

Forgetting and Remembering

In many spiritual traditions, thinking is regarded as a barrier to the recognition of our true nature, and practices are prescribed aimed at curbing thinking. But this can lead to a misunderstanding. It is true that glimpses of our true nature arise in the gaps between thoughts and perceptions. But what is important is the understanding we gain from those glimpses, not the absence of thoughts.

Becoming established as our true nature does not entail being free from thoughts. Being in wisdom rather than ignorance does not imply constantly thinking 'I am', or constantly trying to remain in pure awareness in the absence of objective experience. And it's a mistake to believe that being 'lost in thoughts' is a form of ignorance, or that we should constantly be knowingly observing the activity of our bodies and minds. In the following dialogue, Francis explains how thinking is a natural part of life and there are times when we need to be 'lost in thoughts'. The only kind of thinking that is problematic is thinking based on a sense of being a separate entity:

Q: I wanted to get your opinion on what it means to be lost in thought. And for me, it feels like being in a dream, although I'm not sleeping. When I wake up, a sense of 'I am' returns, I'm aware of other sense perceptions. Would it be right to say that when we're lost in thought, consciousness is veiled to itself in that moment? And when we snap out of it, consciousness is unveiled?

FL I would say it depends on the nature of the thoughts. If the thoughts originate from some sense of lack, and if their aim is to put an end to this sense of lack, then we are in ignorance. But if the thinking process unfolds without a sense of lack, then what's the problem? I mean, who cares about the thought-police who come and tell us, you shouldn't be thinking of that? I'm in my bathtub, and my thoughts go left and right, and I think of all kinds of things. Sometimes I think about physics. Sometimes I think about a project I have, but there is no sense of lack. So like it would be a sin, and we think the Pope is going to come and tell us don't do that.

Because there are spiritual schools where it's bad to think, but mark my words, these people, if we could put some sensors to have a look inside their brain and their thoughts, they are the ones who think the most, and they tell us not to think because they are desperately trying not to think, because they think that is a way to happiness, not to think. If you don't want to think, just buy a gun, shoot yourself. Corpses don't think.

Thinking goes with life. There is a mix of thinking, perceiving the world, perceiving the body, the emotions, all of that. Yes, it's a mix. It's not just thought. But to say or to think that to be lost in the thought is a bad thing, no, it depends on the nature of the thought.

Q: That's very helpful. Thank you. It's definitely a different experience when we snap out of the daydream. It's just a different experience. Some clarity returns, there's an awareness that wasn't there before, and I suppose it just is what it is. But I just wanted to check in with you about that.

FL: If the daydream is an escape of the current situation, then there is a sense of lack at its very origin. If I am in a situation that I feel unbearable, and as a result I project a movie to get through it, to escape, then there is a sense of lack at the very origin of this type of thought. Then it comes from ignorance. Then, yes, there is something to do about it, which is to look at its origin, which always has its source in the belief to be a separate person. And then to ask ourselves the question, is that so, is it true? Yes. In this case, yes. If it is an escape, yes.

But the other example, let's say someone who loves their profession, let's say a doctor. He's seeing a patient, and the patient is telling him or her all the symptoms. And the doctor has to

think. He goes to his database of knowledge and tries to ..., but at the same time he or she is enjoying what they are doing, and it's useful, and there is no sense of lack. Or an engineer building a bridge, I mean designing a bridge. He better pay attention to his thoughts.

[Francis Lucille, 6/11/2022, Online satsang]

Using concepts from traditional Advaita, Francis explains how our natural condition is to project an image of the world onto the screen of the mind, without identifying with any elements of the projection. In other words, without forgetting what we are. The world doesn't disappear when we recognise our true nature.

FL: In the Indian tradition, ignorance is explained by a double process of forgetting and projecting. We forget what we are. We project an object with which we can then identify. So, the preconditions are forgetting and projecting. But the forgetting aspect is not necessary. It's not mandatory. In other words, we can have the projection, the world, without forgetting what we are. And, we can also have no projection and no forgetting.

But somehow there is, in ignorance, an intention to forget what we are. So, that explains that when we are in ignorance, although in the gap between two perceptions, consciousness remains in its own glory. There is no projection then. But there is still the volitional forgetting. So, that's when a new object or a similar object gets projected, the identification resumes. And on the other end of the spectrum, you can have projection without forgetting. And that is what is called the *sahaja samadhi*, the natural condition. The natural condition is for consciousness not to forget its universal nature.

Q: And, is it when I remember that I no longer identify? Or, is it I no longer identify, so therefore I remember?

FL: If and when we remember, identification is impossible. The forgetting is not a natural condition. It's like the king who forgets he is a king and believes he is a beggar. His forgetting has not changed the fact that he is still a king. So his natural condition is to be the king. The forgetting doesn't change it. So in a sense, sooner or later he will be the king again. When he comes back to the palace, guards at the gate give him the salute ...

Q: What is the catalyst for that happening?

