

Memory

When I first read Jean Klein's instruction to 'live in not-knowing, free from memory', although I didn't understand what it meant, I knew intuitively that it was important. It was only several years later that it began to make sense as a pointer to a way of life that is characterised by joyful spontaneity and expresses the truth, love and happiness of our true nature.

In our papers and meetings over the past few years, we have explored extensively the first half of this statement: 'live in not-knowing'. In this paper we explore the second half: 'free from memory'. What does it mean to be 'free from memory'? What is the connection between memory and ignorance? Are all uses of memory problematic? How do we deal with memories of past hurts and traumas?

First, we need to define what we mean by memory. Here is Francis's definition:

FL: There are two types of memory: there is third-person memory and first-person memory. Third-person memory is for instance recording of past events – videos or leftovers of dead volcanoes or radiation emitted soon after the big bang. These are physical leftovers for all observers to observe. First-person memory is our own recollection of a past event. We may be wrong, we may remember that we have left the keys in the car. but no, they were on the night table. So that's two kinds of memory. And these memories are like a recording – recording the change made on some support.

So the way this human body mind gets programmed is through repetition, and this repetition leaves a memory, an imprint, a pattern which keeps reoccurring when it's triggered by given circumstances. The pattern of driving reoccurs when you are sitting behind the wheel, for instance. Or the pattern of speaking a language reoccurs when you are addressed in this specific language, and automatically it comes up.

A subset of these patterns are related to ignorance. In other words, they are predicated upon ignorance. Without ignorance they wouldn't be there. They remain active even after a glimpse because they are imprints. So that's the connection between ignorance and memory – it's just about these patterns. And after a glimpse, these patterns cannot stick any longer. They get debunked. These patterns are dynamisms. There is always a time dimension to a thought. Or there is a time dimension to a bodily attitude or a reaction. So as they get triggered we stop them sooner and sooner and sooner. In this way the repetition is avoided and in time, due to the lack of repetition, they get erased. My teacher used the image of a field or meadow and a tractor driving through the meadow. The tracks are there on the meadow. And then the farmer dies and the tractor doesn't cross the meadow any longer, and after some time the tracks are erased. It's the same thing here: the patterns get erased naturally. So that's a connection I see between ignorance and memory.

[Francis Lucille, 2023 June retreat: [What Are Memories? Memories Explained](#)]

Looking at it this way, it's not hard to see that it's memory that creates and supports the sense of being a separate entity – a physical body and a personality. As Billy Doyle (a student of Jean Klein) explains, our concept of the body is largely based on memory, rather than on actual experience of the real body:

We don't truly know the real body; rather, what we experience when we wake up in the morning is largely memory. It is a pattern crystallised over time, more or less a set of defence mechanisms for the I-image. This set of patterns that pervades every layer of the body

unknowingly imprisons us in our past. It is frozen energy that gives us the feeling of contraction, weight, opacity and fixation. We are, more particularly, localised in the forebrain, the thought factory. In the real body, the global body, the I-image loses its hold.

[Billy Doyle, *Yoga in the Kashmir Tradition*, ch2]

Jean Klein describes how the idea of being a separate person is created from and held together by ephemeral memories:

The personality is nothing other than a projection, a habit created by memory and nourished by desire. Ask yourself the question 'Who am I?' and lucidly observe that the questioner, thinker, doer, sufferer are all forms that appear and disappear within the consciousness of 'I am', the ever-living background. They have no reality in themselves. What we call the person is due to a mistake. Thoughts, feelings and actions appear and disappear indefinitely, creating an illusion of continuity. The idea of being a person, an ego, is nothing other than an image held together by memory.

