suffering”, seek Truth in the realm of concepts, and end up attached to a belief that doesn’t deliver the happiness we seek. A happy mind is not a mind with doubts and beliefs, but a mind which is silent and free.

Let’s go back to the question I asked earlier on: can we live without beliefs?

To live without beliefs doesn’t mean to live without thoughts and concepts. It simply means not to be attached to them. More specifically, regarding the main philosophical doubt you alluded to in your question, can we live without plastering a ready-made “yes” or “no” answer to the question “Is our consciousness, that which is perceiving these words right now, limited, conditioned, separate?” Can we live without knowing?

The revelation of truth requires the humility of not knowing. This is true in Science, and also in Wisdom, which is the science of happiness. When we truly don’t know the answer, we are open to all possibilities, and, in this humility and honesty, the truth of the moment, which is all the limited human mind needs to and can receive, will offer itself to us, as an intuition in the mind, or as a serendipitous event in the world. Understanding will fill the mind with clarity and silence, and the heart with joy and peace.

In the unknowing of things is the knowing of God.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 239 - On God

Name: John

Location: Lincoln, NM

Dear Francis, I often think of Divine Will, the will of God, as something I must open myself to, and then receive the guidance it provides, that of tremendous power and direction. I have witnessed this often in my life, coming after a time of hardship or trial, a sudden, clear revelation and then direction, inspiration, and happiness. After reading Meister Eckhart, I see the problem with "preserving a place in one's being for God," implying a distinction. But I do not know how else to relate to God. I often pray by saying, "God, I am here." I am then silent and I wait the inspiration of the Lord. I ask for nothing and eventually a state of peace comes that has most definitely guided me in difficult situations and given me inspiration and clarity in difficult decisions. But even this process seems somehow inadequate, as there must be another state, a higher state, where such prayer does not exist. Francis, what is the role of God in providing human beings with great inspiration to carry out great tasks on this earth? Does the sage even think of God, or has God ceased to exist for the sage?

Dear John,

The only problem we face, the source of human suffering, is our losing our connection with God. The moment we see ourselves as a separate human being, we are disconnected. It all begins and ends with what we believe to be.

If we believe to be a separate body or a separate soul we are not a truly religious being, nor if we believe, and just believe, to be connected with God, but don't know where the connection is.

If we know the connection, all suffering comes to an end.

Know that your very consciousness, the clear presence that is perceiving these words right now, is in fact God's Presence in you, as your true Self. If you fail to know it, don't try to make it a useless belief, but at least be open to the possibility that it is true. If you are not open to it, at least find out what evidence you have to back up your disbelief.

Advaita is not the only path to God, peace and happiness. The religious path leads also to the same wisdom. On this path, although we believe to be a human body-mind, we seek God's Presence until we find it within as our very own consciousness. From that moment on, we cease to be a separate body mind, for it has been reclaimed by God and has become His servant. Like the rest of His creation, in Him it lives, moves and has its being.

That's what was meant by Jesus in the saying "I (consciousness, true Self) is the Path, the Truth, and the Life".

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 240 - Is this body real?

Location: florida

When my mind exploded there was movement and extreme peace and what was seen took a vague background. Now with it's return so did all the images and the pain and suffering from this disability, pain is mind.. the world is in me and projected from me, and I perceive all my perceptions, none of these perceptions are real yet appear real to touch. so when speaking happens you said it is consciousness speaking to consciousness, to me that is mind speaking to mind, and if mind is not real then speaking is not real either.

1. Is this body real?
2. Is the "person" I speak with projecting me? or am I projecting them? who is projecting whom?...
3. No one can stop the mind, is up to my supreme self to do that and will it do it once I know longer identify with the appearances of the stories in the mind? internal or external? Francis I am sick all the time, all these images are driving me mad, I had to just see myself one with them, to be one with everything seen and love all as myself, I can't make them disappear.
4. Is this what I need to do until the body goes? can you advise me as to the way of truth? is being one with all truth? I feel it is the highest truth, yet, yet, yet something still feels like it is missing from this, what is it?

