

## Cut the Fluff

Following on from our previous paper, *After the Glimpse*, we will now look in more detail at how mind, body and world become aligned with our non-dual understanding. Francis sometimes describes this as the disappearance of 'fluff'. First, here's his explanation of fluff:

FL: In ignorance there is a lot of useless activity – in the mind, in the body and in the world. That is unnecessary fluff. As we go back to our natural condition this fluff disappears progressively. We live our life differently, in a more economical fashion. It doesn't mean there are no challenges. It doesn't mean we don't have to do things in life. It doesn't mean we don't make mistakes. It doesn't mean any of that. But if we look, there is a kind of a convergence that takes place, towards a minimum fluff in our life.

*Q: I like that – minimum fluff. Because I notice even when I'm thinking, because I'm not fighting it, there's still silence in the background. My mind is still thinking. Of course I'm thinking, it's natural to think. But there's also silence.*

FL: Yes, because when we are in ignorance 95% of our thoughts, and potentially 99%, is triggered by the belief to be a separate person. So there is no room to enjoy life. There is no room for the moment. We are constantly in this fluff. So it's a huge difference if we move from a state in which 99% of the time our thoughts are around this belief to be a separate entity, to a state in which 99% of the time our thoughts are not revolving around this. So all this availability then can be used for being present to others, being present to the beauty of the world, being present to fields of interest – some people love doing this or that. So there is so much availability, and moreover there is silence between the activities, between the thoughts. The thought starts, and then ends peacefully. When we are in ignorance, one thought comes and before it's finished, another thought on top of it, then another thought, then another. Then the first thought comes back to the surface. There is a total disorder in our mind. ...

*Q: Well, what we're thinking mostly now is this teaching, and it's a good way ...*

FL: Yes, but at least there is order. There is a thought that comes, and then it reaches an understanding, and that's the end of the thought. That's the beauty of it – that a thought can end naturally, that the thought can die in its bed, so to speak. Whereas in ignorance it's the 'me' thought, it's a thought that never ends – 'me as a separate person'. It comes under various disguises, various characters, but it's always the same guy just putting on different clothes, coming back every time. Constantly, constantly coming up.

[Francis Lucille 26/02/2022 [Beyond the Witness State](#)]

It's common to conflate mind and awareness, and that view is supported by science and neuroscience. But by holding on to that perspective, we block the possibility of understanding that awareness is unlimited, and that our true nature is not dependent on a limited body or mind. By keeping the two concepts distinct, we open the door to a glimpse of our true nature as the experience of pure awareness, in the absence of mind. It's sometimes called 'no-mind'. But as Francis explains, the noumenal experience of 'no-mind' doesn't necessarily disappear when thoughts and perceptions reappear:

FL: 'No mind' doesn't mean 'no awareness'. ... People usually believe that they know that there is awareness because there are perceptions. In fact, that's not true. We know that there is awareness because of the experience of awareness, not because of the experience of perceptions. In other words, we know that there are perceptions because of the experience of

perceptions. We know that there is awareness because of the experience of awareness. The experience of awareness is instantaneous, there is no mind there.

So, in the total absence of perceptions, that which is the source of all perceptions reveals itself. Having detached its attention from all objects, because there are no objects left, the attention returns to itself, it sees itself in its glory, in its eternity, in its wisdom, in its beauty, in its intelligence, in its love.

But then, when the world of phenomena appears, when the mind reappears, in a sense, there is still no-mind because the true nature of the mind is then seen as being nothing else than this no-mind experience. The no-mind experience doesn't stop. Although it reveals itself in an instantaneous glimpse beyond time, it doesn't really stop when the objects of awareness reappear. It's just that they are not seen any longer as mind or as objects, but they are seen as this no-mind reality. ...

*Q: And thinking then, can only be purified – it doesn't really stop?*

FL: Thinking is useful. But it stops. It's like a tool that goes back to the toolbox when you don't need it. There are many moments when we live in our perceptions, in our sensations, and not that much in our thoughts. But really what happens is that we oscillate constantly between thoughts, bodily sensations and sense perceptions. We move from one to the other constantly, but the mix between thoughts, bodily sensations and sense perceptions, changes over time. There is much less thinking, less bodily sensations and more external sense perceptions. The mix evolves over time, because a lot of unnecessary thinking and feeling gets eliminated. ... No fluff.

