

Death and Reincarnation

What do teachers of non-duality mean when they say 'no-one is ever born, and no-one ever dies'? When the body dies, does anything survive? Is there reincarnation? If we understand that we are that which perceives, rather than that which is perceived, why do we still fear death? What does it mean to 'die before you die'?

In the following dialogue, Francis discusses apparent evidence for 'life after death' and gives a different interpretation of the facts:

Q: Years ago I had a meeting with a medium, a person speaking with souls of dead people. I asked her for real evidence that life goes on after death. Then, in the session, the mother of my grandfather came and told me very detailed things through this medium that even I did not know, but could verify after research of our family history. This would show that mind-history-person clusters can exist after death without a body-mind. Does this stand in contradiction to the direct path? By the way, this experience could not take away the fear of death.

FL: Of course, it couldn't. Now the question is, does this stand in contradiction to the direct path? No. There is only one origin for all manifestation. So that because there is this common origin, everything is interconnected, both throughout space and also throughout time. So just as we can travel through space, there are ways through this interconnectedness to travel through time or to travel through minds.

What this kind of experience tells us really is not that life goes on after death or that there is reincarnation or whatever. It tells us that there is one single reality. That's a fundamental message. One single reality. But we miss the mark because most of the time we give a different interpretation to this message. And the interpretation we give to this message is tainted by ignorance, which is our belief in separate individuals. That creates all these notions of life after death, of rebirth, of heaven, paradise, all the virgins in it, etc.

And we stick to these fancy stories for the children, as my teacher called them. The fact that this type of experience points to, is total interconnectedness. One single reality. Time and space are illusions, with regard to this reality. All the sages have said that in all traditions. Time and space are illusions.

So if time and space are illusions, so is the paradise, the hell, the virgins, the reincarnation and life after death. They are illusions the moment time and space are illusions. Otherwise, if they are real, it means time is real.

[Francis Lucille, 26/11/2014 Thanksgiving retreat Week 1 Day 5]

In the next dialogue, the questioner puts forward an interesting argument for reincarnation; that it is a more elegant model for how the universe works with regard to the coming into existence and going out of existence of sentient creatures, in particular human beings, as it is less wasteful. My own comment on this would be that the universe is, by nature, very wasteful. Plants produce many seeds, but few germinate and grow into new plants. But Francis uses different arguments which address the question of reincarnation directly:

Q: Yesterday you said we are here to seek who we are and then to celebrate. If we deny reincarnation, as I understand you do, then it seems that nearly all body minds miss out on the second stage, the celebration. ... It seems more elegant to interpret all these unresolved human lives as the preliminary chapters of books which will one day be completed.

FL: First, you say, 'if we deny reincarnation, as I understand you do': I never denied it or affirmed it. I try to be a politician on those issues. A politician during the election period!

When we talk about reincarnation, the first thing we have to clarify is who is it or what is it that reincarnates? That's the first thing. If we say that the body reincarnates, obviously not. The body is made of atoms that dance in a certain way. And then what is the likelihood that the same atoms, exactly the same atoms that are dancing as this body will regroup to take a different shape? Much younger, much smaller, because then there will be missing atoms, to take a different form. So, obviously, based on the laws of physics, it is not the body that reincarnates.

Now, it's not consciousness either, because reincarnation assumes that there is incarnation. Reincarnation assumes a prior incarnation. But I've never said that consciousness was incarnated. Consciousness is both incarnated and incarnated. It is everywhere. Within and without. So consciousness is not incarnated. If we say consciousness is both incarnated and incarnated, of course it's incarnated in all bodies, since it's everywhere. So it doesn't have to re-incarnate, since it is the same consciousness in all bodies.

It makes sense. We are trying to figure out what it means to reincarnate, and we have to be specific about what it is that reincarnates. Now, is it the mind that reincarnates? It begs the question, what is the mind? We have never seen our mind. So the mind is an alleged entity that we have never seen, because the only thing we have ever perceived are thoughts, bodily sensations, and sense perceptions. That's the only thing we have ever perceived. The mind is an alleged thing.

