

## Time, Memory and Causation

Having realised that we are not a body, brain, or mind, but pure Consciousness, the next step on the spiritual path is to discover the infinite and eternal nature of that Consciousness. In other words, we come to recognise that the Consciousness that we are is not a limited entity that comes and goes in the vastness of time and space.

One of the key barriers to this understanding is our belief in the reality of time. As Rupert explains, time is simply a construct of the mind. We could see it as the first construct that the mind creates in order to provide a background or container through which experience can flow, the canvas on which the artist paints his landscape:

Without reference to thought we have no knowledge of time.

Time is the duration between two events and, although we may imagine two events, we never actually experience them simultaneously. For instance, when breakfast this morning is present breakfast yesterday morning is not. The twenty-four hours that separate these two events are made out of thought, not out of experience.

In other words, in the intimacy of our own being, which is prior to thought, there is no time.

In fact, our self is not *prior* to thought. Without thought, there is no time present during which our self could exist. Even *with* thought there is no time present but, in this case, at least the *illusion* of time is present. [Presence Volume 1, The Eternal and Infinite Nature of our Being]

For practical purposes our minds are necessarily engaged from time to time with objects that appear on the backdrop of time and space. It cannot be otherwise. But when mind rests in its source, time and space disappear. All that is needed is to practise this 'return to the source' whenever our attention is not required by the world. Then after a while when attention goes out to objects, the feeling-understanding that time, space and objects have no independent reality remains with us in the background of all of the ever-changing experience flowing through mind.

One of the reasons it is hard for us to give up our belief in the reality of time is because mind constructs the separate self we imagine ourselves to be around a story – our personal history – which is believed to take place in time. In this extract, Francis Lucille explains the illusory nature of this history:

The past is always a figment of our imagination. It only appears in the now. Only the now is real.

...

Our personal past is based on the concept that we have been traveling through time, that we were there ten years ago, then five years ago, then a minute ago, and so on. However, the reality of our experience is that we are always here and now and that time, events, and appearances are traveling through us. Only the now is real and that which comes and goes is only real as long as it is present. We never go anywhere.

We create the so-called external reality as we go along. In fact, it is not external at all but is always within consciousness. We create our past each time we think about it. ...

*Q: Are you saying that I never had the experience of being a boy, that it is just a memory created in the present?*

What is being said is that there has never been a boy moving in time, turning into a young man, then into a middle-aged man, and so on. All of these appearances flowed through consciousness.

You, as consciousness, have never been a boy, a young adult, or a middle-aged man. These were perceptions and concepts flowing through consciousness. I am not denying that these perceptions and concepts have flowed through consciousness. That is what memory tells us. However, I am denying the fact that the boy grows into an adult. I am denying the objective existence of these events and the objective existence of time. By "objective," I mean independent from consciousness.

From the vantage point of the totality of this timeless presence, there is no time. Consciousness is not in time or space. All the mind can do is reduce consciousness to a point, whereas it is in fact the totality, of which the mind with this universe is just a speck. Since the mind cannot grasp consciousness, it reduces it to nothingness and then becomes frightened of it. ...

We take ourselves for an object that is conditioned, subjected to time and space. There is no doubt that the body seems to be so, but we have no right to infer from this that consciousness is either located in or subject to time and space.

*[The Perfume of Silence, Objects Flow Through Us]*

The existence and content of memory are often regarded as proof of the reality of time. What is memory if it is not a recollection of something that happened in the past? As Rupert explains, if we examine thoroughly the evidence we have, we see that it points to memories being nothing more than thoughts arising in the mind that are construed by the mind as being images of past events.

*Q: How does memory work and does it not validate the belief in the continuity of objects and the world?*

Let us imagine that last night we had dinner in a restaurant. Take any moment during dinner and call that moment, not the memory of the moment, but the actual experience, perception A. Perception A is followed by countless other perceptions and, eventually, let us say the next morning, an image appears in the mind (let us call it image B) that is an approximate representation of perception A. This is followed by a thought (let us call it thought C) that connects image B to perception A. In other words, thought C says that image B is the memory of perception A.

However, when perception A is present, image B is non-existent and when image B is present, perception A is likewise non-existent. What is the connection between a current experience and a non-existent one?

Now, let us go back to thought C that imagines a connection between image B and perception A. If we look more closely we find that when thought C is present, neither image B nor perception A are present. Both must already have taken place for thought C to appear.

So, in order to connect these two non-existent experiences together (perception A and image B), thought C imagines 'a vast container' in which perception A and image B, along with innumerable other non-existent objects and events, are considered to reside.