FL: The desire to stop playing the game. But remember that this game is being played on a multidimensional level, by which I mean this reality plays the game of ignorance, choosing a vehicle, an avatar, let's say. But at the same time, kind of plays the game through all the avatars and through all the events. Just forgetting. So there are events that are going to happen that are designed for this specific avatar to remember. But because of the freedom, there might be a choice not to remember. But at some point, it happens.

Q: Your answer implies some sort of agency, that awareness designs the game, so to speak.

FL: Yes, but with infinite intelligence and effortlessness. It's like the universe constantly conspires for us in this avatar, to awaken, meaning to end the game, right at the end of the game. And we persist, up until we give up. In a sense, we persist because we deeply enjoy playing the game. And at some point, we give up, we want something else, and we don't know what it is. Because we don't know what it is, we are open. That's a moment when we are open to the truth, because we don't know what it is.

As long as we know better, as we believe, I know what I am seeking – money, relationships, recognition, health, whatever – we keep playing the game. But there is a moment when we don't know. And that moment when we don't know, and we ask a question, is openness. That's when the universe, all of a sudden, conspires to give us the answer in many forms. As long as we wanted to play the game, in a sense, the universe was pretending to play the game with us, of separation. At the moment we want the truth, then the universe will oblige.

[Francis Lucille 8/3/2023 March retreat, *Sahaja Projection without forgetting*]

After an initial glimpse, it's common to feel disappointment when we notice ourselves slipping back into ignorance. So we look for some technique or practice to try to prevent this happening. But as Francis explains, that implicit negative judgement about having fallen back into ignorance is what takes us right back there:

Q: When one is stuck in ignorance, when one is stuck in ignorance, I mean it happens to me all the time, most of the time, and I was wondering if there's any exercise or something to do to open the door.

FL: The very fact that you're asking this question, you are not stuck in ignorance.

Q: Well, I am at work, you know, with all the gossip.

FL: In these moments when you are stuck in it, we are not aware of it, so there is nothing we can do.

Q: I'm aware of it.

FL: The moment we are aware of it, we are not in it, so the first thing not to do is to judge oneself for being in ignorance, because the moment we are aware of it, we are out of it. So it would be a mistake to misjudge ourselves, saying, 'ah, I was in ignorance again, damn it'. No! We have to say, 'oh, I notice it, therefore I am not in it'.

Q: No, but mostly it's the repetitive thoughts about an event at work, and the gossip, or whatever it is.

FL: Yes, but when you are gossiping...

Q: Or other people gossiping, and then I sit and think about it over and over and over.

FL: When you are in it, you are not aware of it, right? Right. So there is nothing you can do. So then you gossip, you do whatever, you ignore. When you are in ignorance, you ignore, right? So you ignore, and you keep ignoring up until the moment when you notice that you were ignoring. Now, the moment you notice that you were ignoring, you are no longer ignoring.

So what is important is not to resume ignoring by judging yourself for ignoring. That's the point I'm making. Instead, be happy, congratulate yourself, and see, well, I am aware of it, therefore right now I am not in it. Because then it allows you to stay in this awareness. It's your freedom up until you choose to go back into ignoring. It's a free country. So then if you choose to do so, be my guest. That's perfect.

Q: It just doesn't feel like I'm free when I'm aware of it, because there's so much tension in the body.

But you are aware of whatever tensions are there. To be in ignorance is not to be in a state of tension or not in a state of tension, because it's not a state. To be free from ignorance, means to

be free from believing that I am a person. And there are moments like that. The moment we are judging ourselves, that's for certain that we are back into ignorance. That's for certain. The moment we are judging ourselves or others, we are swimming in it, and it's not clean. But the moment we notice that we are out of that mess already, so that's perfect.

Q: It seems like it reverberates, propagates itself.

FL: These moments when we are not in ignorance, when we notice it, are very precious. That's why we have to respect them. We don't want to belittle them. We want to showcase them, we want to put them on the shrine, so to speak. Because then they are allowed to linger. And then they will linger more and more, and they will become more and more frequent, these moments when we are out of the muddy water, at least the head out of it.

So, in other words, see it the other way. Instead of seeing yourself as 'gee, I'm always in ignorance', say 'gee, I constantly notice that I am in ignorance, which is great'. Because the people who are truly in ignorance, the people who are gossiping, they never stop. They never notice. They are not aware of what they are doing. They are always judging others. That's what they feed on. That's their sport. And sometimes it's good not to be tied to a workplace or to a working environment. If it is too bad, there are often alternate solutions.

[Francis Lucille, 29/3/2014, [Ignoring](#)]

So is there no escape from continually falling back into ignorance? Francis explains that ignorance is a choice we, consciousness, make. It's more than just a thought: it's a belief. Thoughts come and go freely, but beliefs are sticky. They are concepts which we feel to be true, and on which our decisions and actions are based:

Q: On one hand, we are not responsible for our thoughts and we never choose them, but you said that ignorance is a choice. Could you possibly clarify in what sense ignorance is a choice, if thoughts and feelings are not?