So therefore, if we say that thoughts reincarnate, well, we can communicate thoughts. In a sense, that would be one way. Thoughts are around that appeared the first time in Einstein's mind. The thought about relativity. This thought is still around, and the body of Einstein is no longer around.

So, my point is that, in order to answer the question about reincarnation, I am afraid that reincarnation assumes that there is a separate entity that reincarnates. We have seen that it is neither the body, nor the consciousness. So, in order for me to be able to answer the question about this separate entity that reincarnates, you should present it to me. You should tell me what this separate reincarnating entity is. Otherwise I don't understand the question. We all assume implicitly that there is such an individual separate entity, an individual soul of whatever, which we have never seen. And then we claim that it reincarnates. ...

All body minds miss the celebration. Because the celebration is not for the body minds. The body minds are just the vehicles. ... The celebration is for consciousness and consciousness only. The body minds are tools. ...

Ignorance itself is already part of the celebration. That's a fine point. But people love their ignorance. Consciousness loves everything it does, including being ignorant. Consciousness is love itself. When consciousness ignores or ignorates, it enjoys fully its ignorance or its ignorating. So, celebration only seems to happen after the recognition by consciousness of its own nature and the cessation of ignorance. But ignorance is part of the game.

Now, I have another offer to make to you, which is this. If you are absolute consciousness, then whatever you wish under your command will appear to be. In other words, if you find that, as you said, that reincarnation is the best way to do it [*to celebrate*], so be it. In your universal

power, you can choose to reincarnate. As always, the sky is the limit.

[Francis Lucille 13/5/2015 Spring retreat Week 2 Day 5]

Do near-death experiences tell us anything about what happens after death? Can identification by consciousness with a body that is no longer alive, continue? Here is Francis's answer:

Q: In near-death experiences, it is reported that there is still an identification with the body or with a separate consciousness. I asked myself, when the body is no longer alive, who is still identifying with a separate being as there is only one universal consciousness? Can consciousness let go of identification after the body disappears in consciousness after death?

FL: You say 'I asked myself, when the body is no longer alive, who is still identifying with a separate being as there is only universal consciousness?' But it is the same when the body is still alive. Who is identifying with a separate being? In fact, it is consciousness identifying with an object.

After the body is dead, there is no longer a body. There is still consciousness. The question is, is there still an object or not? It depends on whatever consciousness wants to do at that point. If consciousness wants to create other objects and keep identifying with them, to keep playing the game a little longer, why not? It is a free country.

All these answers, all these questions find their answer the moment you stop limiting consciousness. The moment you understand that consciousness is infinite and is not even limited by its own laws, by its own rules, all these questions about life after death, reincarnation, the other realms, etc. become very simple. The answer is, why not?

The sky is the limit for consciousness and there is not even the limit of the sky: it also creates the sky. So everything is possible, it creates what it wants. So don't worry, since you are consciousness, after the body dies, if you want to create something, be my guest. You create whatever you want. You want to reincarnate as a snail? Why not? Must be interesting.

Now regarding the near-death experience, there are two kinds of near-death experience. And there are near-death experiences in which there is still identification with the body and on more rare occasions, there are near death experiences, in which there is a dissolving into the light. So this latter type of death experience would correspond to awakening, to the experience of *nirvikalpa samadhi*. So it can happen in this space between life and death.

[Francis Lucille, 20/10/2013 [On Near Death Experiences, Reincarnation and Other Realms](#)]

In order to understand death, we must first understand life. What is it? What does it mean to 'be alive'. Francis explains that we can see life as being the constant movement of birth and death. Or we can see it as the changeless presence within which birth and death arises. Either way, we have no reason to fear death:

Q: My belief in a life after death is not there, so in what sense do you mean that 'everybody's destiny is to be happy'?

FL: It's an interesting question, life after death. What does life before death mean? Because if we speak about life after death, it implies that we kind of know life before death. But what is life? What is it that is alive?

Q: I would think of life as memories and expectations that are in time.

FL: Often we identify life with movement. But movement implies change. So a broader definition of life would be change. But then change means the death of the old and the birth of the new.

Q: Every moment it's dying, in a sense.

