

Integrity

Followers of the Direct Path are often described as 'truth-seekers' or 'truth-lovers'. It's an apt description because truth, authenticity, integrity are fundamental at the beginning of the path and throughout our lives thereafter. That includes being honest with ourselves and being honest with those with whom we interact.

Here are some thoughts from Francis on self-honesty:

FL: Honesty, authenticity are paramount in this business because we have to start from the facts. We cannot start from a hypothetical situation. We have to start from our actual experience and not kid ourselves into believing, for instance, I am a very, very spiritual person, and I have invested so much in spiritual endeavours, I have been the student of this Dzogchen teacher for 20 years. All of that has no value whatsoever.

Because to be a person is not spiritual in the first place. So to be a spiritual person is... The point I am making, yes, these qualities of the ancient Greek philosophers, the true, the beautiful and the good. To endeavour in our thoughts and in our deeds and in our relationship to exemplify those qualities. Yes, that's definitely the path.

The path is almost scientific. At least the conditions of true scientific research, humility for the facts, absolute integrity and honesty about the facts, you don't try to doctor the facts, you listen to the facts, you try to verify or falsify whatever hypothesis you have. All of that applies equally to this spiritual business.

So it's important to try to exemplify once again these qualities. Because in fact these qualities are not qualities of mind, you see. They come from a different place. Our intuition of what is true, of what is beautiful and of what is good doesn't come from the mind. It's an intuition that comes from what the Platonists would call the world of ideas, the nous, a different realm.

[Francis Lucille, 7/11/2015 Dialogue 1]

Although the goal of the path is usually described as happiness, truth needs to come first. If by 'happiness' we mean relief from suffering, then this is a goal that perpetuates the belief to be a separate person. We are going in the wrong direction. This is common point of confusion among students of the Direct Path teaching. In the following dialogue, Francis explains how this confusion arises:

FL: Sometimes people kid themselves by thinking that they seek the truth, whereas in fact, they have a very personal goal in mind. For instance let's say you have heard that if you get realized, whatever you desire will happen. Now you don't have the money to buy a Ferrari, right? And that's your big desire to buy a Ferrari. To show off. And you say, OK, that would be nice. If I could get realized, I could have a Ferrari. And now, because what I want is realization, my desire is impersonal. Because Francis has said that if you desire realization, this desire is impersonal. But the truth of the matter is, in this case, you are not really desiring realization. Your desire is for a Ferrari. Which is not the same thing. So then you are kidding yourself, right?

So we have to be very clear. And, of course, I took this example of the desire for a car to make some kind of caricature, to make that very obvious in this case. But the same pattern may apply in less obvious situations, for instance, I want to get rid of a problem I have, let's say a psychological problem I have. But then if my desire for the truth is in fact a desire to get rid of the psychological problem I have, it's not the desire for the truth. And this desire only perpetuates this belief to be a separate individual.

In other words, the quest for the truth has to be for the sake of the truth and solely for the sake of the truth. Not for any other ulterior motive. The only ulterior motive should be the truth, not anything else. Now, it may be, and it happens quite often, that we are in ignorance, we are seeking to be relieved from our suffering. And life guides us to a place or to a book or to a situation in which we hear about the truth. But then, there is a need for a conversion to happen. A conversion meaning a change of direction of the desire.

Whereas before the desire was to get whatever it is that we were seeking that would allegedly alleviate our suffering. Upon hearing the truth, something happens that makes us understand that no matter which object I desire, if I acquire it, it won't give me that which I am longing for. But, upon hearing the truth, I have heard that that which I am longing for can be found in a different direction. And then I am going for this new direction. That may happen, that may not happen.

Many people get exposed to the truth, but they are like stones that are taken close to the fire. They warm up, but then when they are removed from the fire, they cool off. Whereas if you take gunpowder close to the fire, it explodes. Or if you take wood close to the fire, it will dry out and then it will catch fire. So there are all kinds of situations for truth seekers, but only the wood and the gunpowder qualify as truth seekers, not the stones.

Q: So the desire for liberation as the end of suffering is not just for the sake of the truth?

FL: No, it's for the sake of the person who wants to put an end to the suffering. It's like looking for Vicodin¹. The conversion has to happen, the conversion of desire.

[Francis Lucille, 2016 Summer retreat in Temecula Week 1 Day 2, 3]

It is one thing to have a natural love of truth, and to demonstrate authenticity and integrity in our private lives. But it can be more difficult in a work situation. Francis explains how this can happen even with those working in physics, a scientific discipline where truth is seen as fundamental and independent of any scientist or scientific institution:

FL: When people are educated in hard science, mathematics and physics, they have this notion of an independent truth, and integrity. When you study mathematics, you are trying to find a solution to a problem. You are with a few friends at the blackboard. You believe you have found the right proof. And then this friend next to you shows you your mistake. And there is no ego here. You say, yes, sorry, I was wrong. And as Einstein used to say, the greatest determinant of progress in physics is the mistakes we make. It's a beautiful, beautiful humility.

When I was in my first job after these scientific studies, the other guy in charge of various departments came from the same place, the French equivalent of MIT. We have been through the same thing. We share the same mathematics, the same physics. We know that. And what I was expecting is the same humility, the same spirit of openness.