FL: When I say that we never choose our thoughts, the small print is as a separate person. As a separate person, we never choose our thoughts. As consciousness, as presence, we choose everything, including our thoughts. Now, ignorance is a choice. Ignorance is a choice that we make. Before we make the choice of ignorance, we are not ignorant, so we are consciousness. Ignorance is a choice that we as consciousness make. And the choice we make as consciousness is to conveniently forget our absolute freedom and to identify with a body-mind object to whom we grant a limited freedom. But, in fact, even that is false because this limited freedom is not a real freedom. In fact, it has zero freedom, but it has a seeming of a limited freedom. It has the illusion of a limited freedom.

Once we have made this choice, the choice of ignorance, because of our universal power as consciousness, by making this choice, we send an order to the universe to manifest in ways that are consistent with this apparent limited freedom of this apparently limited entity. Krishnamurti called that our last freedom. Ignorance is the exercise of our last freedom. The moment we fall into ignorance, we are no longer free, so we have exercised our last freedom.

But there is one exception, which is the following. That in this predicament in which we believe to have some limited freedom, but in which we in fact have zero freedom, it is not completely true. We don't have zero freedom. But we have only one freedom, which is our first freedom, which is the freedom to investigate the belief that we have adopted on the outset, and as a result to liberate ourselves from this belief. The moment we question the belief, we are free

from it. That's the exercise of our first freedom, which is the first path towards the recovery of our absolute freedom. So between our last freedom and our first freedom, between these two shores is the ocean of ignorance.

We have to understand also that ignorance is not solely a thought that arises. It's not the thought of me as a separate person. It's more than a thought. It's a belief. What is a belief? What's the difference between a concept, if you will, and a belief? I can have the concept of communism without being a communist. So I can have a concept of communism without believing communism to be true or without validating it. So there is a difference between having a concept, the concept of being a separate entity, and being a true believer of this concept. So the belief adds something to the concept. And the something it adds to the concept is that consciousness attaches itself to the concept. Consciousness validates the concept. Consciousness merges somehow with the limited concept. So ignorance is such an immersion of ignorance in a concept. It's a crude mixture of concept, of bodily sensation and consciousness. And it's a crude mixture because this mixture is heterogeneous. It is not stable. And the process of discrimination is a separation of both that restores knowledge and liberates us from ignorance.

So ignorance is a choice that we made as consciousness. When we are in ignorance, we believe to be a separate individual. And therefore, whatever choice we make from ignorance, we believe it to be made by this separate individual. This seemingly separate individual, however, can make one true choice, which is to question its limitations.

[Francis Lucille, 8/3/2013 *Ignorance is the Exercise of our Last Freedom*]

Is there ever an end to ignorance? Can the desire to be free of ignorance in fact be yet another form of ignorance?:

Q: Francis, concerning the end of the game, the game of ignorance, the game of identification, there are some people who speak about the game never ending. And yet it is my understanding that comes a point where the interest in identification with the body-mind comes to zero. ...

FL: When I talk about the game, it's an image, it's a metaphor which, like any image, falls short of being an appropriate description of reality. The point is to describe some features, some aspects, but there is no image which can be perfectly adequate. So when we talk about the game never ending, or ending at some point, we have to be precise in saying who is playing the game? Is there a separate entity playing the game or not? And for whom does the game end or not end? There was a belief of being a separate entity, the desire of being a separate entity, that was playing itself through a vehicle.

Q: At some point, the investigation of this belief and the insights that come along with this investigation erode this belief.

FL: This question about ending the game for good or not for good is often based on a confusion in which the question arises: once ignorance has been dispelled, is there a possibility to fall back into ignorance? And this question can be asked from two different vantage points. Who is there to fall back into ignorance? Often these questions come from some kind of fear, well if I finally get enlightened, am I getting enlightened for good or is there a risk that I'm going to fall back again into ignorance? Of course, such a question can only be asked from a vantage point of ignorance. So the answer to this question is, sorry you're already in it, so there is no risk that you are going to fall back into it because you're already in the shit.

As for the one who is playing the game, this one is absolutely free, unbound, but this one has no fear of falling back into ignorance because precisely it's out of her sovereign desire that the game is being played. It's like asking a chess player after a victory, after a win, are you afraid to play a new game? No, he does that for pleasure, so there is no fear and he knows it's only a game. The problem arises only if you feel that you're an entity to whom the game is ..., who has no freedom.

Q: It's clear that it's not a person who chooses to end the game, the 'ending of the game' is consciousness's freedom and will and wish doing it. The question is that the manifestation goes on – I think you use the term projection.

FL: Yes, as I said, there are two different aspects, there is a forgetting and there is a projection.

Q: Yes, so the projection still goes on, but there isn't the absence of forgetting. The question is about the deepening.

FL: Yes, there is a deepening in that sense, but this deepening has to do with the vehicle, just as you can always become a better tennis player, or a better musician, or a better physicist, there is a deepening, but that belongs to the human vehicle.

[Francis Lucille 8/3/2023 Temecula Retreat]

Contemplation

In the progressive way, you constantly refer to experience through comparison with your previous state. You remain in your own darkness. The emphasis is on avidya, ignorance. In the direct way, you don't emphasise ignorance but look to the light, to vidya. It is a question of where you put the accent.

[Jean Klein, *Who Am I*]