

There is Only One Reality

Our understanding of the nature of ourself and the universe usually starts with a series of glimpses and gradually becomes established as a 'default setting' through a deep self-enquiry. We are helped in that self-enquiry by a series of analogies, metaphors and models which our teacher uses as a skilful means to remove the layers of ignorance and belief that seem to veil understanding. But none of these analogies, metaphors or models are absolutely true. They all have limitations. In the Indian traditions it is known as 'a thorn to remove a thorn'. But what is important is to ensure that once we experience the peace and happiness of our true nature, there are no thorns that remain hidden as subtle beliefs. If this understanding is to protect us from psychological suffering throughout all the situations that might arise in life, it has to be on a rock-solid foundation of clear understanding based on our own experience and reason, and not on belief.

So in order to flush out any hidden beliefs that those who are very familiar with Rupert's teaching may have acquired from the various 'thorns' that he uses, this paper uses dialogues from Francis Lucille that explore exactly the same Direct Path teaching, but from a different perspective. It may also be helpful in providing an alternative pathway for newer people who are finding some aspects of the teaching difficult to understand and relate to.

Francis distinguishes between that which can be proved from phenomenal experience – in other words that which is in the realm of science – and that which we know from within, noumenal experience, and which therefore cannot be proved but is nonetheless not a belief. We know it with 100% certainty. This first dialogue explores the two noumenal intuitions that form the basis of non-duality: consciousness is real; and there is only one reality.

Q: I heard you say that there are two intimate observations or intuitions: one is that consciousness is real – and that resonated. The other is that there is only one reality and that did not resonate. I just don't understand the words.

FL: If you take a cat. There is a tail, there is a body of the cat and there is a head of the cat. These divisions are only names that we project onto the cat. The cat is a cat, as it is. The cat is one single reality and then through operation of the mind, we see parts. But the cat doesn't come with labels on it saying 'this is the cat's head', 'this is the cat's body', 'this is the cat's tail'. So if you transpose that to the world, our experience, everything, the distinctions we make are mind-distinctions. But our experience is one. Nature is one. ...

So this intuition that there is only one reality is the intuition that everything is one. Also, it could be expressed by saying everything is interrelated. That's why the laws of physics seem to apply everywhere. In other words, they apply to a domain that is way bigger than our bodies. So the reality of this domain to which our bodies belong, because our bodies are also subject to those laws, in this domain everything is interdependent. It's like a kingdom in which the laws apply to the whole kingdom, so there is a oneness to it.

But what I am saying here are not proofs. It's something that cannot be proven. Just as we cannot prove that consciousness is real. We know it from within. I cannot prove it to you. ...

What I mean by reality is the hidden origin of things – not the things in themselves, because the things always change, but that which creates them, which doesn't change. So this notion of reality is that which is always the same, which never changes. So how do we know about it? And the opposite of reality is illusion, that which is not real. How do we know as we wake up in the morning that the people we interacted with and the trees and the mountains during the dream

are not real? We know it because they have absolutely disappeared. They cannot be found anywhere. That's what I mean by absolute disappearance. They have totally vanished. So, we say 'well, they never existed in the first place, they were not real'. So if an illusion is something that vanishes absolutely, then reality, being the opposite, is that which never vanishes absolutely. That would be the definition of reality. And it is the source of that which is in time and in space and is therefore beyond time and space. ...

If you look at what is the reality of my human experience, the reality of my human experience must be *my* reality. Right? And if you think about what is the reality of my human experience, what is that which is always present? Is it not consciousness? Consciousness is that which is present in your experience all the time. That's why we know that we are conscious with a certainty of 100%. Whereas anything else – we cannot have the same certainty. That there is a computer here? We may be dreaming right now and on waking up from this dream it may turn out that this computer was not real. But nevertheless, consciousness perceiving the computer is real. With reality comes this absolute certainty. So the reality of our experience is consciousness, because that's the changeless element and everything else changes. Our body changes, our thoughts change, every atom or molecule in our body changes, even the way our body works, changes. But consciousness doesn't change. ...

