

Non-duality and Forgiveness

It is relatively easy to verify for ourselves that we don't choose our thoughts; they are cosmic events that come to us like the weather. Or to be more precise, we, awareness, choose our thoughts only to the same extent that we, awareness, choose the weather. There is no personal chooser. And that means there is no personal decider, and no person responsible for anything that happens. While in principle this is easy to understand, the implications are far-reaching and can seem challenging. We have discussed some of them in previous papers. In [Ethics, Conditioning and Responsibility](#) and in [The Game of Ignorance](#) we looked at the implications of this understanding for the concepts of guilt and sin. We saw that no one is guilty for what happens, and that there is no sin or sinner.

The real test of our understanding comes when someone we trust behaves badly or unjustly towards us, or betrays us. In this dialogue, Francis discusses the idea of forgiveness and how to apply our understanding in situations where we feel mistreated, belittled or betrayed:

Q: I have a question about forgiveness. When I do forgiveness, it feels like I'm forgiving someone. But now I realise there is no entity inside that can forgive someone. It feels like it's just some release of tension about a belief.

FL: Yes, you are on the right track. I can try to clarify that a little more because we cannot truly forgive others unless we forgive ourselves. That's the first step. And we cannot forgive ourselves through an act of will, through a decision like a judge: 'OK you don't go to jail this time'. That's a decision of the judge. But we cannot do that. The only way we forgive ourselves is through understanding.

Here is what we can understand. We can understand that we don't choose our thoughts. We can understand that experientially for two reasons. First, we don't really know what our next thought is going to be before it arrives. It just arrives like the weather. It's just in hindsight that we pretend that we knew which thought was coming and that we decided, yes, I'm choosing this thought. But that's not how it happens. It just happens. So once we understand I don't choose my thoughts, we understand that our decisions are a sub-category of the thoughts: let's do this – I think should I do this or do that, OK let's do this. All of those are thoughts. We don't choose them. We don't choose our decisions, and if we don't choose our decisions, we are not guilty. So by understanding that we are not guilty, we forgive ourselves. That's what it means – not guilty, forgiven. But the moment we are able to forgive ourselves, we understand that it is the same for other people. They don't choose their thoughts either. They don't choose their decisions, so just as you see yourself as not guilty, you see others as not guilty. They are the same as you, so everybody is like you. You see the fundamental innocence of all beings. That's what you see in wisdom.

Now it doesn't mean that if you have a murderer, society is not entitled to put it out of the traffic, so to speak. Because society has the right to protect itself. But that doesn't change the fact that there's nobody guilty here or there. So the forgiving or the forgiveness is universal. So that's why in the Qu'ran it says one of the hundred names of God is 'The Merciful'. Mercy is a universal quality of wisdom and understanding. And it doesn't mean either that we are not responsible. But guilt belongs to past actions and we have to consider all past actions as being acts of God. God did it – whatever that was. But in the now, we are responsible for God's past actions because we are an instrument, as a body-mind; the body-mind is an instrument that is at the service of truth, love, beauty. So it doesn't mean that when you have insulted someone in the past, although you are not guilty for the insult, that in the now, you are not responsible to go

to this person and say 'I'm sorry'. Depending on the level of understanding, you're not going to tell them 'I'm sorry because God insulted you yesterday'. No, that that wouldn't be a good idea, any more than if the cop stops you for speeding, you aren't going to say, 'Excuse me, Officer, but it was just God speeding'. No, that's not a good idea!

So real forgiveness comes from this understanding, this intelligence that nobody is guilty, I am not guilty, universal forgiving. And it doesn't mean we are not responsible in the now. And the past – who cares? Only in ignorance do we hold grudges against people. It doesn't mean that we are not aware of some patterns in people, some behaviour. For example, if someone has screwed us financially one time, then they come back and they ask you for one more loan, you tell them 'sorry, but you didn't pay back the first one and now you're asking for a second one'. But they are not guilty – that's how they are.

There is a form of being pretentious – 'Oh I forgive you, I bestow upon you the grace of my forgiving'. Not very natural!

Q: But what I have also noticed is when I'm doing this forgiveness thing, so-called 'I', a lot of thoughts start coming up – 'he did this', 'she did this' and all of that. Or if it's one particular person I'm holding something against ...

FL: Replace 'he' with 'God', and later on replace 'God' with 'I'. Or if you want to be on the direct path, replace 'he' with 'I'. 'I did that to myself. So what do I do now?' Then there is a moment of creativity. There is going to be a very different response if instead of thinking 'he did that to me, I said: 'I did that to myself, what do I do now?'. Perhaps you are still going to punch the guy in the face. We don't know what you are going to do. Sometimes they deserve it!

Q: It gets a little tricky with family members.

FL: Oh yes, they are the trickiest ones!

Q: And now when I sit, I see that they are the same being, but their actions sometimes really make you cry, or it makes you feel that they've betrayed your trust.

FL: Be ready to be betrayed by people. It's part of the learning curve. You cannot trust people. You can trust the truth in people. Our parents are not perfect, and we have to see, to be clear-eyed and see the ignorance in them. And sometimes it's hard to swallow because we are disappointed. But we grow in wisdom from this being clear-eyed, and that also gives us the ability to forgive. To forgive doesn't mean to be blind, but to forgive means to understand the blindness in others. To see it, and to understand in spite of that, the innocence.

