

KRISHNAMURTI AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SILENT MIND

Some Unsolved Problems

Our mind usually works through memory and ideas. We make a partial use of our mind; we do not work it to full capacity, integrally. We just do not know that there is another way the mind can function, free from memory, comparison and choice. This incomplete use of the mind creates a sense of inner deficiency, emptiness, which seeks to be filled with interest vested in property, in other human beings and the enrichment and expansion of the self, which becomes a rallying point for all our efforts to fill the inner void. All the while we are completely unconscious of the fact that our mental life is but the result of our habits, and there is nothing in the nature of the mind itself to compel us to use it as we do. Greed and ambition, conflict and strife are so much with us that we do not even question their right to exist and do not at all realize that they are due to inadvertence only and lack of insight.

... Our habit of escaping from conflict has created an inability to see things as they are. Fixed patterns of escape have entirely mechanized our lives and resulted on the decay of all the intrinsic human qualities, the qualities of the heart, such as respect for truth, admiration of beauty, feelings of friendship and love, freedom from self-concern. ...Facing facts without condemnation or justification forms an important element of Krishnamurti's approach to the problem of our own transformation. However, as long as we use our minds for self protection and self-aggression, as long as we look at the world through ideas and prejudices, and create a permanent rallying point for separative, defensive and aggressive activities, which we believe to be ourselves, we shall persist on our habit of escaping from the actual present and therefore missing the very ecstasy of living.

To live a life free from self and its fulfillments is K's solution of the world problem; that is his true revolution.

To him there are factual memories and psychological memories and he objects only to the latter, so also he draws a distinction between factual time and psychological time, and only the latter is the measure of our frustration.

Psychological time is created when we long for a past or future fulfillment. In reality we live always in the now, consciousness is always in the present, past and future, like dimensions in

space, are mental constructs, valid and valuable for creating order in the world of sensory perceptions, but entirely misleading when superimposed on our life with its stream of events which happen only in the present and are true only when not corrupted by memories or expectations. Krishnamurti wants us to live in the present from moment to moment, seeing facts as they are.

... Stretched between the past and the future, the self, like a spider, builds its net of acquisitions and habits.

The role of time in the building up of self is crucial, because the self cannot exist without the idea of its having been in the past and going to be in the future. The permanency of the self is inextricably tied up with the continuity of time from the past to the present into the future. The self is like an axis of crystallization round which thoughts, feelings and desires settle. The conditioning of thought by the idea of its belonging to a permanent self is at the same time a conditioning of the present by the past and the future. Timelessness is co-extensive with selflessness, and both are manifested in living in the present from moment to moment, unconcerned with past memories and future hopes and fears.

The Silent Mind

... So long as we use our mind wrongly, any change in our environment will lead us nowhere; for, the mind will, within a short time, re-creates the same or similar environment. By our present use of the mind, we have so distorted it that it has become dull and insensitive to its own potentialities. True revolution consists in clearing the mind from all alien elements and making full and correct use of it. The revolution is not on the environment, but in the creator of the environment.

Mystics and Yogis all over the world have said, each in his own way, that man's fundamental problem is his own mind. But their difference with Krishnamurti becomes apparent, when we examine how they deal with mind. According to K mind is to be free from all confusion due to prejudice, all rigidity due to attachment to beliefs and ready-made patterns, all submission to authority, all dependence on success and failure, all greed and possessiveness, all ambition and self-fulfillment. Our mind, he says, cannot be thus free, unless it be completely silent, quiet, neither with the motionless of suppression, nor with the tranquility of death, but with

the calm of integral self-awareness. The mind cannot be made silent; it becomes silent when we see how we make it restless by misuse.

To him, ignorance is not ignorance of God of metaphysical entities, of higher planes; it is ignorance of one's mind, of its make-up, its ways and motives.

