

Thinking, Enquiring, Contemplating and Abiding

Those who are new to the Direct Path often have difficulty reconciling some of the statements Rupert has made with their own beliefs and experience. For example: 'you are already the presence of awareness – you don't need to work to become that'; 'there's no room for a practice'; 'there's no need to get rid of thoughts'; 'enlightenment is not an experience', 'don't turn self-enquiry or self-abidance into a practice in order to obtain something in the future'. It seems logical that, as the saying goes, 'if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got'. So how can those statements be true? Isn't it obvious that something needs to change if we are to find this unconditional, imperturbable happiness that Rupert talks about?

As Rupert explains, the answer lies in *noticing* rather than doing, relaxation rather than effort, interest and enjoyment rather than practice:

Everything about your experience changes continuously. But one element of your experience – that which knows or the knowing element of experience, remains consistently present. Simply witnessing, or being aware of your experience – that is not something extraordinary that suddenly starts to happen at a moment in time – it's happening all the time. We don't notice it because our attention is so exclusively directed towards objects. We are so fascinated by our thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions, that we don't notice that there is something that is aware of all of this. What is that?

But as soon as someone says 'be interested in whatever it is that is aware of your experience', something magical happens. We cease focusing on the objects of experience, we cease focusing exclusively on thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions, and in that moment, there is a relaxation of the mind, a relaxation of the focus of our attention on objects. And in that moment, the presence of awareness is noticed. The presence of awareness doesn't start then, we just notice it. ... As soon as we relax our interest in the drama – we don't even need to get rid of the drama – as soon as we relax the focus of our attention on the drama: 'Oh, there's the presence of awareness'. Just this silent, open, inherently peaceful presence of awareness, simply witnessing or watching the movie of experience. ...

So don't expect something special to happen. These stories about people who are barely able to walk down the street or sit on the sofa, these kinds of experiences occur when there has been such a contraction of the attention on objects, when the attention has been so exclusively focused on objects that this relaxation triggers a series of side-effects in the body-mind. So for some time there is a complete disorientation in the body-mind because that body-mind has been gripping onto external experience or objects so tightly that this relaxation throws him into confusion. Other people have to sit on park benches for two years while their body-mind reacclimates ...

But it doesn't have to happen like that, and in most cases it doesn't. It could also happen like this: 'Oh yes. Of course. There's something that is aware of my experience. Why did nobody tell me that before? Of course, my thoughts are flowing through an empty space. My feelings and sensations are appearing in this same empty space. And this empty space is inherently peaceful. It's never stained by experience.' That's it. It could happen like that. And then that person would just keep visiting, keep noticing this openness in which experience appears, and begin to live there more and more, so that their thoughts and feelings – in time – would become saturated with the peace of awareness. And they would never be able to report anything special.

[Rupert Spira: Buckland Hall 26th April 2016,: [Noticing the Presence of Awareness](#)]

At the beginning, this may still seem puzzling. Surely there must be something that we need to actually *do*? In the following dialogue, Rupert explains how just taking the thought 'I' and allowing attention to be drawn back to our essential being, is enough. And if at first it seems like it's something we do, or it seems like an effort, that's OK – we just do it, we just make the effort:

It's not necessary to repeat 'I' or 'I am' to yourself, you just take the thought once. Take the thought 'I am' and then allow your attention to be drawn to its referent, to that which is referred to by the name 'I', which is your essential being. For a mind that is accustomed to being lost in experience, that, to begin with, will feel like something that that mind has to practise. The mind has to extricate itself from the depression, from the loneliness, from the fear, from the sorrow, and return, as it were, to its essence, pure being. So to begin with, it seems like a practice that the mind has to do. And this is why in the early stages we feel that meditation is a practice that we do. But in time, we realise that we can't practise being ourselves. You haven't spent all of your life practising being a man. You just feel 'I am a man'. ... So now we realise that actually what we *essentially* are is not being a man or a woman or even a person, it's just this pure aware being.