[Jean Klein, *I Am*, ch 2]

So one aspect of being free from memory implies being free of the limitations imposed by our belief to be a separate entity. But that doesn't mean that memory has no useful role to play. Within the realm of first-person memory, Jean Klein distinguishes between functional memory and psychological memory:

Memory which functions without the limitations of the self-image is completely integrated in cosmic memory, the all-possibility, whose archetypes are in us as the tree is in the seed. Functional memory appears spontaneously when needed in different situations. Spontaneous thinking is grounded in functional memory. However, we rarely give memory this freedom of function. Psychological memory recalls constantly. It is a fortress for the survival of the 'me', the idea of being an individual. The categories of past, present and future are mere conventions for the survival of this image. ...

In the absence of psychological memory your living in the world is new at every moment.

[Jean Klein, *Who Am I*, ch 4]

The spontaneous action Jean Klein is referring to is quite different from impulsiveness associated with the habit of ego protection:

Q. How can I know when I am being impulsive and when spontaneous?

A. Impulsive behaviour is reaction. It is conditioning. When you take yourself for nothing you are a loving being and there is no reaction. What you say or do belongs to the situation itself and not to an idea. Spontaneous action is free from memory. It is perfectly aesthetic, beautiful and right. It is fundamentally ethical.

[Jean Klein, *Who Am I*, ch 2]

Francis gives some clear guidance on distinguishing the uses of memory that are helpful in practical situations from those that give rise to suffering.

Q: How do we see memory or the past from the point of view of truth? When can it be an obstacle to a truth seeker?

FL: We have to be careful not to throw away the baby with the bath-water. In other words, memory has a role to play. Who wants to have dementia? Nobody. We want our memory, we want to be able to remember, if possible, what you did in the morning or where you put your

keys. We want to be able to remember how to speak a language. We want to be able to remember the words of the language. We want, if possible, to be able to remember how to do an addition. These are useful skills. So, memory is important.

The only form of memory which is detrimental to happiness is regrets – sense of guilt and regrets. And regrets and sense of guilt are predicated upon the belief that we are a separate and limited person who has made bad choices in the past. So, we have to understand that the choices we make, we don't really make them as a person. It's all God's choosing, everything.

Whether God chooses out of truth, love and beauty, or whether God chooses to play ignorance, to play this game. And having chosen to play this game, the choices which are made by this apparently separate entity that consciousness seems to have become, these choices are of course detrimental to our happiness. And then we have regrets. So, every time we have regrets, every time we feel guilty about something in the past, we are in ignorance. So, it is only this part of memory, the psychological part, that has to be dropped as a result of the glimpse, as a result of our understanding.

Another way to answer this question about memory, is that the only memory which is problematic is the haunting memory, the memory which comes in the now and bothers us in the now. There are in the now two kinds of haunting memories. One kind is related to ignorance, and the other kind is a warning signal telling us, 'oh, you better do this' that comes from the past – 'I received this email, which I have to answer'. And I have to do it. So that haunts us. But once we have done what was needed, then it doesn't haunt us, and it's done. So these are the examples I would use. So everything which is really psychological from the past and relates to ignorance, that's the only problematic aspect of memory.

[Francis Lucille, 13/5/2023, Online Satsang]

As our lives become more and more free from psychological memory, so our openness grows, and our experience of the universe takes on a freshness in every moment. Presence shines in all we perceive. Here is Jean Klein's description of what it is like to live in not-knowing, free from memory:

When you are free from memory, you are open to every situation. When you are free from end-gaining, free from striving, free from expectation, then you are open, open to all the possible facts. Otherwise, you are only open to the past, and that means to repetition. When you are open to all the facts, there is no repetition. Every moment is new. Life is never repetitious. It is because of our way of looking and acting from the 'I-concept' that there appears to be repetition. Because we superimpose old ideas on the situation, we are not open to the newness, open to the unknown. We must be open to the unknown. This openness with your surroundings is harmonious living. In openness there is love.