The quieting of the mind through the orthodox methods of determination and effort in the pursuit of an objective merely allows the mud to settle for a time; it clears the mud but the danger of disturbance and darkening remains and the mind's price for its freedom from disturbance is 'eternal vigilance', which means ceaseless tension. Surely a mind ever in tension may appear quiet on the surface, but it is the calm of a prison, ever ready to break out in an uproar.

We cannot forcibly bring peace and calm to the mind; the mind has to reach that state.

The first step in the direction of clarity and silence of the mind is what K calls self-knowledge, which comes when the mind watches its own working with interest, and yet with impersonal detachment.

We must distinguish self-knowledge from introspection. Introspection merely deals with small sections of the surface, while self-knowledge lays bare the very constitution of the mind, it warp and woof, peels it off layer by layer, down to the self, its innermost kernel, even to the tiny seed that remains when we discard the kernel.

Introspection merely examines some elements of the conscious activity of the mind, while self-knowledge is of the whole mind, conscious as well as unconscious.

Self-knowledge rightly pursued illuminates every crevice of our mind, so that nothing remains hidden; yet it does not attempt to interfere with the constitution or working of the mental states, but merely brings them into light. It should not be supposed that the observing mind is something about the mind, some additional external fixture; it is the same mind acting differently. The mind under observation and the observing mind are one and the same mind; their difference is only in function, not in essence. These two aspects of the mind stand to each other in a peculiar relation: when the mind becomes restlessly active the observing mind

seems to disappear; its function of observing has completely faded out. When, on the other hand, we succeed in strengthening the observing function, the process is reversed and the distractions and restlessness lose some of their vigor. K's approach to the problem of the restless and painful mind takes advantage of this relation and, through strengthening the mind's capacity for self observation, brings about the spontaneous quieting and silencing of the observed mind and its distractions.

Self-knowledge is therefore passive only in the sense that it does not immediately and actively interfere with faulty mental states. But it is far from being ineffective. On the contrary we may find at the end that it possesses far more power than we dreamt of. K gives us the first glimpse of this power by calling it 'alertness', which immediately converts the observing mind into an investigating mind, a spotlight into a search light. Self-knowledge therefore is active in the sense that it is alert or closely watchful. It not only watches the distracted activities with its own light but can probe into the fringe of consciousness; the borderland with the unconscious has to cross, before it enters the conscious, so that nothing in that region may be missed. It is passive in the sense that it does not interfere, but active in the sense of being alert and watchful. It is, therefore passively alert or actively quiet. Not only can such an alert mind observe itself, but it can ferret out and penetrate the most obscure and hidden of its activities. Introspection can watch only the simpler movements of the conscious mind; the alert mind we are describing is also in touch with the unconscious mind and brings more and more into light the fringe of consciousness, the dim regions where the conscious merges into the unconscious and the unconscious projects itself into the conscious. This it can do because it is free both from active valuation and indifferent unconcern. The average conscious mind is so little aware of itself that this fringe of consciousness escapes its attention and little opportunity is given to the unconscious to establish a larger surface of contact with the conscious. Both suffer in consequence: the conscious remains shallow and petty, commonplace and uncreative; the unconscious—in conflict and strife, disintegrated, heterogeneous, full of complex and painful entanglements.

The alert mind is the first step toward bringing the conscious and the unconscious together. It begins by making the conscious part of our mind sensitive to the unconscious at the fringe of consciousness; it also encourages the unconscious to project itself more and more into the conscious. When the interaction in between the two aspects of our mind is well established,

both will be the gainers; the conscious mind will gain in width and depth of insight; the unconscious-in opportunities for constructive and creative self-expression.

K does not make us to depend on any external agency, some higher mind or higher Self, that is utterly unknown to us.

When alertness reaches a point of such intensity that, effortlessly and spontaneously, it discards all memories and aversions, all fears and hopes and is solely and supremely concerned with the entire content of the present moment, outer and inner, subjective and objective, without separating the two, without a sense of duality between the Me and the Not-Me, both being only two aspects of a single integral experience; -such a point of supreme alertness Krishnamurti calls 'AWARENESS'.