

Beyond the Mind

In some non-dual circles, use of the mind is discouraged and disparaged. It is regarded as an obstacle to the recognition of our true nature, and the path of reason or knowledge is seen as being if not entirely useless, at best inferior to the path of love and devotion. That is a misunderstanding that for many, blocks the way to the imperturbable happiness that they seek. In the following extract from a webinar dialogue, Rupert explains that all of us need a balance of all four paths of truth, love, beauty and action, although individually, we might be more attracted to one of them:

RS: The non-dual approach addresses three questions: What is the nature of reality? How can we find lasting peace and happiness? How should we live in the world? The first question, 'What is the nature of reality?' relates to our thoughts. 'How can we find lasting peace and happiness?' relates to our feelings. 'How should we live and act in the world?' relates to our perceptions, relationships and activities. The non-dual approach addresses each of these three issues. Why? Because as human beings we think, we feel and we perceive and act. The non-dual approach addresses each of these channels of experience. It doesn't preference any aspect of our experience. As individuals, some of us are more inclined towards thinking than feeling, others are more inclined towards feeling than thinking, and some are more inclined towards perception and action – creativity – than thinking or feeling. The non-dual understanding has developed pathways that respond to each of these three tendencies that each of us has. ... Each path, the path of knowledge, the path of love or devotion, the path of perception or action – jnana yoga, bhakti yoga, rupa yoga, karma yoga – there are really four paths: knowledge, devotion, perception, action, these are all legitimate pathways.

In the approach we take here, the approach is, I hope, fairly evenly balanced across all four – thinking, feeling, perceiving, acting. It's a fairly balanced approach. It includes all four realms. It doesn't preference any particular realm. So my recommendation for all of us, as far as possible, would be to be balanced. To take all four pathways. It's natural that some of us are more inclined to some aspects more than others. So as long as we embark on all four paths, at least to a degree, then to have a preference for one or another pathway is fine.

[Rupert Spira, Webinar: 23rd April 2020]

When someone is struggling to get in touch with their true nature, we often hear Rupert say something like 'you can't find it with your mind – it's beyond mind'. What does 'beyond mind' mean in that context? It's sometimes interpreted as meaning that it's no good thinking about it – we need to find it through another channel such as feeling. But that would be a misinterpretation. What is being referenced is what Atmananda Krishnamenon called 'higher reasoning' rather than the conventional logic or 'lower reasoning' more commonly used by the mind. Atmananda (who was the originator of the term 'the Direct Path') clearly had a preference for the path of knowledge and he is therefore an excellent source of guidance and clarification on this subject. Here are a few excerpts from his *Spiritual Discourses* which explain the difference between lower reasoning and higher reasoning:

In our search for Truth, beginning with an examination of the world before us, we use as our instrument the faculty of reason. This reason can well be divided into two. One is lower reason, which is exercised by the mind in examining the mutual relationship of objects, from intellect down to the gross world. The other is higher reason or transcendental reason, which is exercised in examining the mind and its objects – gross or subtle – with a view to discover their real content.

There are usually three accepted paths to the Truth. They are the paths of *devotion*, *yoga* and *jnana*. Of these three, devotion and yoga deal only with relative things falling within the sphere of the mind and sense organs, taking into consideration only experiences in the waking state. Their findings, therefore, can only be partial and incomplete.

The *jnana* path looks from a broader perspective and comprehends within its scope both yoga and devotion. It takes into consideration the whole of life's experiences – comprised in the three states – viewed impartially. It demands a high degree of real devotion, in the sense that the aspirant has to have a high degree of earnestness and sincerity to get to the Truth. This is *real devotion, to Truth*; and it is infinitely superior to devotion to anything else, which can only be less than the Truth. ...

Every perception by itself is invariably governed and corrected by the relatively higher faculty called *buddhi* (lower reason). This *buddhi* is in its turn controlled and corrected by another faculty called higher reason (or *vidya-vritti*), which is well beyond the mind. This is Consciousness itself, appearing to be functioning. We are usually slow to accept the existence of this faculty, as it is usually confounded with the lower reason itself, their workings being apparently similar. ...

Truth transcends the senses, mind and intellect. It can never be brought down to the level of the mind, to be thought, felt or grasped by the intellect. If it were grasped at all, it would never be by the intellect, but by the higher reason alone. ...

Lower reason: Silently makes reference only to your own [personal] experiences.

Higher reason: Makes a silent reference only to the very being in you, and the endorsement comes spontaneously from within.

