

Not Doing

We'll start with one of the key questions in non-dual teaching:

Q: Rupert, is there a doer?

RS: There's no personal doer. When a thought appears, there's nobody responsible for creating or choosing that thought. When you have a thought, can you choose your thoughts?

Q: Sometimes I feel that I can – I choose one thought rather than another.

RS: OK. But do you choose which thoughts appear?

Q: No.

RS: So if you don't choose what thoughts appear, then you don't choose the actions that come from those thoughts. If you have the thought 'I want to go to London tomorrow', then if you didn't choose that thought – it just appeared to you like everything else appears to you – then all the subsequent actions that resulted from that thought, you can't say you chose those either. If you don't choose your thoughts, you don't choose your feelings, you don't choose your relationships or activities.

Q: What about if you want a certain outcome for a situation – say a family situation?

RS: There are choices. If I said to you 'would you prefer tea or coffee? You would say ... tea. That's a choice. But there's no personal chooser of that choice. ...

Q: Am I in charge of my subsequent actions or not?

RS: It's not a question of whether you are in charge of your thoughts and your subsequent actions. It's whether there's a 'you' there in the first place – either to be in charge or not to be in charge. So tell us about that 'you' that you are asking about. You experience thoughts, feelings, sensations, perceptions? So what or who do they all appear to?

Q: More and more I realise that they appear to an unnameable, clear space.

RS: Yes, exactly. Tell us about that unnameable, clear space. Of course, you're right, it's unnameable, but try to describe its qualities.

Q: Appearances just bubble into it.

RS: Yes – thoughts bubble into it, feelings bubble into it, the sound of my voice bubbles into it, the sight of this room bubbles into it. ... But tell us more about the nature of this clear space that your experience bubbles into. ...

Q: It's a relief, it's relaxing.

RS: Can that clear space ever be disturbed? Let's say that an agitated thought or an unpleasant feeling appears in it. What happens to the clear space in which it appears?

Q: The space is undisturbed. ... So what I'm getting, and in my experience as well, when I'm able to stay grounded as awareness, then I'm at my least separate, and therefore ...

RS: Yes, because when we feel we are just this openness, this empty openness, in which all experience appears, that empty openness cannot be harmed. It would be like trying to harm the empty space of this room. What could we do to harm the empty space of this room? ... It's totally

allowing, it's totally welcoming. And because there's nothing in it that can be harmed, it doesn't need to defend itself against any experience. Only something that is susceptible to being destroyed needs to defend itself. So the separate self is *always* defending itself or aggrandising itself in relationship. This openness in which all experience takes place has nothing to defend itself from. It cannot be destroyed. It's indestructible not because it's so strong but because it is so empty and so open. So if we understand and more importantly feel 'I am simply this open, empty, aware space in which all experience takes place', then it's a position both of complete sensitivity and vulnerability to all experience. Total openness to all experience, and at the same time, it's imperturbable. It's indestructible, no experience stains it.

So once it's clear to us that what I essentially am is not a cluster of thoughts, sensations and feelings, I am this aware openness in which all of those appear, then there is a deep relaxation, both in the mind and in the body. Because we feel – we don't just understand, we *feel* that no emotion, no event – it doesn't mean we stop being sensitive to other people's emotions and events – but ultimately, what we are is not stained by any experience, is not harmed or disturbed by any experience. And that is like a deep peace underneath the mind. The mind *can* still and *does* still do its dance on the surface, responding to situations and circumstances, but underneath, it's like a well of peace.

[Buckland Hall, 17th May 2015: *There is Only One Infinite Awareness*]

We might conclude that since we are not the doer, there's nothing we can do to realise our true nature. Indeed, many teachers say exactly that. This is Rupert's response:

It would be disingenuous to believe that there is nothing to do, that Consciousness is all there is, that there is no separate entity, simply because we have heard or read it so many times.

Such a belief leaves us worse off than we were in the first place. Not only do we still harbour the original belief in separation and its attendant feelings, but we overlay it with a veneer of 'Non-Duality', embedded in which is the deep belief that the mind only perpetuates ignorance.

If we make the statement that there is nothing that we can do to reach enlightenment, we make it either from understanding, from our own experience, or from hearsay, from belief.

If the statement is made from experience, then it is true.