Love, ~janice

Dear Janice,

You have too many concepts. Let's keep it simple: Consciousness is that which is perceiving these words in this very moment. No matter how unlikely it may seem at first, this consciousness is not personal, limited, mortal. It is not a separate entity which is aware of these words, but the universe itself, God, the Absolute.

Now to your questions:

1. This body is real as consciousness, and is an illusion as having an existence separate from consciousness.
2. Because consciousness and consciousness alone perceives, we never speak to persons, but only and always to consciousness, which is projecting all the minds, separate persons, and the world.
3. There is no need to stop the objective perceptions (the mind) to be at peace and happy. Simply know that you are eternal and universal consciousness, not the mind, not the body.

4. The way to truth: investigate which evidence there is that consciousness is limited, mortal, and separate. Do this on all levels: concepts, bodily sensations, external sense perceptions. Find an authentic teacher to help you realize your true nature and get established in it.

Love,
Francis

Francis Answers - 241 - Is it your experience that awareness can only ever perceive one object at a time?

Name: Jay

Dear Francis, Upon close examination, it appears that awareness can only ever perceive one object at a time. Mind strings perceptions together creating memory, thus giving birth to the illusion that multiple objects can be perceived at once. But, in truth, this is illusion. Ultimately, when past is perfectly absent, there is simply one act of pure perception after another. Is this your experience? Thank you very much, Jay

Dear Jay,

It could perhaps be said that the human mind can only ever perceive one object at a time, but not awareness. The human mind works in seriality, not the Cosmic mind, which holds together all minds and all worlds in perfect simultaneity, and allows for you and I to seemingly communicate over the Internet. In fact there is no mind, human or cosmic, there are only perceptions appearing in awareness. Mind doesn't string perceptions, nor does it create memory. Mind itself is only a concept, a model of reality. Nobody has ever perceived a mind. Everybody has experienced thoughts, bodily sensations and sense perceptions, which are in fact only consciousness. Therefore, everybody has only ever perceived awareness. The inference that there would be anything else than consciousness, be it an object, a mind, is just a theory, a model of reality, not an experience.

The moment we understand that there is only one Reality, only one Being, it becomes clear than awareness perceives all objects, at all times, or, perhaps better said, that it perceives no object, and no time, only itself.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 242 - Do you think that experience was awareness during dreaming-deep sleep?

Name: Ivan

Location: Galicia

Dear Francis: Few weeks ago I read somewhere that you can have a “glimpse” of the Self just after waking up, and I said to myself “it would be good if can detect that very moment and linger there”. . . But I couldn’t even remember to do so and I just said: “OK that’s not for me”, I didn’t give much importance to the fact and I keep on doing my things. Some days ago being asked by my girlfriend how I was sleeping lately (because she is away and she couldn’t sleep very well in those days) I told her that in the past nights I kind of wake up in the middle of the night, not completely awake and stayed like that almost all night long (or at least what seemed to me a long time, though I can’t say it for sure), but on finally waking up I did not feel sleepy or drowsy, in fact I felt fine, I felt like having had a good night. It was not like dreaming, it was more like seeing myself dreaming. Hard to describe, hope you know what I mean. Believe or not I didn’t see any connection between the two facts until recently. Now I am a little confused. Do you think that experience was awareness during dreaming-deep sleep or just some sort of “daydreaming”, some delusion nourished by this search of mine. Thanks a lot!

Dear Ivan,

As we become interested in the experience of pure consciousness, changes occur in the three states. In particular, the dream state becomes step by step “lighter”, until we don’t sleep any longer. The body sleeps, the mind dreams, we remain awake. There might be a long delay (several years in my case) until we realize that we don’t sleep any longer. We then know this wakefulness has been going long for a long time, but we often cannot remember when it began. These are interesting signs, telling us we are on the right track, but the real benchmark of self realization is unshakable peace and causeless joy.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 243 - What is the difference between a dis-quite mind and a mind free to indulge in every thought that arises?

