

## Do We Have Freedom?

When we understand that we don't choose our thoughts and when we recognise that we have no evidence that time has any real existence, it is natural to ask whether everything is predetermined. Is the fate of the universe already decided? If the universe unfolds according to a fixed set of laws, is the outcome of all phenomena already known within consciousness, even though it's not known by the human scientific minds that are studying it? The paper *Does Time Really Exist* touched on these questions, without providing definitive answers. We explored some possibilities and were left with 'not knowing'. So can we be any more certain about our own lives? Do we have freedom or is the course of our own life set in stone?

Most of us have a deep intuition that we really do have freedom. It's a noumenal experience, similar to the experience of being aware. Francis describes freedom as being an attribute of consciousness, just as love, truth and beauty are attributes of consciousness. Here is his description of the experience of freedom:

FL: On the level of the Absolute, there are two kinds of freedom: 'freedom from' and 'freedom to'. On the path towards happiness, we first discover the 'freedom from'. As we realise that we are not the separate and limited entity that we believe to be, but that this consciousness that is hearing these words right now, instead of being limited and separate is universal and shared by all and therefore unaffected by any phenomena. This consciousness is by nature free from the phenomena it manifests. It is unaffected by the phenomena in the same way that a mirror is not affected, damaged, stained, destroyed by the reflections that appear in it. So that's the 'freedom from'.

As a result of 'freedom from', what we experience is peace. We are relieved, we are no longer affected fundamentally by the objects, by the phenomena. But then, understanding that consciousness is the reality which is perceiving these words, and that it is universal, and since there is only one reality, that it is the reality, the substance of everything. It is also that which creates all the phenomena. In other words, not only is consciousness unaffected by the phenomena, but it also creates them. And that's the second freedom which we discover, which is the 'freedom to'. And the 'freedom to' is the understanding of the manifestation as some kind of a song or celebration.

It could be said that in the first moment the manifestation, the universe, points to the freedom which we are as consciousness, as reality. But that then, on the other hand, it celebrates this freedom as we see it as originating from there. That's if we speak of freedom.

There is another issue which is deeply related to this one which is free will. This feeling we have that we are able to make our own decisions. And this feeling is in fact, in a certain sense, a hallucination. As a separate entity, we believe to have a limited freedom. For instance, we don't have the freedom to dictate other people's thoughts, under normal circumstances. But we believe we have the freedom to choose our own thoughts. And that's why we make a distinction between other people's thoughts and our thoughts. Other people's thoughts we have no control over their thoughts, but we believe that as separate individuals we control our thoughts. Well, if you try to control your thoughts, you will realise that that's not true. So it was a freedom that we assumed we had, but as we really investigate – 'do I control my thoughts?' – we realise, no. We realise that in fact, the thoughts come to us like the weather. They are like cosmic events. And that's what they are. They are cosmic events. And so are the thoughts of people around us. In

fact, there is only one thinker in the cosmos, which is the cosmos itself. And it is the cosmos which creates all the thoughts simultaneously.

So it follows that as a separate entity, we have no freedom to think. If we have no freedom to think, we have no freedom to decide, since our decisions come as thoughts. And if we have no freedom to decide, we have no freedom at all? If we have no freedom to decide, we are cooked – no freedom at all. So as a separate entity, we have no freedom. And nevertheless, we *know* freedom, because we know that when we want something, it comes from this joyful space. And it is true, we know freedom because although it is true that as a separate entity we have no freedom, but also it is true that we are not a separate entity. And as consciousness, we are the only one creating these thoughts. And therefore, this experience of our freedom that we know is not different from consciousness, because it is the experience of the place from which our thoughts or our decisions originate, which is consciousness, that which creates. And this place is true freedom. So to put it in a nutshell, as separate individuals we have no freedom, but as consciousness we have absolute freedom. We have total freedom. And the experience of freedom is the same as the experience of consciousness, and it's the same as the experience of happiness actually.

I often say it's to do with the two letter 'fr': freedom; friendliness; in German 'frieden', meaning 'peace'; 'freude', meaning 'joy'. So happiness, freedom, peace, love – all that comes to the same experience.

[Francis Lucille, [Nonduality 10 of 16 - Two Kinds of Freedom](#)]

The question arises: if awareness is the only chooser and decider, why does awareness choose ignorance? Here is Francis's answer:

FL: The body-mind has no power to choose anything. Only awareness has the power to choose. So ignorance is a choice that we as awareness, as intelligence, make. In other words, as intelligence, we decide to become blind. It's like people who choose to believe in something where in the beginning they know it's not true, but it would be nice, they think, if it were true. And in the end they have repeated it for long enough to believe the story they are telling is true. Life is full of politicians who claim that they have served in Vietnam and they have repeated it so often that in the end they themselves believe that it is true, even if it isn't.

*Q: So why does awareness within your body-mind not play this game any more, but in my body-mind, it is still playing it?*

FL: It is the same awareness that chooses. That's the freedom. The same awareness plays many different games using many different vehicles. I am talking to this awareness now and I am asking this awareness on which grounds do you choose to be a separate entity? What is your evidence? Why do we choose that? And you keep going on a tangent instead of asking yourself the question 'why do I, intelligence, believe to be separate, dependent on this body-mind, limited? What is my evidence?'. Don't ask Francis or anybody else. Look at yourself. What is the reason to believe to be separate? ... Why do you believe in the absence of evidence? It's because you're free. It's your choice. That's the only answer. It's beautiful, you are free. That's the reason.