However, if it is not our experience that there is nothing to do to reach enlightenment, then, by definition, there is still an apparent personal entity present. That personal entity *is* the apparent doer, feeler, thinker, enjoyer or sufferer.

So if we believe ourselves to be such a doer, it is disingenuous to say that there is nothing to do. It is a contradiction in terms. We are already doing something. To that apparent one it would be more appropriate to say, 'Yes, there is something to be done.'

What is there to be done? Investigate the belief and the feeling that what we truly are is a separate entity, an individual doer. When that issue is resolved, the question as to whether or not there is something to be done will not arise.

So the formulation 'There is nothing to do' and the formulation 'There is something to do' can both be either true or untrue, depending on the understanding from which they are derived. In the end both are irrelevant, but in the beginning, both can be helpful.

If we think that either one is truer than the other, then we are stuck at the level of mind. We condone and substantiate mind either through denial or through assertion, and there is not much to choose from between those two positions. In fact, they are the same position.

However, if we explore the relative truth of *both* statements, we free ourselves from the dogma attached to either position and, in this case, the issue is transcended in Understanding rather than resolved in knowledge. [Rupert Spira, *The Transparency of Things: The Doer*]

Rupert quotes Francis Lucille as saying ‘meditation is a universal yes-saying to everything’. So should we accept everything as it is, and not respond actively to situations in the world? Here is Francis’s answer:

If it is within your power to change things, there is no point in simply accepting them as they are because you think that it is a higher path to leave everything as it is. ... Use your intelligence. Be open to doing anything that your intelligence and sensitivity prompt you to do. But if, after having done everything that is within your power, you still want things to change, that’s a different matter. That indicates a residual refusal to accept the reality of life.

[Francis Lucille, *Truth, Love Beauty: Let the Moment Flow*]

In the audio we listened to last week, Rupert explain how to apply that approach in practical situations of relationships with ‘apparent others’:

Q: What if the other side doesn’t have this understanding?

RS: That doesn’t mean that we allow ourselves to be mistreated or abused. It doesn’t mean to say that if we see something that is not consistent with love and understanding, that we just pass by with a smile on our face. No – we will respond, moment by moment to the situation. It doesn’t mean always saying ‘yes’ with a smile on our face. Sometimes it’s necessary to say ‘no’, and sometimes very firmly. But whatever we say, whatever we do, whatever we think, will be deeply informed by this feeling-understanding. And then we tailor this understanding to each situation that arises, including being confronted by an apparent person or situation that doesn’t share this understanding. We do our best to respond appropriately and practically, but our response is informed by this understanding. It might have to be a very firm response.

[Rupert Spira, [Berkeley 21st October 2015: Love](#)]

So what is it like *not* to feel ‘I am the doer’, ‘I am dealing with this situation’?

If you fall in love with presence, you don’t try to stop the moment, you let the moment flow because you understand that it doesn’t matter. The more it flows, the more it establishes you in your presence, your *now-ing*, your knowing. You will sense the flow of things and become a Taoist. That’s the meaning of the word Tao—the flow.

[Francis Lucille, *Truth, Love Beauty: Let the Moment Flow*]

Rupert describes the same process from another perspective:

The human teacher is, for most of us, the first form of this Knowingness, and through our association with him or her, in whatever form that may take, we are returned to the Knowingness that is our Self.

In some ways this encounter ends a chapter in our lives. In another way it opens a new one. What we previously thought to be ‘practice’ or ‘doing’ is no longer a choice. It is an impossibility. At the same time the offering of the body, the mind and the world to Presence becomes an inevitability.

From the outside this may look like a practice, like something that an individual is doing for a desired end, and it may not differ outwardly from more conventional modes of spiritual seeking. However, it is nothing of the sort. They are worlds apart.

In fact, it is not even the offering of the body, the mind and the world. It is the reclaiming of the body, the mind and the world, their reabsorption into that from which they were never for a single moment separated.

This should not really be called practice. It should be called love. In fact, it *is* love.

[Rupert Spira, *The Transparency of Things: The Doer*]

Contemplation

The separation between the knower and the known, the experiencer and the experienced, the thinker and the thought, the feeler and the felt, the doer and the deed, never actually occurs. It is made only of the thought that thinks it, and is substantiated in the body as feelings.

[Rupert Spira]