Name: Chris

Location: San Diego

There seems to be a fine line between a quite mind and a controlled mind. After many years of practice I'm often able to completely suppress the words in my head. It's like I'm the parent of a young child, a child who incessantly fills every moment with some commentary, always interrupting to offer some narrative, using words and concepts to describe the world. As a loving parent, I hold him close, and with love press my finger to his lips and stop the noise. Then the true experience is allowed to take form, without words and concepts. Francis, I've heard you say that thoughts themselves come from the infinite and that true acceptance is realized when these thoughts are allowed to come and pass naturally. What then is the difference between a dis-quite mind and a mind free to indulge in every thought that arises?

Dear Chris,

Mind control, even as "a loving parent", is not loving. What takes place then is not the true experience but a caricature of it. devoid of any perfume, and most certainly of the perfume of freedom. Such an experience can never become permanent because it is not our natural state, but rather an artificial state created through effort. We have to eradicate first the root cause of the disquietness of the mind, which is the belief and the feeling that we are a limited, mortal entity. Then the mind and the body will gradually and spontaneously relax, revealing the peace and causeless joy that belong to the background of Presence. We can knowingly cooperate with this revelation, not as a person, but as this presence itself. At all times, the mind is free to indulge in every thought that arises, whether we are aware of it or not, because the mind is this very thought that arises. But the mind is still only if we naturally abide in the Self, as the Self.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 244 - On Love, relationships, and jealousy

Name: viola

Location: italia

Dear Francis, my question is: how to be in a committed loving-relationship while feeling the freedom which I know I deeply am. I mean a relationship based on unconditional love , who we truly are, yet living a “conditioned” love, meaning “IWe choose to be committed to unconditional love first of all,yet I choose you and not him, I am faithful to you and you choose me and are faithful to me. . . until the relationship feels good. In my experience the openness of unconditional love leaves space to jelousy to arise, because it is All Free. . . Love, Viola

Dear Viola,

There is no “one size fits all formula” for human relationships. But no matter what the formula is, celibacy with monogamous or polygamous relationships, marriage, spiritual community, gay or straight relationships, etc. . . that which really matters is the love. We are in love with the Self, both in us and in the so-called others, in our partners, spouses, lovers, friends, etc. . . It is only Love we are committed to, and it is Love that dictates our actions. The same impersonal love expressing itself through different body-mind experiences may dictate seemingly opposite behaviors under similar circumstances.

Jealousy comes from a sense of separation, always. It can never coexist with unconditional love. We should be in a relationship not because we are committed to it, but because we love it. In this case there is no sense of alienating our freedom, because we want to be in it. And Love, not weakness, is the only valid reason to stay in a relationship.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 245 - On knowing God

Name: Jay

Dear Francis, I have heard you speak of joy, peace, enthusiasm and other such divine qualities as arising from “awareness perceiving itself,” or to use some other words that I hope you would still agree with, Divine experiencing Itself. The statement, “I and my Father are one,” seems to articulate this experience, wherein the sage, knowing his or her true identity, sees that he or she is actually the Divine experiencing itself in its infinite variations. According to my understanding, this stage is described as the unitive stage in the Christian mystical tradition, coming after the purgative and illuminative stages. In the unitive stage the sage is firmly established in his or her true identity, and thus experiences suffering, phenomenal events, and all experiences as the divine itself. I have recently read several teachers who speak very clearly and vehemently of a stage beyond this one, where the divine experiencer—the “I” that proclaims, “I and my Father are one”—falls away, ending all experience of the Divine. This occurs because the “I” that experiences the Divine and its numerous qualities falls away, and thus the two, the experiencer and the experience, are gone. What is left is beyond all human description or comprehension, which are both dependent on experience. There is no longer an “I”—divine or otherwise—remaining to experience the Divine. This final stage is said to occur after the standard periods of enlightenment and stabilization in the unitive stage, and is said to arise NOT through effort, for the unitive stage carries with it absolutely no sense of lack. First let me explain, the reason I write this long and perhaps inappropriate question is that the notion of the sage as I described above—the stage from which the statement “I and my Father are one” originates—still seems to me be fragmentary and incomplete. This is because even though this stage consists of the Divine experiencing the Divine, the sage’s experiences are still just that: experiences. They have a separate experiencer who is there, separate from the experience. This experiencer reports on these experiences, elucidates them for others, etc. And no matter how transcendent, no experience lasts. Whether it’s joy, enthusiasm, inspiration, compassion, infinity, bliss, or other such things that emerge from the Divine experiencing itself, no experience lasts. While the sage may actively experience the core of his being to be the awareness into which any and all experience dissolves, his divine nature is still focalized and limited into something that experiences the Totality, the “Father.” The very statement “I and my Father are one” still contains two: the Father, and the “I” who discerns this oneness. Bernadette Roberts, who speaks of this stage beyond this one as the “experience of no self,” puts it this way: “The illusion is the belief