[Atmananda Krishnamenon, *Notes on Spiritual Discourses*: 63, 111, 123, 249]

The mind operates only in duality – subject and object. That duality can be transcended only by 'going beyond the mind'. The following example (which will be familiar to almost all of us), illustrates how higher reason can be used to take us directly to that non-dual understanding:

The disentangling of awareness from its own activity can be effected by asking a question that invites the mind to trace its way back from objective experience towards its essential, irreducible nature.

One such question is, 'Am I aware?' Most questions lead awareness to direct the light of its knowing or attention towards objective knowledge or experience, but a question such as, 'Am I aware?' is a sacred question that invites the mind in an objectless direction.

As the mind proceeds in this objectless direction it begins to relax, sink or fall back into the source of awareness from which it has arisen. The mind progressively loses its colour or activity until its essence of pure awareness is revealed.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was referring to this sacred investigation when he wrote, 'Follow knowledge like a sinking star, beyond the utmost bound of human thought'.

That is, seek absolute knowledge of the eternal, infinite, self-aware being that shines in each of our minds as the experience of being aware or the knowledge 'I am', at the very source of the mind itself, prior to all objective knowledge and experience.

[Rupert Spira: *Being Aware of Being Aware*: Ch 4 the Disentangling of Experience]

Self-discovery, and indeed the understanding of anything, takes place beyond the mind in the vast, unmoving, silent, empty field of awareness. It is perhaps for that reason that many progressive paths teach methods of getting rid of thoughts in order to reach that silence. But in the Direct Path this is regarded as unnecessary. We come to recognise that our true self is always knowable, always shining, whether in the presence or the absence of thoughts. It is natural for us to use our minds. The only types of thought that can seem to veil our true self, awareness, are thoughts that revolve around the sense of separation. Here is a description from Francis of the different functions of thinking:

I often find myself daydreaming.

Daydreaming is an avoidance of the now which is deemed to be boring. It is an escape from whatever is arising in the moment and it takes us into the past or the future. It relates to the thought that we are a personal entity.

There is a difference between daydreaming and what we could call “free thinking.” Daydreaming could be called “captive thinking” in the sense that it is captive of the notion that we are a person, that there is someone to whom the daydream is happening, a projected someone. In “free thinking,” thoughts arise freely and there can be strange associations, but there is no entity around which they revolve. It is very creative.

It is also necessary to have practical thoughts, for instance to make plans, to book the car into the garage, to make a shopping list, and so on. There is nothing wrong with these types of thoughts. They are an appropriate response to the current situation and do not need to hinge around a separate entity.

There is another type of thinking that doesn't depend on, create, or maintain the idea of a separate entity and these are thoughts about truth. They come from the truth and lead us back to it. We could call it “higher reasoning.” It is only the first type of thinking, which revolves around a separate entity, that leads to misery. ...

If we drop a daydream, then the next time one appears, we will become conscious of it earlier. Each time we do this it becomes easier to drop it the next time, so the average duration of a daydream will get shorter and shorter. At some point, we no longer daydream because, before it takes root, we catch the impulse to avoid the now, which triggers the daydreaming in the first place. At this point the understanding, the moment of becoming aware of the daydreaming, and the moment of dropping it are simultaneous.

[Francis Lucille, *The Perfume of Silence: The Mother of All Problems*]

If we find we are day-dreaming around a personal entity, instead of trying to get rid of those thoughts, just the recognition that they have arisen in service of an imaginary separate self is enough. We simply allow them to flow through, without engaging with them. Here is some advice from Francis:

Be with what appears. Sometimes we think and sometimes we don't, sometimes we move and sometimes we don't, sometimes we play and sometimes we don't, sometimes we eat and sometimes we sleep. If we let this alternation between active and passive states unfold naturally, we are taking our stand as true changeless presence, which is not an object.

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

Higher reasoning is something that happens, rather than something we can do. But by starting with a question, and perhaps some 'lower reasoning' around it, we can encourage higher reasoning to arise. And once a particular higher reasoning pathway has taken us to the understanding that lies beyond mind, all that's necessary is to keep going back along that pathway every time we find that we have become lost in the world of objects. As Francis explains, this soon becomes instantaneous, and the pathway is no longer needed.

In satsang, through grace, we have glimpses of truth and we experience occurrences of higher reasoning. We find ourselves thinking very deeply about these matters, and it all happens spontaneously. The formulation that we arrive at becomes simpler and simpler. Instead of there being a lengthy process between the first appearance of the thought about the truth and its resolution into the experience of truth, the end is present at the beginning. You think about the truth and you are truth.

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

Contemplation

The mind can only explore the situation and then stand silently at the threshold of consciousness, waiting for the answer to come. This answer may be an intellectual understanding. But ideally there is a dimension of love and a dimension of beauty, with a conviction that this is indeed the answer.

[Francis Lucille: *Truth, Love Beauty*]