The moment we see the danger, if we have to walk through a room in the darkness and we know there is a snake, it's very difficult. But if we switch on the light, if the room is big enough, it's not a problem. So it's the same. As long as we are not clear about people, they can trigger suffering in us. But the moment we have this clarity then at some point you are no longer the little girl. At some point you see them as little children. We become the parents of our parents because the real maturity is in wisdom. It is not in the age of the body. Most people are children in ignorance. They don't know better. You have to accept that. You'll survive. Life is beautiful. A great adventure.

[Francis Lucille 25/11/2021 [How to handle betrayal by loved ones?: Betrayal and Forgiveness on the Direct Path](#)]

Even after we have clearly understood all this, it can take a while for all the feelings associated with the perceived betrayal to disappear completely. Memories of that event can trigger waves of negative emotion. So what is the best way of dealing with that? Should we stay with the feeling in the body and wait for it to dissolve, or should we investigate the cause of the emotion? Here is a transcript from a video from 2013 recently made available on YouTube in which Francis addresses this situation:

The way it manifests is by a kind of explosion of negative emotion. It can be anger, it can be frustration, it can be a sense of being inadequate to the situation, a sense of not being loved, a sense of not being likeable, and all of that relates to me as a person. Why? Because if I'm not loved I'm in danger, because I need protection. Because then if I'm not loved, my surroundings are threatening me. They are a potential enemy. And also, if I am not loved, there are things I need from my surroundings that I am not going to get because I'm identified with this body. So for all of these reasons I'm in danger and that triggers all this mechanism.

So the way it happens, you see this big explosion of frustration, whatever, of feelings and this explosion is telling you something, is going to suggest that you do something. For instance, if it is anger and frustration, to punch this person in the face or just to kill this person. Or if you are on the other side, if you say you have this feeling of inadequacy – you are shy, you are ashamed of yourself – this feeling is going to tell you to go back to your bedroom or find a little rat hole somewhere and hide in this rat hole for the rest of your life. So these are the two types of attitude that this big emotion is going to trigger in you.

So my suggestion is to refrain from killing the guy and to refrain from going to the rat hole. Instead watch what has just happened, the memory of what has just happened over the last ten seconds or ten minutes is very fresh. I'm not talking about going back to events in your childhood when you were four years old, no, no. What has just happened? How did this big explosion come about? And you will see it came about because this person told me 'you are not good, you are bad', or 'you are stupid' or 'you are not able to understand anything' or 'you are ugly' or you are whatever. And that triggered this mechanism: 'how did he dare say this to me?, how did he dare think that of me?'. Me! And 'me' is always this body-mind, so it is always about not what I am, but precisely that which I am not. So this big outburst of frustration, anger, whatever, wouldn't happen without me, consciousness identifying with this little person. ...

Now if you have investigated enough, when you reach this point, you say 'Oh I know better, I have no reason to believe I am such a separate person'. Now the thing is, the investigation, what we call the investigation, is not something which is solely intellectual. There is something else which takes place which is this. What is going to happen is that in the presence of the guru, you will experience whatever the guru means. You will experience a suspension of the sense of lack. You will experience a peace that, in the beginning, you won't perhaps be able to enjoy when you are on your own. But nevertheless, the fact that you are able to experience a peace which is causeless, which emanates from your true nature within, will bring about a distance within you which is not logical, which transcends logic and reason and which will enable you, as time goes by, to meet these situations more and more easily. In other words, although you asked me what to do in those situations and I gave you an answer, the goal of my answer was only to shift your interest away from the problem at hand, which is your outburst of rage or whatever, to the investigation about the truth. In other words, to shift your attention away from the problem to consciousness, to the solution.

There is no point staying with the problem. There is no point worrying about the problem, because if you keep your eye on the prize, which is consciousness, which is the solution, the peace that emanates from the guru, from consciousness, will take care of these psychological situations, and if there are any psychological residues, usually with guidance of your human teacher or your human guru, you will also get rid of those. But the basic cure is the experience of your true nature that shines as peace within.

[16/11/2013 [Deconstructing an Explosion of Negative Emotion](#)]

We may decide to organise our life so that we no longer have any contact with those whose actions led to the feeling of betrayal. But if it was a family member, that may not be practical. Francis gives this suggestion for a practical experiment that we might like to try if we are in this situation:

It would be interesting to liberate ourselves when we meet people we know like our parents or our children, to see them as strangers we see for the first time. And in the beginning they won't be happy because in this way you are going to move beyond what they expect you to do, to say, to be. But ultimately, it's liberating for them. Your parents expect you to be the little girl that you were when you were seven. Perhaps now that you are older they allow you to be up to ten years of age, but there are no guarantees! Often they will downgrade down to seven or six. So if you see them as you see someone for the first time, you're an adult and you will have a very different attitude. And this attitude is normal. There is nothing bad about it: it includes compassion; it includes love; it includes everything, but at the same time it would be different than what you would do if you would allow them to put you back into the ten-year-old little girl.

[28/11/2021 [A Liberating Experiment to Conduct with your Family](#)]

Contemplation

When there is love, there is forgiveness. From the point of view of the person, there is never forgiving because then forgiving is only intellectual. In love there's not a forgiver. As long as there's a forgiver, there cannot be total forgiveness.

[Jean Klein: *Open to the Unknown*]