that experience of the divine IS the divine. Although the deepest experience of which self is capable IS experience of the divine, this experience is not the divine. By contrast, self or consciousness' most authentic experience of the divine is no experience, a non-experience, we might say. This means that in the end our experience of the divine turns out to have been the experience of our own deepest self. So the final unknown illusion to fall away is the revelation that all human experiences of the divine are only the unconscious self. And if we take away all consciousness or self, all its divine experiences go with it. The divine as it exists beyond the unconscious true self can never be experienced by any self or consciousness because, quite simply, self or consciousness is not equal to it, not up to it. The ultimate illusion, then, is mistaking self for the divine or believing our experiences of the divine to BE the divine. Intellectually we know, of course, that the divine cannot fall away or disappear. But in experience the divine can indeed fall away or disappear—this experience is well documented, particularly in the Christian no-ego experience. What disappears, however, is the experience of the divine, not the divine. The experience falls away because it is not divine. As it turns out, the experience of the divine is only self or consciousness. Thus the deepest unconscious true self IS the experience of the divine, or the divine in experience. This experience, however, is NOT the divine. What falls away, then, in the no-self experience is not the divine, but the unconscious true self that all along we thought was the divine! The shocking revelation of the no-self experience is just this: that all our experiences of the divine are only experiences of ourself, and that all along the divine as it existed beyond self or consciousness had been non-experiential. While the divine had been the cause of our experiences, the experiences themselves (the effects, that is) were not the divine.” Another teacher I have heard articulate this stage is U.G. Krishnamurti, defining realization as realizing “for yourself and by yourself that there is no self to realize.” All of this sounds completely distinct from anything standardly described in advaita. I know very well that different teachers use different terminology and that numerous confusions arise as a result. I also know that teachers speak to their students in accordance with the students' level of understanding. I am writing because I have had an experience in which there was no God, bliss, love, or any such things, and yet I know it to be the final truest reality. It was entirely beyond any description. Words like “bliss” and “infinite” still belong to the realm of experience, and seem almost absurd. Indeed, for me, God, bliss, love, and infinity have only existed as experiences—coming and going—and therefore have never sufficed for me as the final truth. They seem empty, like concepts or memories. I am fully aware that I am “digging shallow holes everywhere, instead of one deep one.” I am not asking for some sort of reconciliation between standard

“advaita” and the statements of Ms. Roberts. I simply felt compelled to write this, for some reason. I feel lured by an undeniable truth that I cannot ignore. I will follow this scent. I know that words can be debated and contemplated endlessly. I intend to go beyond them, to where there are no concepts or beliefs, or the corresponding debate and doubts. In the end, I suppose, there is only one final Truth and it cannot be doubted. Thank you very much, Francis. I deeply appreciate your time. I hope this message did not seem presumptuous, and wasn't hard to follow. God bless, now and always,
Jay

Dear Jay,

Joy is peace in motion and peace is joy at rest. They are inseparable. Joy-peace is the experience of the Self knowing itself. Objective joy is the experience of the self knowing itself through the veil of objects, like seeing the light of the sun through the threads of a loose fabric. Absolute joy-peace is like seeing the sun directly. It is a timeless and mindless experience. Ask yourself the question: can anything else than God know God? And, furthermore: Is there anything else than God, **really**?

