

Living our understanding

Once we have experienced glimpses of our real self as ever-present, infinite, unlimited awareness, and enjoyed the peace and happiness that accompanies this understanding, we feel frustrated when feelings of being a separate self reappear. So how do we establish this understanding as our permanent way of seeing, feeling, acting and relating? This is how Rupert describes the process:

This clear seeing of what we are is instantaneous – in fact, it is timeless – and once it is our own experience it cannot be taken away. However, it is usually followed by an apparent process in time by which the residues of ignorance – that is, ignoring what we truly are and believing ourself instead to be a separate, limited self – slowly unwind in the light of this understanding.

These residues have deeply conditioned the body and the mind, in most cases for decades. At the level of the mind, ignorance consists in the belief that our self, aware Presence, is located somewhere in the body, for instance behind the eyes. Once this core idea about our identity has taken root, most subsequent thoughts about ourself contain this belief at their origin.

Once this belief has been uprooted by clear seeing, all psychological thoughts, which were previously founded upon it, no longer have any credibility.

... In time this habit of thinking on behalf of a separate entity shows up less frequently because it is no longer substantiated by the belief that such an entity is real.

A similar process takes place with our feelings at the level of the body. It may seem to take longer for this understanding to infiltrate the body because ignorance is more deeply rooted there: for years the body has been considered to house the separate self. ...

The clear seeing that there is no separate self residing in the body is instantaneous, but that doesn't mean that the contractions in the body that developed as a result of this belief vanish instantaneously. They do not!

There is an apparent process in time during which these residues of ignorance at the level of the body are gradually dissolved. And just as the body once expressed the belief in our identity as a separate entity, so it now begins to realign itself with the new understanding and feeling of our self as unlimited, unlocated Presence. In time, our activities and relationships naturally and effortlessly begin to express this new experiential understanding. ...

How does this realignment take place? What do we do if we burn the toast when making breakfast? We just open the window! In time the residues of smoke and the smell of burning are naturally and effortlessly dissipated into the surrounding transparent air.

It is the same here. We simply abide knowingly as this open, empty transparent Presence and welcome the residues of feeling, moving and acting on behalf of a separate, inside self, without any agenda. We offer the density of the separate self to the openness and transparency of Presence and allow them to be infused with its substance.

As the mind and body become more transparent they naturally and effortlessly begin to express the love, freedom and intelligence that are inherent in our true nature of impersonal, unlimited Presence.

Enjoyment, enthusiasm, creativity, friendship and humour are just some of its expressions.

[Rupert Spira: *Presence Vol. II*, The Burnt Rope]

In some traditional paths such as the Christian tradition and classical Advaita Vedanta, the world is seen as a distraction, and monasteries and ashrams were set up to enable people to live enlightened lives free from such distractions. But in the tantric traditions there is no rejection of the world: on the contrary, the world is seen as a help rather than a hindrance. In the last retreat at Buckland Hall, Rupert explained why he takes this approach:

If our peace is only available when circumstances are perfect, when there are no demands of relationship or having to earn our living, then it's a fragile peace. And a fragile peace is no peace at all. ... So see your life in the world both as a test of your experience and also as a means to express and share and communicate your experience. ...

The world needs people who share this understanding in all walks of life. And the same with relationships. Don't feel that relationships – either intimate relationships or ordinary friendships – are in any way in conflict with this investigation. You already know and you will discover more that friendships and intimate relationships throw up every possible challenge. They test our understanding and our love more deeply than anything else. So go headlong into relationship. Expose yourself to all its pleasures and pains – its trials and difficulties. Because a relationship not only tests your love and understanding, in a very profound and visceral way, it's also an opportunity for sharing and communicating and celebrating this understanding.

[Buckland Hall, 24th November 2016: *Separation is an Illusion*]

So at a practical level, how can we use our lives in the world to become established in and as our true nature? First, here is Rupert's advice:

How do we become established as the presence of awareness? We just go over and over and over again to our experience until it just becomes obvious to us. In just the same way that it used to be obvious to us that 'I am a collection of thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions – it used to be so obvious that that's what I am – and we thought, felt, acted and related in a way that is consistent with that belief, now it is equally obvious to us with the same degree of clarity – in fact with a greater degree of clarity and certainty – that I am the presence of awareness. And our response to experience is consistent with this new understanding.