[Francis Lucille, 15/02/2022, [It's a crucial moment when we open to the possibility ...](#) ]

We don't need to do anything or avoid doing anything to see that no-mind, or awareness, doesn't disappear when we are engaged in activities in the world. All that is necessary is to allow body and mind to follow our natural interest and enthusiasm from moment to moment. Our innate love of truth brings with it the welcoming of all experience. The fluff is caused mainly by resistance to our current circumstances. It is eliminated by benevolent indifference:

*Q: I'm just wondering, is my only job to remain in innocence by living on the razor's edge of not-knowing and always be in curiosity of what comes next?*

FL: And following your enthusiasm. In other words, it doesn't confine you within the straight-jacket of absolute passivity or inactivity. It may involve, for instance, learning new skills with eagerness, being active in life, but being active in a way which is economical, which is no fluff. ...

If we take the example of surrender, for instance, ... we have to surrender to the totality of the situation, meaning to fully accept the totality of the situation, including our own feelings. And out of this complete borderless acceptance then if a decision is needed, the decision may be what do I do next – a very simple decision. The decision will come which will be in full consideration of all the elements, and it will be impersonal. So that's the idea. It is not about absolute passivity, but it's about a way to live our life unencumbered with non-existing issues which are all the issues which I call the 'fluff', which relate to this fictitious personal entity. ...

If we look at consciousness in this moment, thoughts are appearing, sounds are appearing, feelings, bodily sensations are appearing. All of that is appearing in this welcoming presence. 'Welcoming' meaning the presence doesn't say 'no'; there is no resistance. It's all accepted but at the same time there is no attachment to it because all these perceptions – they come and they go. Consciousness doesn't really choose, doesn't say 'go', doesn't say 'stay'. The sensation

can come, it's welcomed in, but it's also seen off graciously. No attachment, no residue, no glue, no stickiness. That's the idea of this welcoming: it's welcome, meaning it's benevolent; no attachment – it can leave; indifference. So benevolent indifference. And that's effortless because that's what awareness is doing at every moment and has always been doing. So by emulating this benevolent indifference we eliminate the fluff that existed between pure awareness and what we believe to be, the fake I. By eliminating the fluff that separated the real I from awareness, we recover our real identity.

[Francis Lucille, 15/02/2022 [Cut the Fluff aka Ignorance](#)]

If the fluff is eliminated, doesn't life become dull and boring? Doesn't being stabilised in our understanding involve 'being spiritual' all the time – only thinking spiritual thoughts, performing spiritual actions, having spiritual relationships? In fact, those worries can only come from a sense of separation. This is how Francis answers that concern:

*Q: Francis this morning I felt like I was the king who had nothing to fear who had nothing to worry about, all my worries are gone and that's it, that's where life is, what life is all about. And then suddenly a fear came with it – of this knowledge of this understanding that I had. I was thinking: if there is nothing more to it, then what is there left in life now? And I suddenly felt as if life would be so dull and boring from now on. I felt liberation and at the same time I felt this fear, that there is nothing more left to be unravelled or to look forward to, and that's it.*

FL: So we are describing two different moments. And my question is: in the first moment was there a sense of lack?

*Q: No.*

FL: So then obviously in the second moment there was a sense of lack. So the sense of lack reappeared. And of course, a sense of lack is about you as a person. So the boredom, the absence of something to look forward to, comes from this feeling that what is now is not enough, what is now is not good for me, there is a separation between me and what is now. 'Me' is a fragment. So when we are the totality, knowingly, there is nothing missing and there is nothing to look forward to. Because we have already that which we could possibly be looking forward to, so there is no point looking forward to something else. It's like when someone is satisfied with their partner, there is no need to look for anybody else.

So we have to understand that we shift from moment to moment – from a glimpse of our totality, that there is nothing outside me, there is nothing I could possibly be looking forward to, I am all there is, I'm all there will always be, to I am a fragment and this thing right now is not good for me, I need something better. You have to see the whole process, and you have to determine which one of these two pictures is the real one. Because you move from one picture to another quickly, but which one is the real one? That's a question.

*Q: At this stage it's the first one that's the real one.*

FL: Then forget the second one. Move on. Stick to the real one. Because if the real one is real, it's always true.