Love. Francis

Guided Meditation - Ottawa, April 30, 2003

Francis Lucille

Ottawa, Canada

April 30, 2003

Turn your attention towards the Presence in you, which is aware of these words.

Now ask yourself the question, "Where is this Presence, which is aware of these words and these thoughts, located?" Make this determination based upon your own experience in this very moment, not based upon what you have read in books. And you may have a first answer that would say that this Presence is located in the head somewhere. Now take a closer look at this first answer. You will see that this first answer is a feeling, a sensation located in the head or in the chest or somewhere else. This first answer is a sensation, a localization, a location in the body.

Now, that which appears, the answer, the localization, the sensation, seems to be localized, but ask yourself the question, "Where is the Presence, to which the localized sensation appears, located?" If the sensation is localized does that make the Presence localized? Ponder this based upon your experience. In other words, "How do I know this presence I call 'I' is localized?"

Find the answer for yourself. Don't let me tell you what the answer is. What I tell you has no value. What you find by yourself, what you discover firsthand has value. If you decide this presence is localized, that's your decision based upon your experience. My advice is: check it out, again and again. It is your experience alone which makes the decision. My advise is: check it out, again and again, until you reach a rock-solid conviction one way or the other as to whether, based upon your experience, this Presence which you are, is localized or not.

Now you may say, "I don't know." Fair enough. Or you may say, "I don't know, but other people know." That's not fair enough, because how would they know better than you where your Presence is located? Only you know your Presence. They know their Presence, assuming their Presence is different from yours, but they don't know yours. So they have truly no say as to where your Presence is located. I have no say in this matter. That's why I don't want to tell you anything. That's why I suggest you find out for yourself. It's called freedom.

You have to understand the weight of peer pressure, the weight of false knowledge, or knowledge accumulated through generations, that has been transmitted to you though your genes, through your education, through your relations. That doesn't make it true. The fact that knowledge has been communicated to you, imprinted on you doesn't make it true.

You are the gatekeeper of true and false knowledge. *You*

are the final judge of truth. That's the esoteric meaning of the 'the final judgment,' because you are the truth. As

Al-Hallaj said, "I am the truth." They killed him for having said that.

You cannot find the localization of this Presence, which is hearing these words right this moment. Nobody can. And if nobody can, perhaps it means that this very simple Presence is non-local, non-local meaning it is not the product of this body or this flesh. It is more like a property of the totality, of the cosmos—if we see the cosmos as God's creation, as God's body. It is one more property, one more quality of that power that created the cosmos.

Presence, one more name for the ultimate.

And if we think about this body, which most of us see in isolation from the rest of the cosmos—if we take a closer look, there is no such a thing as an isolated body, other than a concept of it. The body is in total symbiosis with the rest of the universe, with the air it breathes, with the water it drinks, the space in which it moves, the things it eats, the other beings it relates with and the stars. And just as the body is not isolated, the mind is not isolated, always exchanging information with the rest of the universe. So that even from the vantage point of physics or biology or information theory, we are led to the conclusion that there is no isolated system in the universe, that there are no isolated bodies. It is a childish concept to consider parts of the universe in isolation.

And if it is true that the body and the mind are not isolated, even if we believe that consciousness is the byproduct of the bodymind, (since bodyminds are, in that case simply a byproduct of the totality), we have to reach the unavoidable conclusion that this Consciousness, this Presence that I call 'mine' is not produced by the bodymind but rather, at its deepest origin, by the totality of the universe. It is not the Consciousness of the body, but ultimately the Consciousness of the universe.

We are the flowers of the tree of life. Many flowers, only one tree.