To begin with, the thoughts and feelings carry on as they used to, thinking and feeling on behalf of a separate self. But we no longer believe those thoughts; we no longer feel that we are the separate self to whom those thoughts and feelings refer. And in time, those thoughts and feelings begin to show up less and less and less because we're no longer feeding them with our belief that they are true. We don't do anything to get rid of the thoughts and feelings; they're not a problem, they just flow through us. But because we're no longer investing our interest and identity in them, they begin to wind down. And as they wind down, we find more and more that we are just simply, naturally stable in this feeling-understanding that what I am is this openness, this empty presence through which all experience flows.

So one of the things we do here, is return over and over and over again to this presence of awareness. And sometimes, if we seem not to be this presence of awareness, we have to do a little bit of exploring or excavation in order to get there, and hence these conversations and lines of reasoning. But in time, we need less and less of these investigations. We just go straight back there. It becomes more and more obvious to us until we just begin to live there, just to make it our home. Instead of making our home in thoughts and feelings, we make our home in the presence of awareness. And then we begin to notice that less and less thoughts and feelings are able to persuade us that we are something other than the presence of awareness.

To begin with, the slightest little thing – our partner doesn't look at us in a particular way, or says something that's unkind – and immediately we're lost in our feelings again; we seem to have become a separate self. But after some time, it becomes less easy to be pulled out of, or seem to be pulled out of, the presence of awareness. The circumstances that a few months ago would have completely involved our thoughts and feelings, now just appear and flow by. Somebody once asked Atmananda Krishnamenon: 'How do you know when you are established in your true nature?'. He said: 'when the thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions can no longer take you away'.

So become accustomed to being the presence of awareness in easy, peaceful circumstances such as these [*on a retreat*]. And then when we go back out into our everyday lives, when circumstances become a little bit more testing, just become more and more accustomed to being the presence of awareness under all circumstances, not just the easy ones.

[\[1st December 2012: How to Become Stabilised as Awareness\]](#)

Francis Lucille gives essentially the same advice:

Just tune into this silence, into this presence which is you, which is us. Surrender everything that is perceived, especially your body. Leave it there, floating in emptiness, floating in your infinity, desiring nothing, having nothing, knowing nothing, being nothing.

Take a bath in this light. Turn your heart towards this resonance. Don't ask how, just do it. Do it again and again. Every time it seems you have lost it just do it again, until it becomes as natural as a young child looking back to see if his mother is still present watching him. This is a very simple gesture, going back to that which you love the most. From this place there is truly nothing to do.

Simply remain in waiting without waiting. 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 things. Things are the shell. The sweetness is the pearl.

Objects are like the shadow of the branches of a tree moved by the wind and projected against a wall. The kitten desperately tries to catch the shadow. Be a wise, old cat.

You do not have to eliminate the objects that appear, the sensations, the thoughts, or the feelings. Simply be indifferent to them. And if you are not indifferent to them, ask yourself, "What are these shadows going to bring about? Why do I desire them? Why am I afraid of them? Are they truly what I want?" ...

You are the wall, the sun, the tree, the wind, and the cat.

Live with your desire for truth. Let it be your guide. The desire for truth comes from truth itself. It brings about higher intelligence that will, in time, clarify all questions.

Enjoy the path. There is already a joyful element in understanding. Don't take yourself for a limited entity, now that you have understood, at least in a glimpse, that you are awareness beyond all thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Keep it as your treasure. Go back to it whenever it invites you. Live with this understanding and let the understanding do the work.

[Francis Lucille: *The Perfume of Silence*, *The Transparent Diamond*]

Contemplation

Just allow God's infinite being to shine more and more brightly in your life, and to infiltrate your thoughts, your feelings, your activities, your friendships, your perceptions. That's all.