Begin with your body, your nearest surroundings. Generally, when the body wakes up in the morning, it is the pattern in your mind which you think is your body, which wakes up. Free yourself from the pattern; see that it is a pattern. Let the feeling of your body wake up, not the pattern. Then you will see that it is the same with your surroundings, your children, your wife, your husband, your neighbour and so on. You have been living with them as you live with furniture, because you superimpose patterns on your surroundings. It is very tragic when you come to middle age and see that you have contacted all your surroundings through an image. It happens with couples who have been together a long time. People talk too much and observe too little.

[Jean Klein, *Open to the Unknown*]

For many of us, the greatest challenges to this openness and freedom from memory arise in personal relationships. We have a tendency to classify people, make judgements about them and create an image of them which is stored in memory. Then when we meet them, we relate only to this image, not to the actual experience of them in the moment. Here is Jean Klein's advice:

Your neighbours and friends have ideas about you. Do not be taken in by these ideas or in turn have ideas about them. Don't imprison people in your memory. Circumstances never repeat; life never repeats. It is only the ego which desires a known security that labels every being and situation. So live in your surroundings as if for the first time. Be without qualifications. In this nakedness you are beautiful and every moment is full of life.

[Jean Klein, *Who Am I*, ch 2]

Q. When I meet someone a second time, for example, is it possible to use only functional memory?

A. Absolutely! Functional memory may recall the name, face and previous circumstances, but take note that you quickly form opinions about people and that this psychological memory colours your second meeting with the flavour of the first. You bring preconceived ideas with you. With this kind of memory there can be no real meeting. You do not let the other come to you in newness and you in turn take the old with you. There is no love, no affection.

[Jean Klein, *Who Am I*, ch 4]

Understanding that we are not separate from anyone or anything in the universe is the key to resolving conflicts. It doesn't mean we are going to give in to whatever the other person demands. We need to be impartial in looking at the situation from both sides and do our best to come to a fair resolution. This is Francis's advice:

If we have a conflict with another individual, we understand that we share the same reality, we are the same universe, so we're not going to try to screw him or her in the deal. On the other hand, we're not going to allow him or her to take advantage of us. We're going to do our best to be fair, to be loving, and in this way, we are not guilty of the past actions, because they are all acts of God. We are responsible as universal consciousness for whatever arises in the moment. We take responsibility for it in the now, in the moment.

In this way we live, as they say in India, without accumulating karma, but in fact without leaving traces in the past. So that when we look back into the past, everything has been taken care of. It's only light, there is no heaviness, there is nothing from the past that sticks. That's a way to live without leaving traces. There is a book by Krishnamurthy which he calls *The Flight of the Eagle* –the eagle flying through the sky doesn't leave traces behind, it cuts through the sky. So in this impersonal life we don't leave traces. Everything is taken care of from moment to moment.

[Francis Lucille, 21/4/2023 *Many Paths, One Self* conference]

When people behave badly towards us, it can be hard not to hold grudges. The way to overcome this is to see that they did not choose their actions. As we have discussed in previous papers, all actions are 'an act of God', or if you prefer, a choice of universal consciousness. No-one is guilty:

Only in ignorance do we hold grudges against people. It doesn't mean that we are not aware of some patterns in people, some behaviours. If someone has screwed us financially once, 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 just how they are.

[Francis Lucille 25/11/2021, Thanksgiving Retreat]

It's very important to absolve yourself and others simultaneously for whatever has happened in the past. To know that it was all God's activity, because karma is only true from the vantage point of ignorance. The real liberation from karma is liberation from the memory of the doer, and not only of the personal doer, but of all other doers that have apparently done harm to this individual doer. So as we understand our innocence, we understand also the innocence of everybody. And that's the only resolution of all the psychological trauma from the past – to understand that ultimately nobody has done anything, it was all an act of God. So complain to God, complain to yourself.

[Francis Lucille, 20/1/2022 Satsang, *One Awareness Show*]

Contemplation

When we live in memory, we cut ourselves off from the universe, we live in isolation. This is the root of all suffering.

[Jean Klein, *I Am*]