In ancient times in the West, people believed that the sky was closed, that we were inside a blue sphere and that the stars were diamonds attached to the blue sphere. We believed that space was limited. And then we knew better; we knew better because we investigated the sky.

But as we investigated the sky and the universe around us, we didn't investigate the inside of us. And because of this lack of investigation of the inside, we believed that our Presence was limited, that it was bounded just as we believed the sky was bounded. And just as the boundary of the sky was a man-made creation, so the inner boundary of Consciousness, which we call ignorance, is of our own making.

Just as the sky out there, space, the universe has always been unbounded, the inside sky of Presence has always been without limits.

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Francis answers - 246 - Where is Consciousness when the body-mind is asleep and not dreaming, and where is Consciousness with regard to the human corpse?

Name: Kati

Location: Kent in United Kingdom

Dear Francis May I put two questions to you? 1/Where is Consciousness when the body-mind is asleep and not dreaming, and where is Consciousness with regard to the human corpse? 2/ Can humans hurt Consciousness-the Universal Love-with their vicious, hurtful, ignorant thoughts and actions? Looking forward to your answers, Kati

Dear Kati,

1. Consciousness is always within itself, no matter whether the body-mind is waking, dreaming or in deep sleep. It is a space of its own, located both beyond the usual space-time continuum and beyond the mind, and in which both appear. The human corpse belongs to space-time, and it is perceived by consciousness through the mind.
2. No, they can't.

Love, Francis

Francis Answers - 247 - Could you explain how it is possible to be established in the Self and at the same time live and act in this everyday world without an ego

Name: Evelyn

Location: Manhattan, NY

Dear Francis,

Could you explain how it is possible to be established in the Self and at the same time live and act in this everyday world without an ego. I refer to the following from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. "As long as there is duality, one sees the other, one hears the other, one smells the other, one speaks to the other, one thinks of the other, one knows the other; but when for the illumined soul the all is dissolved in the Self, who is there to be seen by whom, who is there to be smelt by whom, who is there to be heard by whom, who is there to be spoken to by whom, who is there to be thought of by whom, who is there to be known by whom?" Does this not imply that as long as one sees the other, hears the other speaks to the other etc., one is still in duality, therefore not ego free? Thank you. With Love,
Evelyn

Dear Evelyn,

Yes, it implies just that. However, it doesn't imply that it is impossible to live and act in this every day world while being free from ignorance. As an exercise, try, upon meeting a so-called "other" to see in the body you are facing the same consciousness which perceives your own thoughts, feelings and sense perceptions. Speak to and interact with this consciousness, not with a material body or an imaginary human mind. Speak to the spirit, to the soul, to the child inside, for it is also YOU.

Love,

Francis

Francis Answers - 248 -

Name: Bruce

Location: Michigan, U.S.A.

Comments:

Mr. Lucille, Something has revealed itself as the absolute one to a me it plays as. This is not a product of imagination. It is the very source of all it appears as and the source of the seeing that watches the play. There is nothing that it is not. It has kissed me and now it is everywhere shining as its self. I cannot take my eyes off of it and I am overwhelmed. It can speak as me to all inquiry and there is nothing it does not know as itself. What place do I have as this knowing? I am looking for a mirror. as Bruce

Dear Bruce,

True knowing is its own place. There is no other place. True knowing is the answer, it has no questions.

love,

francis

Dear Mr. Lucille,

Who knows this? Where is this one knowing? How can it be an answer if it was not first a question?

Please, I am sincere... if it is knowing... then it must know what it is as that, yes?

Bruce

Dear Bruce,

You asked the question: "What place do I have as this knowing? ". I answered: "

True knowing is its own place. There is no other place. True knowing is the answer, it has no questions."

Now you are asking:

1. "Who knows this?"

The consciousness you truly are, that which in you knows everything you know knows it.

2. "Where is this one knowing?"

True knowing is its own place. There is no other place.

3. "How can it be an answer if it was not first a question?"

It is both the question and the answer.