*Q: Yes, I can confidently say that, yes. I know it.*

FL: For instance, it doesn't make any sense to be happy because we are looking forward to something. It's not real happiness. It's hope for happiness. If you had the choice between hoping for happiness and being at peace, which one would you choose?

*Q: Being at peace.*

FL: Being without hope, without desire, just being what you are. But even that is not true because when we are at peace there is contentment that comes with it. The peace is not a peace without having any perfume itself. It's a happy peace.

[Francis Lucille 3/10/2022 [Why do I shift from feeling freedom to feeling fear?](#)]

Little by little we begin to notice when there is attachment, when thoughts that are predicated on the belief to be a separate entity keep circling around and around. It's an unnecessary dynamism of mind that has a counterpart of tension or agitation in the body. In the following dialogue, Francis explains how his guided meditations can help by showing us what life is like in the absence of this dynamism. This direct experience of 'absence of fluff' then bleeds into the rest of our life:

FL: Ignorance is identification of our reality with something – with an object, a body-mind. Objects, bodily sensations, thoughts are dynamic phenomena. They're always changing. We deeply know that that which we are, consciousness, is changeless, doesn't change. We have been the same consciousness since we can remember. Everything we perceive changes, evolves, but there is no change to this background of awareness that can be observed. So whatever object it identifies with is going at some point to disappear or to change, basically to disappear. So to keep the identification alive we have to move from this object, to this object, to this object, constantly. There is a dynamism there.

So if in meditation we artificially reduce the global dynamism of the mind, then this identification becomes almost impossible, because the ignorance requires this movement. For instance, obsessive thinking, the kind of thinking that runs in circles, useless thinking about 'me', 'me', 'me', it evolves around me, constantly. Waste of energy. If we observe it and understand that I'm not going to get involved with that, I'm not going to try to do anything about it, I take my stand as simply whatever it is which is the presence in which this thing happens, this constant movement is not fuelled any longer by my involvement. It's going to collapse. So it's a mechanism.

The idea in this meditation exercise is this: by slowing down all mind processes, which is artificial, we also slow down and erode ignorance. It's like throwing everything down the drain – unfortunately we also throw the baby down the drain – to experience the emptiness. So you get used to this new condition of the body which is without borders, in a sense, and of the mind which is peaceful. And then when the activity resumes – because in real life we have to think, we have to move etc. – for a while something remains of the meditation. And that's the interesting moment, it's not *during* the meditation – it's what happens during the rest of the day here among us. The fact that we interact with each other, that we think, that we move, that we live our normal life, takes a new quality because this meditation bleeds over into these moments of our life when we are active, when we are acting and living normally. So that it's a way that enables us to integrate the impersonal way of living with the requirements of normal life – thinking, moving, doing things.

So that's the explanation of what I meant when I said ignorance is a dynamism, is essentially dynamic, because the objects with which we identify are impermanent. So if we reduce the overall dynamism through this kind of technique, by the same token we reduce ignorance. And besides, ignorance is not vital to the body. The body knows that. So that if we slow down the activity of the mind, the mind will at some point spontaneously eliminate any thinking which is

useless to keep the core of functions that are fundamental for the support and maintenance of life.

*Q: The part of ignorance that is hard to let go is the worry and the planning part. The anger is just like a habit, it's the fear of not planning, that things will not go well.*

FL: No. Let me tell you something. It's OK to plan. It's OK to plan for retirement or to plan for the next trip, to plan for dinner. It's OK provided we do this planning as the manager of the body but not for ourselves as consciousness. We are the custodian of the body. That's normal. It's no different from planning for our car. To plan that if I'm low on fuel, I have to fill up. I have to check the brakes, to change the oil. But am I worried? No! It's the worry which is unnecessary.

[2022 Thanksgiving retreat wk1, day2, 15]

A playlist of Francis's guided meditations that are available free on YouTube can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNAK9tLJTCpttaQoDqIA-vUVhzhcws4-K>

More can be purchased from his website.

## **Contemplation**

*To begin with, it seems like an effort to keep returning to the welcoming presence. But at some point it is so natural that it seems to require an effort to leave it. It feels like home. We no longer feel that we need to be entertained.*

[Francis Lucille]