This consciousness knows itself. It knows that it is real. The problem is that it believes [itself] to be limited, without really seeing all the implications of this belief. Because if this consciousness is limited, it means there are other realities. So then there is more than one reality. For instance, each individual consciousness or each being would be a reality of its own. And then there is the reality of the world out there, of this extraordinary universe, and possibly more realities. The problem with the 'many realities' theory is with the interaction among these realities. How do they interact with one another, if they are truly separate? If they are not separate, then why make a distinction because it means that they belong to a bigger reality? That's food for thought. ...

This understanding that you and I are the same consciousness can be accessed only through consciousness itself – not through objects, not through phenomenal experience. But if you want to reach it intellectually through logic and reason, the path is to understand, to see from your own experience that consciousness is real on the one hand, and also to interrogate, to investigate your intuition that there is only one reality.

[Francis Lucille 2014: [Self-Inquiry 15 of 16: There Is Only One Reality](#)]

This second dialogue explores experience of perceiving the world. What can we know about the reality of the world 'out there':

Q: During meditation this morning, the birds were chirping. Who perceives the chirping?

FL: The perceiver-in-chief which is the ultimate perceiver, is consciousness. That which really perceives, I call it consciousness.

Q: Is it perceiving the perception of the chirping?

FL: Yes, because you don't know what the chirping is by itself. All you have is the perception of the chirping. If you were blindfolded and if I was playing a CD of birds chirping, you would feel 'there's a bird out there', but in fact it shows you don't perceive the bird, you perceive the chirping. You perceive your own perception. Whether there is a bird 'out there' – it depends what we define as 'out there'. And what we define as 'out there' is the source of all of our

perceptions that can be verified by peer observers. Like this flower – you and I we agree that's a white orchid. Then that's out there, that's external. My thought in this moment – first I thought of a white elephant, then that's too real, and then I thought of a pink elephant but I thought I often did that, then I thought of a blue elephant. So you didn't perceive my thought, right? That's private. So that's not part of the external world. Because the definition we have of the external world is 'that from which the objects come that allegedly create that subset of our perceptions to which the intersubjective agreement applies'. That's the external world. Whether there is such an external world existing ... Now the first thing to notice is that this external world exists independently from minds, which is often a mistake made in Advaita that it exists only in minds. But no. If I leave the room, the orchid will still be there. It's independent from Francis's mind. If you leave the room, I can still perceive it, so it's independent from your mind. And therefore it's independent from both minds. There is something out there that is independent from minds, from human minds. Whether it is independent from reality – no, because by definition, reality encompasses everything. So it's not independent from reality. And since I call consciousness 'the reality that perceives', and if there is only one reality, then it is not independent from consciousness.

I cannot prove to you that there is only one reality. But since you *are* that reality as consciousness, this evidence is within us: the evidence that consciousness is real and the evidence that there is only one reality. I cannot prove it to you.

Q I understand that, but I'm stuck with the perceiving of perceptions.

FL: Eliminate the external object. Perceptions are that which you really perceive.

Q: But then the understanding that it is an orchid. How does that happen? So when we say we perceive the perception, does that include the understanding that it is an orchid?

FL: No. The perception itself is made of visual images. We look at it. Then we have a shape-recognition program running inside the brain and the outcome of that is 'it's an orchid'.

Q: Then it's the brain that decides 'that is an orchid'.

FL: Well, the brain is a model, right? But it's a good model. So yes, there is a local processing of the data.

Q: So it came up with this answer 'that is an orchid'?