4. "if it is knowing... then it must know what it is as that, yes?"

Yes, deep inside it knows, but, hypnotized by thoughts and sensible objects, it may have temporarily forgotten his universal nature.

Love,

Francis

Francis answers - 249 - How do we know it was not an event in my brain that stopped the sense of being a separate entity?

Name: Paul

Location: Boston MA USA

Dear Mr. Lucille, In 2008 I had an experience that I'd like to ask you about. I really need some kind of clarity!!! I don't want to waist your time with tons of details but prior to this experience, during the second part of 2007, I had a lot of stress. One night I was trying to relax and I ended up going out, getting drunk, and to make a long story short I cheated on my wife. Next morning, when I realized what I did, I told my wife. She forgave me. . . but I did not forgive myself. The next few months were crazy - the feelings of guilt, dissatisfaction with myself and life overall were huge. Soon after that I got sick and on top of everything I became extremely scared for my life and future. This continued for about a year. . . And then I came across E. Tolle's "Power of Now". I've read it over and over again. Something started to shift. It was very powerful. I felt going deeper and deeper into all this stuff: reading, meditating, doing yoga and qigong, even switched my diet to Macrobiotics. Somehow all of it felt right. My illness and depression slowly went away. Soon our 1st child was born. I can't describe the joy I felt - it was pure heaven. . . Nevertheless, there was another side to this. . . I completely lost any interest in my work (I used to be a co-founder/partner of a management and IT consulting firm here in Boston). Basically, I ended up becoming a full-time stay-home dad once my wife went back to work. All of a sudden, in a middle of very busy days and nights, my life became very simple. Everything slowed down. A few months after I became a stay home dad I started to have very strange dreams like getting calls from a vibrating limitless darkness, listening to strange silence and so on. And then I had this (don't even know what to call it) experience: All of a sudden, as I was falling asleep at night, I felt something in my stomach. It felt like a large ball of air. Condensed hot air. . . It moved up into my chest and then my throat. All extremely quickly. . . At that moment I felt great fear that I can't even begin to describe. . . It was as if I was literally dying. . . Every memory, everything I know, and even single sensation in my body was getting erased one by one all extremely quickly. The last thing I felt was this ball of air moving from my throat up to the top of my head somewhere. Then, there was some kind of explosion in the head and everything stopped. All fear also stopped. This body's eyes physically opened. It was very very strange. But here is the description of what was experienced after that, which is even stranger. There was no sense

of “Paul”. No Paul or anyone else, no individuality, no thoughts, no emotions, no memories, total absence of all physical sensations except for vision. . . . But something or someone was looking through this body’s eyes! Whatever or whoever was looking through Paul’s eyes was not anywhere in one particular place but was everywhere at the same time - all space in the room and outside, all objects, the night sky in the window. . . . everything! This non-personal I looked around and did not know what it was seeing, it did not know anything, it was like seeing everything for the very first time. That I had no idea that wall was a wall, bed was bed, this body was body. . . . For that I there was no difference in seeing a wall or this body for example. . . . And as this I was seeing all of it it was seeing itself meaning the wall was this I, bed was I, body - I, sky -I. . . . It was completely unlimited, non-localized, timeless. . . . There was only this I and nothing or nobody else. I don’t know how long it lasted. May be a few hours clock time. . . . This body did stuff. . . . Walked around, etc. At some point there was like a registering of some movement. . . . There was a thought what is this movement? It seemed like this I studied this movement for some time. . . . Then, again all of a sudden, Paul with his identity, memories, sensations and everything else was back. I found myself sitting on the edge of our bed in total darkness. . . . This movement was my right hand moving. . . . That’s what this I studied all this time. My wife was peacefully sleeping next to me. . . . Up to a year ago I would tell you a lot about this experience: pure awareness awakening to itself, spirit, etc. Now all I can say is I really don’t know. I have all kinds of doubts. . . .and it really kills me. . . .I can’t find rest. My main question is this: How do we know it was not just some event in my brain that stopped everything except for the part of the brain responsible for generating a sense of I? Is it possible that a complete loss of memory, thoughts, emotions and all sensations except for visual made me perceive myself as this non-localized and unlimited I . . .but really it was all in the brain and I am this brain and this body after all!?!?!? I mean, how do we really know that this I-Awareness-Presence is not something created in/by the brain!?!?!? Sincerely, Paul

