

Effortless Effort

Francis sometimes describes the Direct Path as being the path of holy laziness, the path of no effort. But if there is no effort, how can anything change? How can we escape from ignorance without making any effort? The secret is in the recognition that when we feel we are making an effort, that effort is psychological, not a physical effort. Physical effort doesn't feel like effort if there is no psychological resistance. We might call it 'effortless effort'. Here is Francis's definition:

FL: Effortless effort is an effort to which you 100% agree. It's like when I play tennis it's an effort for the body but it's enjoyment for me. So an effortless effort is an effort which is not an effort for you because you agree to do it completely. If I have to take out the trash, then that's more effort. It's not like playing tennis, although playing tennis is more exhausting for the body.

[Francis Lucille, 24/11/2013, [The Teaching is in the Silent Transmission](#)]

When we first come to the Direct Path, it is common to feel that 'being aware of being aware' requires some kind of subtle effort. We are given a simple method and we may have no problem with that, but we then think 'I must abide as awareness, I must try to hang on to this awareness that I have discovered'. But as Francis explains, that would be a mistake:

Q: How to maintain awareness of awareness – is this correct – while we're doing the meditation?

FL: No, because it's contrived. It's an effort. We have to understand that the experience of awareness, being aware of awareness, we experience it as happiness and peace. And happiness and peace is what we experience fleetingly in ordinary life when a psychological burden has been removed. Because temporarily, at the point of removal of this burden, we go to our true nature which is always there as peace and happiness. But then because ignorance has not been removed, we find ourselves a new problem to come to grips with. And then this new problem which relates to me as a person, once again veils the background of peace. So we don't have to create, to manipulate, to maintain the background of peace. Because it's real.

It's important to understand that. Because any manipulation is in fact more cover that veils the background. Ultimately, we have to understand that because our true nature is the effortless state, more effort cannot take us to the effortless state. When we understand that, that's a moment when we leave the progressive path and we enter the direct path, which is the effortless path. It's like when you're cycling *[up the mountain]* and you reach the pass.

[Francis Lucille, 27/5/2018, [The effortless path](#)]

Progressive paths invariably involve some kind of systematic practice and that requires some degree of effort. When we understand that the ease of being and happiness that we are looking for can never be found through effort, we wonder how it can be brought about. Does the Direct Path require a certain type of person, or a certain level of purity? Here is Francis's answer:

Q: So does a direct path presume that we all have sattvic¹ qualifications for this path?

FL: The only qualification is the desire for it. That's the only requirement.

Q: And yet developing a sattvic¹ state is important?

¹ *Sattva* – thoughts turning towards Self (from Atmananda Krishnamenon's glossary to *Atma Darshan*). *Sattvic* usually refers to the innate qualities of the Self – truth, serenity, peace, balance, harmony.

FL: The one who has a desire for that, an overwhelming desire that poses very little resistance to changing their habits, within a few days or a few months their life is completely changed. Whereas another one who doesn't have a strong desire will still, after fifty years, be victimized by his own attachment to concepts, belief systems etc. So it's amazing, it's mind-blowing how some people because they have a strong desire they have this plasticity that they let go of all these attachments. And others they are still completely hypnotized by this type of thing.

Q: So one can have a very bad vasana, a very bad habit, and yet that desire alone for the truth can somehow dissolve it?

FL: Yes, if the desire is a true desire for the truth. Now often people who have a lot of bad habits, as you say a lot of *vasanas*, they see the truth as a way out of their predicament. That's not love for the truth. It's a misunderstanding. What they are experiencing is just a lot of pain and they want to get rid of their pain. The love for the truth is totally different. It's not experienced as pain. It's experienced as a joyful interest for the truth itself. So that's why people say 'Oh I had this strong interest for the truth, I spent so much time in caves and meditating and seeing these teachers, and I've not made any progress'. Well look at yourself. Perhaps your interest was for yourself and not for the truth. Your interest was in getting better, but was not this joyful investigation about 'what is this [*world, self, awareness*]?' Very different. So in such a case we are talking apples and oranges. But if one who is deeply set in his ways, all of a sudden takes fire in their love for the truth, then all this past attachment to belief systems, religious, political, whatever – that just explodes. It's like junk. You realize when you wake up in the morning and you ask 'gee, wow, I've been asleep, my house is full of trash'. And then you get all the junk out. But you need to have the desire to get the junk out. If you love your junk ...

[Francis Lucille, 28/2/2020, [The Only Prerequisite for the Direct Path](#)]

Ignorance requires effort. To maintain ignorance, we need to maintain a sense of being a separate entity. Protecting and maintaining that imaginary entity takes constant vigilance, and that vigilance requires effort. Francis's guided meditations provide a simple way of experiencing the effortlessness of our natural state. In the following dialogue, Francis explains how these meditations work and how they can help us transition to experiencing effortless effort in our normal daily activities:

Q: In one of your meditations that's online you said 'make no physical effort, no mental effort'. Do you mean all day or just when we're doing the experiments?

FL: Just doing the experiment. The experiment is artificial in that sense that as we conduct this experiment, we stop all effort in bulk, indiscriminately. So ignorance is an effort. By stopping all type of effort the best we can, we kind of asphyxiate ignorance, which enables us to have an inkling or a live experience of meditation of a condition in which let's say ignorance is anaesthetised – not killed but anaesthetised.