Once the idea of mind as a vast container is considered to represent something that actually exists, thought can have a field day! It can populate this imagined container called 'mind' with all sorts of imagined experiences such as time, space, memory, objects, people, birth, death, causality etc. ...

Once we have forgotten that time, space, entities, objects, causality etc. etc. are imagined, they seem to become very real and we, the imaginary people that appear as the result of this forgetting, seem to reap the inevitable consequences of this forgetting.

... some of us eventually turn round and question the very construct of the mind itself. What is memory, time, space, the separate self, the world etc? All these questions are really the same question and they are all eventually answered by the same answer.

However, that ultimate answer is not just one more construct of thought. It is the dissolution of thought in its own substance.

So, if we trace back your question all the way and refuse to be satisfied with an answer that is yet another construct of thought, the answer is found as this living, non-objective ever-presence into which thought dissolves and out of which it is made. ...

Returning now to the dissolution of memory, time, space, the separate self, objects, others, the world etc., we may well still wonder, if all these are simply constructs of mind, made only of intermittent objects that bear no relation to one another, why there is such consistency to appearances. After all it is this consistency that seems to validate the belief in all these concepts.

What appears to be consistency between objects or thoughts is, in fact, a pale reflection at the level of the mind of the only true consistency there is, which is the consistency or, more accurately, the ever-presence of our own being, awareness.

In other words, even in the appearance of intermittent thoughts, images, sensations and perceptions, which are not in themselves consistent, awareness, as it were, leaves a trace of itself, a hint of its own reality.

In fact, all experience is shining with the ever-presence of awareness.

The apparent consistency in time or permanence in space does not belong to the realm of thoughts or objects. It belongs to awareness. The ever-presence of awareness is translated, in the language of mind, as continuity in time and permanence in space.

Time and space are the mind's way of conceptualizing the eternal and infinite nature of reality. They are hints of the beloved in the realm of the mind.

*[Presence Volume II, The Dissolution of Thought in Its Own Substance]*

Once we recognise that time is a construct of the mind, it becomes obvious that causation is also a construct of the mind as it requires the concept of time to make sense. Francis Lucille explains it like this:

*Q: So do all physical laws just reflect the way that the mind works, rather than accurately describing something that exists objectively?*

The laws of physics are the laws that apply to this waking dream. During night dreams, the laws of physics are different. That is why you can fly at night! The laws of causation, which are more general than the laws of physics, apply to both domains. However, at the level of consciousness, there is no causation because there are no objects, there is no duality. At this level, there is one single law, and that is the law of love. At this level, love is the ultimate cause of everything, and it is for this reason that there is no answer to the question, "Why?" Everything is just the playfulness of God showing up at every moment.

*[The Perfume of Silence, Meditation Never Starts or Stops]*

We might ask: 'How is this relevant in our practical lives? Surely without using the concept of future time, we couldn't go on holiday? And without the concept of memory (past time) we would not find where we had left our car keys?'. Here is Rupert's advice from a recent meditation:

Use time for practical purposes, but abandon psychological time. In other words, unless you need to think of time for practical purposes, just stop thinking about it. Stop imagining that it exists. Why? Simply because you have never experienced it. Ask yourself the question: 'What happens to my problems if there is no psychological time?' Could you worry about anything without the presumption of time? Could you be sick without the presumption of time? Could you be aging or destined for death without the presumption of time?

So you see this is nothing to do with disciplining your mind and trying to live in the Now, or anything like that. That would just be more 'mind'. This is about *understanding*. If time is truly seen to be non-existent, then living in the Now is an inevitable consequence of that understanding. It is not the result of effort or discipline, and therefore it doesn't need to be *maintained* by effort or discipline. It is just an inevitable, totally relaxed, effortless consequence of understanding – experiential understanding. When I say 'experiential understanding', we have to 'go to' the *facts* of our experience to see that all experience is 'mind'. Consciousness is the nature of 'mind'. And that consciousness never goes anywhere. It hasn't come from somewhere, it's not destined for anywhere. It wasn't born, it's not aging and it's not going to die.

[\[http://non-duality.rupertspira.com/watch/meditation-now-is-a-window-onto-eternity\]](http://non-duality.rupertspira.com/watch/meditation-now-is-a-window-onto-eternity)

## Contemplation

*We never truly desire an object for its own sake; we desire only to be relieved of the agitation of resistance and seeking that takes us away from the Now into time. Thus, all we ever truly desire is to be desireless.*