FL: Because the brain is not independent from reality. The brain is very much anchored in reality. It is the product of reality. But in and by itself, it is not a reality. Therefore, the brain is a tool used by reality to perceive the orchid. Which is also a product of reality, right? That's why in fact this duality observer-observed that we find in quantum mechanics, are part of the same reality. It's so obvious, right? So it is this reality perceiving itself. But once we recognise ourselves as being 1) real and 2) consciousness, then it becomes obvious that what we usually call 'consciousness', the moment we attribute to it the 'reality' quality, becomes universal. And we know from direct experience that consciousness is real. I cannot prove it to you, but you cannot make it up. You see what I mean? Everything you perceive could be an illusion, but at least consciousness is real. And you can also convince yourself easily of the fact that that which is real has to be universal.

Q: When you say 'at least consciousness is real', I see it as 'the experience of perceiving is real'.

FL: Yes.

Q: I don't know what I'm perceiving, but what I'm perceiving is real.

FL: You don't know whether that which is perceived is real. Yes.

Q: But the experience of perceiving is real.

FL: Right. Consciousness is an experience. Reality is an experience. You see, that's very important because usually in our materialistic view or conditioning, we see matter as real. And matter means objects made of matter. So as a result we see experience, or experiencing, to be less real than matter, whereas it's just the opposite. Why? Without experiencing, we couldn't possibly know there is matter, or assume there is matter. Therefore, that which we know is at best as real as the truth through which we know it, which is consciousness. Right? So basically, consciousness is at least as real as matter. That's very important. But what's important also is to see that by proceeding in this manner, we have avoided the pitfall of solipsism – that 'all is mind'. All that new-age stuff, that neo-Advaita stuff, and you find that also in India – 'it's all mind'. No. It's all consciousness, and consciousness is much bigger than mind and much bigger than all the minds.

Q: Then what is maya? They say 'the world is an illusion'.

FL: Maya refers to the world being not as real as the consciousness that creates it, sustains it, makes it evolve. The world that we see is in transit. It is in constant transformation. As a result, it is not as real as the changeless reality that manifests it. And which appears to us *as it*. So in a sense, there is maya and there is no maya. Because the world that we see is Shiva, or Brahman, taking the disguise of Shakti or maya, whatever. But it is reality itself. There is no duality between maya or Shakti and Shiva. It is Shiva that wants to show his female side and whatever ...

Q: So this name and form is just reality?

FL: Right.

Q: And that's where you talk about how reality is granite-like?

FL: When I say that, it's because we see consciousness as thought-like. Reality comes from the Latin word *res* which means things, objects. So we see objects as matter-like, granite-like. So we see reality as granite-like and we see consciousness as thought-like, dream-like. So as long as we see these two realms, the realm of thoughts or perceptions and the realm of matter, as not intersecting – they are parallel or they are like two trajectories in space that don't intersect – so long as we see these two realities as having nothing in common, it prevents us from seeing consciousness as real, as reality. And therefore it prevents us from seeing matter as being made out of consciousness. Because we see consciousness as being thought-like and we say 'this guy is crazy, he is telling us that that's thought, but I never bumped into a thought, and I just bumped my knee into a glass table! So you cannot sell this bullshit to me'. That's the argument.

This argument is valid as long as we consider consciousness as being thought-like and reality being granite-like. But if we blur the distinction from both sides between reality on the one hand and consciousness on the other hand, then it changes everything. So the way to blur it, is first to understand that consciousness is real. We know that from ourself. So if consciousness is real, consciousness connects with reality. Right? And the other way is to see reality as not being confined to matter. As not being necessarily granite-like.

Q: Or reality is universal. And consciousness is real. And there is only one reality.

FL: Yes. All of that will blur and erase those divisions that we have artificially created. The fundamental equation is *Brahman = Atman*. Reality = consciousness, that's the meaning. *Satchitananda, nama rupa* – when we see that *sat* and *chit* are the same. Consciousness and being, or reality, are the same. Then they are one. And *ananda* follows, even in the presence of *nama rupa*¹.

[Francis Lucille, [2018 Spring Temecula retreat Week 1 Day 1](#)]

Contemplation

People neglect the reality of the illusory world.

[Huang Po]

¹ The innate happiness of our true nature, *ananda*, is experienced even in the presence of objects. *Nama rupa* = name and form.