However, it is impossible to handle our everyday life in such a configuration, because we need to think, we need to work, we need to do things. So we need to be active. However, if we go into this meditative state, albeit in an unnatural, slightly contrived manner, as we stop the meditation and we release the unnatural conditions that we were imposing during the exercise, now there's no more constraints. Now we can think, we can make effort, we can do things, we can cook, we can work, we can walk – we can do anything. But the perfume of this peace of the meditative state lingers at least a little bit during the daily life activities. So it's a practical way to gradually reaccustom ourselves with our natural condition.

Because the condition in which most of human beings live is not the way we are meant to live. It's extraordinary that it is not our natural state. In Sanskrit, there is a name for it, our natural state is called *sahaja samadhi*. Only a few people in the world live it knowingly. But on the other hand, the body knows it, the mind knows it. We know it when we are in it. Why? Because there is no sense of lack. There is a feeling that we are where we should be. We are at the right place, doing the right thing. And that's fundamental. Most people expect fireworks. They expect a big spiritual experience. But that's not what it is about because such a big spiritual experience is simply unsustainable within the constraints of a human physical body-mind vehicle.

[Francis Lucille 30/1/2022 online satsang]

If we undertake these experiments from interest and enjoyment rather than as a practice, we find we are increasingly invited back to our natural state during our normal activities. The distinction between meditation and normal life blurs and eventually dissolves. This happens not through effort, but through understanding. Here is Jean Klein's description of that process:

JK: There are moments in life when there is no anticipation or thinking about the past, when we spontaneously live in silence. But because we only know ourselves in activity and are not informed otherwise, we take the silent moment for an absence, an absence of activity. Then, because we do not know the silence behind activity, when we follow the inner need to be still or to meditate, we get stuck on the level of the mind as we try not to think, try to empty the mind of objects in an effort to create silence. But this absence of activity is also an object. Many books have been written about stilling the mind, stilling thoughts, but all this is effort, a waste of energy. A disciplined mind can never be a free mind.

When we are invited to meditate, we can go into meditation as we go into a laboratory, on the condition that we already know that the meditator is the stuff of the mind, a mind which is looking for an experience of God, or beauty, or silence. In the realization that the mind can never reach what is beyond it, the meditator has no more role to play, and there is no object of meditation. When this is profoundly understood, there is a spontaneous giving up of the reflex to try to experience what is beyond experience, and one is in meditation, continual meditation. Understanding is the only way to reach beyond the mind.

[Jean Klein, *Open to the Unknown*, 4/11/1990]

In practical life, we frequently need to make decisions. That decision-making can seem to require mental effort. But as Francis explains, there is only effort if there is resistance:

Q: What is the connection between 'no effort' and not being an individual?

FL: Well, I have to define effort, because there is physical effort and there is psychological effort. So 'no effort' in this case means no psychological effort. And the way I define psychological effort is a decision or an activity which doesn't come from absolute clarity. In other words, it's a decision or an activity that comes with an inherent resistance – we want to do it but at the same time we don't. We want, we don't. There is a push, there is a pull. It's like friction in physics. Friction opposes movement. So an effortless activity is one without resistance, without friction. It's one with which we are in total agreement. There are two ways to be in total agreement with what we do. The first way is when we have fully investigated the pros and cons, the advantages and disadvantages in the light of our understanding of that which we are. We have achieved absolute clarity and we know that's what I'm going to do. No resistance.

The other case is when we have tried to investigate, but we have not reached a perfect conclusion. It seems to us that one decision is better than the other, but we are at the fork on

that path. Time is of the essence and we have to act. So we take our best shot. But in this case too there is not going to be any resistance, because at that moment that's what we have to do. That's the only thing we can do.

So the way to eliminate this push and pull, this friction, is either through a complete understanding or it's through the understanding that we have to make a decision because time is of the essence. You see that in the world there are different types of personalities. The judge, the lawyer, the intellectual, the physicist – they want to reach a perfect understanding before they move. So for them time is irrelevant; time is not of the essence. Very different for the platoon leader on the battlefield under fire. Time is very much of the essence there. Or for the businessman. But both types have access in different ways to effortless activity, effortless decision, the thoughtless action.

[Francis Lucille 25/9/2021, [The World is a University](#)]

When desire for truth and love of truth become the driving force in our lives, we find that more and more we automatically reside in our natural state, and life becomes effortless. Here is Francis's advice on how to cooperate with that natural process:

FL: I suggest that you recognize your love for understanding, take it as your guide, and surrender to it whenever it invites you. Know with complete certainty that the actions that flow from it are not ego-driven, unlike the fears, concerns, and doubts that arise from the notion of being a separate entity.

Your search for the truth should be totally open-minded, free from any beliefs, or from any intellectual attachment to a specific religion or philosophy. It should be based solely on your intimate feeling of harmony, understanding, and devotion. Contemplate your innate beauty, intelligence, and love as you spontaneously respond to a majestic sunset, a scripture that points directly to the truth, a meeting with a friend who is free from the notion of being a personal entity, or more generally, to any situation in your life. In this way, your investigation remains lively, innocent, and effortless. It will lead you inexorably and joyfully to that background which is the common goal of religion and philosophy.

[Francis Lucille, *Eternity Now: The Direct Path*]

Contemplation

If we are in love and we finish an activity, we think of our lover. It doesn't require any effort. We fall in love with truth and truth falls in love with us and reminds us of itself whenever we are available. ... Someone who is in love with truth doesn't need to make an effort to think about truth.

[Francis Lucille, *The Perfume of Silence*]