So although we may, to begin with, have to extricate ourselves from experience and return to, so to speak, ourselves, or our essential being, in time we realise 'no I don't have to return to myself, I've never left myself, I've always been myself, only previously, myself was so mixed with experience that experience coloured or clouded or obscured myself and I overlooked myself'. So to begin with there's this feeling of returning to yourself, that's the *practice* of meditation. But in time, you realise 'I don't have to return there, it's where I naturally am, it's my home.' So then meditation ceases to be something we *practise*. We realise it's what we are. So we no longer practise returning to ourselves; we just abide in ourselves, as ourselves. If anything, we have to *practise* becoming a person again. That is, adding thoughts, feelings, activities, relationships to our essential being.

So initially, we think 'a person is what I am, and meditation is what I do'. That's fine in the early stages. But at some point, there is a reversal. We realise that meditation is what I am and the 'person' is what I do. In other words, the person is the activity of thinking and perceiving that is added to me. It is my activity, but not myself. ... But it's fine if you feel at some point that you are lost in experience – in suffering, in excitement or whatever – it's fine then to trace your way back to yourself. And if that feels like something you have to do, then it's fine – do it. If it feels to begin with, that it's something you have to make an effort to do, then make the effort. Later it will become clear to you that being yourself is actually the only thing in life that requires no effort at all. Everything else, apart from being yourself, requires effort.

[Rupert Spira: Garrison 30th April 2019, The Unity of Being]

It might seem obvious that since the belief in being a separate person or an ego is what is veiling our true nature, that it is necessary to destroy or crush ego. And some traditional progressive paths involve trying to achieve exactly that. Rupert has made it clear that fighting ego or trying to crush it simply makes it stronger. But more recently another variation on this approach has been put forward by some non-dual teachers, who talk about the need to 'deconstruct' ego. As Rupert explains, this too, is unnecessary:

RS: The ego doesn't need to be broken or crushed or dissolved, or annihilated or even understood.

Q: *I'm very invested right now in deconstructing ...*

RS: No, don't deconstruct the ego. The ego will fall apart. Ego just means 'I' in Latin, so the word 'ego' really means 'infinite being'. That's the real ego, the only ego. The only I there is, is infinite self-aware being. So the ego is just a belief that that infinite, self-aware being shares the limits and the destiny of the body. So there's no such thing as 'an ego' or a separate self. If there was, it would have to be destroyed. But to believe that it has to be destroyed or broken or annihilated or deconstructed, credits it with too much existence, and thereby perpetuates it. What is necessary is to see what is meant by the word 'I'. If you see clearly what is meant by the word 'I', that's like taking the cornerstone of the house away. It can't stand any more, its foundation has been removed. Not because you have tried to get rid of it or annihilate it or discipline it, or deconstruct it, but simply because you have seen its reality.

[Rupert Spira: Garrison 30th April 2019: The Unity of Being]

Instead of deconstructing the sense of being an ego, Rupert suggests enquiring into and then contemplating what it is that we call 'I' – in other words, what is essential to us. In the following dialogue, Rupert explains the difference between these two processes:

Q: What is the distinction between enquiring and contemplating?

RS: Contemplating means 'being aware of ...', whereas enquiring or investigating is a process of exploration. Self-enquiry has two parts to it, or two stages of it. The first is an enquiry or an investigation, and the second is more of a contemplation or abidance. [In the previous conversation with a different questioner], that was an investigation into what we call 'I'. We were exploring first of all the thought that I am my feelings and perceptions, then we realised that I am the one that is aware of my perceptions. That was an investigation that took place – a series of questions. And the questions take us deeper and deeper into ourselves. That's called self-enquiry or self-investigation. But at some point, we arrive at ourselves, so to speak. We can't go any further back. We arrive at 'yes, I am present, I'm ever-present, I'm aware, I have no form, I never change'. And then we can't go further back. There's no more investigation to do. Our investigation then turns into self-abidance or self-resting, or being aware of being aware, or just contemplating the contemplator.

Q: My mind is so active, like talking and talking and talking. And I feel like I can abide with that, but it doesn't seem to stop or slow down. It's always thinking or talking and creating a swirling-up of emotions ...