Dear Paul,

The real question is not “of what is this presence aware?” but rather “who is aware as this presence?” The brain and the body may be necessary to supply and process the stuff consciousness is aware of, thoughts, sounds, tactile sensations, etc. . . . but this doesn’t imply they are the reality that perceives, that which truly perceives, the perceiver in chief. **That which is perceived can tell us nothing about that which perceives.**

I had an experience similar to yours many years ago, with perhaps the only difference that the sense of being a separate, limited consciousness and the fear of

death, of absolute disappearance, disappeared and haven't resurfaced since. This experience was also accompanied by absolute bliss, love, splendor, eternity, but all of this, except the presence itself, faded away within a few days. Gradually, thanks to the help of my teacher, the relaxation, fearlessness, and peace of mind that were revealed during this experience became permanent, paving the way for causeless joy, for a life in which the permanent miracle of creation and celebration ceaselessly reveals itself.

And that brings me to your question: "How do we know it was not just some event in my brain that stopped everything except for the part of the brain responsible for generating a sense of I?"

The brain cannot conceivably generate serendipitous events and miracles in the physical world. As a result of our letting go of being a separate entity, and of the merging together of inside and outside, we experience peace and happiness inwardly, and the unfolding of the permanent miracle outwardly.

The proof is in the pudding. There is no room left for ignorance when it is squeezed between happiness and miracle.

With love,

Francis

Follow up on Q. 249

Thank you for your answer! You say that “**That which is perceived can tell us nothing about that which perceives**”. Yes but this does not mean that it’s not possible that there is something generated in the brain that can’t be perceived (e.g., the perceiver in chief), does not it? You say **The brain cannot conceivably generate serendipitous events and miracles in the physical world**. Actually, how do we know this statement is valid? Why not? And besides, we might perceive something as a miracle but how do we actually know it’s really a miracle (like for example what happened to you many years ago and to me back in 2008) and not just a trick of our perception created in/by the brain? I would really appreciate your answer. I really want to get to the bottom of this!!

THANK YOU!!!!!!

Dear Paul,

1. That a physical object, the brain, creates consciousness is a belief, an assumption, a religion, an act of faith, that can never be proven experientially to be true. There is not the beginning of a shred of evidence for this. We simply believe there is a full body of evidence, but, upon closer scrutiny, it turns out there is none. We may as well believe that unicorns create consciousness. The reason for this absence of evidence is that consciousness is non-phenomenal. Therefore we cannot envision any thought experiment to verify scientifically any hypothesis about consciousness, and, in this case, to verify that it is a by-product of the brain. How could we possibly experientially establish the existence of “something generated in the brain that can’t be perceived”, and, more generally, of something non-perceivable? We have to come to grips with the fact that we have become believers of the “Church of the Brain Generated Consciousness”, itself affiliated with the religion of Ignorance, which has the largest membership on the face of the Earth.
2. When I said “The brain cannot conceivably generate serendipitous events and miracles in the physical world”, I meant assuming that the brain is a locally isolated physical system. If we consider the brain as a universal or cosmic reality, and if it is the reality of consciousness, it means that the consciousness which is perceiving these words right now is in fact universal.
3. I didn’t said that the events you or I experienced were miracles. Miracles are events that violate the laws of Physics, serendipitous events are highly improbable occurrences. A miracle would be Jesus walking on water, or the opening of the Red Sea. A serendipitous event would be you taking a trip to India, a country with a population of over 1 billion, and wishing while in the plane to encounter a guru who lives in the Himalayas. Upon getting off your taxi in Bombay, this guru happens to be the first person

you encounter.

Love,
Francis