[Francis Lucille, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021: *Ignorance is a Purely Gratuitous Belief*]

Understanding this liberates us from the feeling that we are helpless and trapped in a web of ignorance. Only an illusory separate self could be trapped. Francis gives this clear, uncompromising advice:

*Q: There's probably nothing I can do if the mind wants to say 'I'm the knower, I'm the one that can know'.*

FL: Don't abdicate your responsibility. It's you that thinks this way – it's not somebody else. It's not the mind – the mind is just an instrument – it's you as the master of the mind who decides to think and believe and to act in certain ways. You as awareness take responsibility.

I know it's very tempting to play the part of the victim because that's something we have been culturally trained to do. We are very good at playing the part of the victim. We play the part of the victim and we say ignorance and therefore misery is inflicted upon *me*. But the 'me' upon whom ignorance is inflicted it is precisely the ignorance to believe there is such a 'me'. In other words, ignorance is the belief that there is a 'me' who is in ignorance.

[27/5/2021 *The Creation Emerges Out of Love and Freedom*]

It can feel frustrating when we recognise that we have fallen into ignorance. We might ask ourselves 'why do I keep doing this? Why do I keep oscillating between understanding and ignorance?'. This is how Francis answered that question:

FL: We enjoy being separate, and that's the original sin, if you will. To know yourself to be someone separate. That's the fruit of the tree of knowledge. That's the beginning of duality – good and evil. Why we make this choice beats me. We love the drama. People who are never happy. The story I tell of the three old ladies who meet at the same restaurant every Thursday for lunch. The waiter who knows them well, one day at the end of the meal, says 'was anything all right, ladies?' But if you tell one of those ladies 'Oh, in fact you enjoy complaining, you complain because you enjoy doing that', they will get very mad at you. Why? Because you have touched a real thing. It's like they enjoy it because they've nothing else to do. So people enjoy complaining, people enjoy criticising, people enjoy gossiping, people enjoy criticising the other side etc. It makes them feel special and separate. It seems to give substance to ignorance, because ignorance – in and by itself – has no foundation. It's built on sand. So it needs to be propped up all the time through activity.

Psychological suffering is a sign that we are making a mistake, in the same way that physical suffering is often a sign that we are making a mistake – not brushing our teeth, eating the wrong kind of food, or driving the car recklessly so then there might be accidents and a price to pay for that. That's why the first understanding and the most important one is that all these problems that we see in the world, that we see in society that we see in politics, wouldn't be there if there wasn't ignorance. The deeper the ignorance, the more tragic the circumstances. Wars, civil wars, large scale criminal activities – all of that comes from deep, deep ignorance.

So what we can do – and most people wouldn't like me saying this – the most efficient thing we can do is to liberate ourselves from ignorance. And then live our lives in a way which is in line with our God-given talents, skills and preferences. So that we stay in this harmony in our lives and so that some of this harmony radiates into society. If we have too big ambition, we may in fact be destructive, instead of being constructive. So we have to accept the situations, we have to accept the world as it is. That's the first thing. We may say 'well, it's a problem between the Palestinians and the Jews, but what's the root of it? What are the conditions under which the problem would disappear. And the answer is love, no separation.

[27/5/2021 *The Creation Emerges Out of Love and Freedom*]

One point that puzzled me about 'awareness choosing ignorance' was whether there really is any activity of choosing. And if there isn't, how is it that I feel free? This is part of Francis's answer:

*JB: I have a question about freedom, specifically about 'freedom to'. There seems to be a disconnect between my intuitive understanding about freedom, and my feeling of freedom.*

*To start with my intuitive understanding, I know that I have no more freedom to choose my thoughts and actions than I do to choose the weather. But also, I have a strong intuitive sense that there isn't anything at all that chooses or decides. That everything just unfolds according to natural patterns, everything constantly moving and changing. And my body-mind just being an integral part of the universal pattern. But at the same time, I have a feeling of complete freedom. Not a freedom to choose – just freedom.*

FL: Yes. That's why I didn't define 'freedom to' as freedom to choose. It's more like freedom to create. The question is, in the creative act, is there choice? Yes and no. In a sense because what the creative act is, it's a particularisation, a specification out of infinite potential, to create a form which is specific. So in that sense, creation can be described as a choice of one possibility which will be actualised out of an infinite array of possibilities.

But I understand what you are saying and I would simply allude to the fact that this experience we have of freedom, cannot be attributed to a human being. But nevertheless we have the experience of freedom. So either the experience of freedom is an illusion and there is no such thing as freedom, or it's real, but then it is not the freedom of a separate human being. So the mistake we make is to attribute the experience of freedom to an object, to a human being. And of course, by doing so, we limit it. It is the same operation of ignorance through which we attribute the perceiving reality, awareness, to a specific body-mind, thereby limiting it of course, making that which is eternal and infinite, finite and ephemeral.

You can understand the parallel. In fact it is more than a parallel, because it's the same play of ignorance that limits the infinite by attributing to a specific object, a limited object, noumenal qualities that belong only to the absolute. So every time you particularise in this way noumenal qualities such as awareness, love, intelligence, freedom, beauty – you attribute those to an object – we fall into the trap of ignorance again and again. ...

You cannot attribute God's qualities such as love, eternity, beauty etc. to objects, to people. Freedom is one of these divine qualities. In the Sufi tradition, they have the one hundred names of God, and these refer to noumenal qualities. So in a sense, gratitude, mercy, love, compassion, eternity, freedom, beauty – all of these qualities are not qualities of objects.

[Francis Lucille 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2021: *Pure Consciousness Is A Timeless Experience*]

## Contemplation

*As individuals, our freedom is illusory. On the other hand, at the level of our deepest being, everything flows out of our freedom. ... We want, create, and are at every moment, everything in the unity of awareness.*

[Francis Lucille: *Eternity Now*]