RS: That's fine. Just let your mind do whatever it's been conditioned to do. It's like going for a walk with a crazy chihuahua, and the chihuahua is all over the place, but it's not causing you, yourself, or anyone else any harm. So you just put it on a long lead, or take it off the lead – it knows its way around, it's going around all over the place – and you just walk peacefully along the path. You are not concerned with what it's doing. So it's the same. Treat your mind like this crazy chihuahua, just let it do what it's been conditioned to do. Your business is with yourself, not with your mind, in this contemplation. There are other times when it's appropriate to give your attention to your mind. When you're interested in your Self, your business is with your Self. And your Self is present, irrespective of the content of your mind, irrespective of what is, or is not, taking place in your mind. So don't fight with your mind. Just give your attention to your Self, contemplate your Self, be with your Self, or be knowingly your Self. Rest in your Self. And don't be tempted by the unruly chihuahua to go off when it starts yapping, and it has found some exciting new smell somewhere – don't be tempted to go there. It's not the time to be going there. It's the time for being with your Self.

[Rupert Spira: Garrison, 29th April 2019, *The I that I am.*]

The form of meditation that Rupert teaches is subjective meditation – allowing attention to sink back into its source, the *subject* of experience. There is no attempt to control the mind. Other forms of meditation – objective meditation – all involve trying to control the mind by giving it an *object* to focus on. Jean Klein explains why trying to control the mind doesn't bring us to our true nature:

The mind cannot change itself, the wilful ego is only one aspect of the mind. It can never bring about a change by analysing and choosing, excusing, explaining, criticizing or concluding. Most of the time action is only reaction caused by fear, anxiety and desire. These are aspects of a mind which works like a kaleidoscope which can only rearrange a fixed number of pieces, a mind sustained by the ego, the already known, memory. Through global vision all will, all intention is abandoned leaving only silent awareness, total presence. This silent presence frees us from the patterns fabricated by the ego, thus opening out before us a whole new world of energies.

We often try to master the mind, to quiet it through concentration, but with clear-sighted vision we soon realize that concentration and distraction belong equally to the divided mind. We cannot possibly master the mind by means of the mind. Concentration only gives rise to a fixation, imprisoned like a canary in a cage. Silent awareness is beyond dispersion and concentration. Once seen in this light, the mind gives up striving and agitation dies away, giving way to living presence. ...

If we succeed in stopping thoughts by concentration we nonetheless remain in a state of conflict. When the mind is calmed in this way, we perceive an emptiness, a feeling of quietness which might mistakenly lead us to believe we had attained the ultimate. It is essential to accept that our true Self is never to be found in a perception, in an object. We can never look in the known for what is beyond the known. If we have a preconceived idea of the ultimate, we will try to attain it. This striving itself then becomes the major obstacle. So we must meditate on the sayings of the guru and let their content guide us to non-objective experience. When the object is no longer the centre of our attention, attention leaves the object and is reabsorbed into the ultimate subject. This experience is lived quite beyond the ordinary dual relationship of subject and object.

[Jean Klein, *I Am* ch 13]

When we sink deeply into whatever it is that we call 'I', it sometimes feels as though we are going to sleep. But what is happening is that the mind has simply stopped operating:

Q: When I am approaching a deeper layer within myself, and I'm just about to break through, it seems that my mind relaxes so much that it almost goes to sleep.

What is interesting is when the mind goes to sleep and you remain awake. Just kiss the mind goodnight.

In those moments it doesn't matter whether the mind is operating or not. The mind has been making a last-ditch effort to understand the truth and it has become exhausted. It is close to seeing that it cannot understand, and it is just about ready to give up. So let it have a holiday.

[Francis Lucille: *Truth, Love Beauty*, ch 8 Kiss the Mind Goodnight]

Contemplation

The discovery that peace, happiness and love are ever-present within our own Being, and completely available at every moment of experience, under all conditions, is the most important discovery that anyone can make.

[Rupert Spira]