FL: And therefore, life, when we understand life as movement, we understand life as birth and death. And in that sense, as Krishnamurti used to say, we die with every thought, we die with every mentation, from moment to moment. It's not that we don't know death, we know death very well. Because we die from moment to moment, and we are born from moment to moment.

But there is another way to understand life as that which gives birth and that which sustains and that which destroys. That which is behind the three aspects of manifestation, its birth, its existence, its death, from moment to moment. So the reality, the changeless presence, or the changeless reality, that undergoes all these changes, yes, but which is in essence changeless. So that's a different understanding of life. And this life, with a capital L, is not subjected to death and birth. It's eternal.

So it is present in our experience because reality is present in our experience. Let me rephrase that. There is an element of reality to our human experience. It is not entirely an illusion. It cannot be. There is something real. Descartes used to say, there is something real, I don't know what it is. There is something real. ... This element of reality doesn't die.

Q: That's the happiness you're talking about?

FL: Yes. What is important is to understand that we both die and we don't die. As Krishnamurti says, we die from moment to moment with every thought. So we shouldn't be afraid of this death because we know this death. We constantly experience this renewal.

Q: What we are afraid of is not death but the process leading up to it.

FL: That's a different issue. We are in it. This process is in us already. We are not really afraid of it because only a few commit suicide. Although we are all dying in this sense. The body is dying. But only a few commit suicide and for whatever reasons, but most people don't. Meaning that they are quite happy with the process. Although they may claim that they are very unhappy about it.

Everybody suffers no matter whether young or old, healthy or sick, successful or losers. It doesn't matter. There are people in some countries who live in very poor conditions by our standards, and they have a smile on their face all day long. There are people here who can buy anything and they commit suicide.

So happiness is a real question in life. That's the goal of life. That's the mission, the project. And if we make it dependent upon something of the world, of the body, of the mind, since this thing we make it dependent upon is impermanent, our happiness will go down the drain with the thing. And therefore as we enjoy the thing, we cannot enjoy it fully because of its impermanence. And if the thing we enjoy the most is our life as a human body, we cannot really enjoy it because of the very impermanence of the human body. Think about it. So in this regard we are all in the same predicament.

[Francis Lucille, 19/11/2017 Thanksgiving Temecula retreat Week 1 Day 1]

If we regard happiness as being the goal of life, then we need to discover that that happiness cannot be found in objects or phenomena in the world. Francis explains how our attachment to the world is the origin of the fear of death. But once we understand that our real being doesn't die, it always is,

there is nothing to lose and nothing to fear – we, consciousness, can create or recreate whatever dream we want:

FL: Happiness is never the experience of something in the world, never the experience of the world. The experience of happiness is always the experience of our real identity, of our intimacy, which is love, which is peace. But we are so attached to the world. We hold on to it for dear life.

And also, some of us perceive death as absolute nothingness. Others believe the death of the body is not the end of the soul. And then the soul is going to have an even harder time in the beyond, and gets a lot of retribution for whatever actions have been taken. So all of that, in both cases there is fear.

But it should be easy to understand that absolute nothingness doesn't exist. Absolute nothingness is an impossibility.

Q: So we will exist somewhere?

FL: That which is, always will be. In other words, that which really is our real being will always be. So we are not going to lose what we are, our reality. We are going to lose a dream which we can recreate at will if we want. ... But what's the point of doing the same thing again? Been there, done that, says God.

Q: So I want to know if after death, our soul will appear in another body?

FL: You do whatever you want. If you want to appear in another body, why not? Because you will realize that you have always been doing what you wanted. So it's not like something is going to happen to you that you don't want because you are the boss. You are the CEO, so you cannot be fired.

[Francis Lucille, 12/02/2019 February retreat Week 1 Day 3]

Contemplation

Once you understand that consciousness is the only reality there is, you understand at the same time, or you experience at the same time, that you never die, because you were never born. The reality never dies. It's only our limitations that die, our seeming limitations. And then this sense of impending doom vanishes. That is liberation, liberation from being something that is caught in becoming, that is caught in the jaws of time.

[Francis Lucille, SAND15 conference]