And now we are in meetings with all these guys. And each has his turf and his department. And we are talking about a problem, a technical problem, a practical problem shared by various departments. Each department has its input. And I was astonished to see that this integrity had completely vanished. That then they would argue like lawyers in favour of their own department, of their own interest, and conveniently forgetting the objective, mathematical truth, in spite of their background. For me, it was an extraordinary experience. In the first

¹ Strong pain relief medication, similar to co-codamol

months, I realised that I couldn't figure out how there was such a tremendous change in the same guy, by just leaving the school and moving into life.

And my mistake was that I was forgetting the compartmentalisation in people. They can be very rational and very open-minded for mathematics and physics. But with their wives, their children, their customers, their parents, and the stranger in the street, all of that goes down the drain. And then the entire ignorance and sense of separation comes back with a vengeance.

And you can find the same thing in physicists, for instance, even in theoretical physics or in research, you have guys who are very logical, very smart, but then when they are in competition with one of their peers, they are going to steal the idea, claim that it is theirs, not give credit, compete for the Nobel Prize, etc. The same thing. But at least within the framework of their science, they are bound to have this openness and this objectivity because their peers won't admit this type of behaviour. Whereas in philosophy, it's not a problem. It's not a problem for philosophy to be dismissive. You cannot in science be dismissive. You cannot be dismissive of experimental facts any more than you can be dismissive of a clean mathematical reasoning.

[Francis Lucille 5/12/2014 Thanksgiving retreat, week 2 day7, 1]

The following question was asked shortly after the US presidential election in 2016. It is a lovely example of honesty about thoughts and feelings in relation to liberation. Francis's answer includes a description of the natural integrity that exists among nations and communities, but is seldom found in political life:

Q: Recent events in the world made me see how attached I was to the way things were, the way I thought they would be. For a few days I felt a lot of emotions, fear, anxiety, sadness, but I was just watching them. And within a few days I started to get much calmer, but I also noticed a desire to become liberated so that I didn't have to ever feel those things again. And it was like my desire for liberation was not like wanting to be one, but it was like to go away from what I didn't want, which I kind of understood probably not a good thing.

FL: Our belief to be a separate entity seems to perpetuate itself through opinions – rooting for this football team, for this political party, for this politician, for that. Politicians are all politicians. Nothing is more like a politician on the left than a politician on the right. That's my experience. They are the same species. Politics is a game. Politics means the management of the city – that's all. It doesn't have the importance that people attribute to it. In other words, politicians don't make the world rotate. They don't make the economy work. The people make the nation work. The people are the nation – the people who work, the people who are creative. Politicians – they take advantage in most cases.

Now, the integrity of the nation, that makes a big difference. The values that are shared in a nation, of tolerance of other people's ideas, of respect of our brethren, of women, men, gay, straight, black, yellow, pink, blue, white. That's important, you know, because these are the values in society. Respect for women, respect for men.

That's important. Freedom, respect for freedom. Honesty in the deals that we make. Respect of commitments, respect of the law, respect of the rule of the democracy, for the executive to apply the laws, even if they disagree with it. Respect for the balance of powers etc., all of that is important. Because at the end of the day, the rulers are not important, we can kick them out, but what we are as a nation is important.

The nation is made by the people. The politicians, they want always to divide us according to their own ideologies, for their own benefit, and in fact they dine together. They go on TV and they fight. Then they dine together in the fancy restaurants with the lobbyists in Washington, and they laugh about you, the people. How they can screw you. And we stupidly believe them.

In their campaign all their political advisors say 'look, we have done this, we have done that'. It's a game. It's a game, and also it's a way to make money. Huge amounts sometimes, through foundations, speeches. Five hundred thousand dollars – there must be a lot of wisdom in the speech. I'm not that wise!

Q: Well, interesting, I really like that you talk about the people, that the nation is made by the people, because I've been talking to a lot of people since the election, openly as much as I can. And I don't find any bad people. I mean, maybe there are, but the ones that I've been talking to, they have their reasons and their logic, and they're usually good people, hardworking people, sweet people. So I found what you have said very helpful.

FL: I mean, there are bad people, people running with trucks or cars into a crowd. You see what I mean? People doing the Nazi salute in their meetings, you know, and saying horrible things, or people destroying property and rioting, you know, and mayheming people who don't share their political opinions. All of this, that's bad. All of that is bad, what can I say? But most people are not there. Most people are decent people. They may disagree on abortion or whatever, but that doesn't make them bad people.

[Francis Lucille, 2016 Thanksgiving Retreat week 2 day 3, 5]

At an individual level, we can't have much influence on the result of an election or the consequent events, but we can encourage the natural integrity that exists in our nation by upholding, demonstrating and encouraging those shared, universal values. Not as a belief system or just a philosophy, but as a way of living.

Contemplation

Most people are more attached to their belief systems than they are to the truth that can be revealed through their own investigation. As a result, in order not to discover the lies they live in, in order to preserve the lies they live in, they don't do their homework, they don't investigate the truth of what they are.

[Francis Lucille interview, [Recipes for Happiness Don't Work](#)]