

Words

He had read intensively; and though he was poor, he considered himself rich in knowledge, which gave him a certain happiness. He spent many hours with his books and a great deal of time by himself. His wife was dead, and his two children were with some relatives; and he was rather glad to be out of the mess of all relationship, he added. He was oddly self-contained, independent and quietly assertive. He had come a long way, he said, to go into the question of meditation, and especially to consider the use of certain chants and phrases, whose constant repetition was highly conducive to the pacification of the mind. Also, in the words themselves there was a certain magic; the words must be pronounced rightly and chanted correctly. These words were handed down from ancient times; and the very beauty of the words, with their rhythmic cadence, brought about an atmosphere that was helpful to concentration. And forthwith he began to chant. He had a pleasant voice, and there was a mellowness born of the love of the words and their meaning; he chanted with the ease of long practice and devotion. The moment he began to chant, he was lost to everything.

From across the field came the sound of a flute; it was haltingly played, but the tone was clear and pure. The player was sitting in the rich shadow of a large tree, and beyond him in the distance were the mountains. The silent mountains, the chant, and the sound of the flute seemed to meet and disappear, to begin again. The noisy parrots flashed by; and once again there were the notes of the flute, and the deep, powerful chant. It was early in the morning, and the sun was coming over the trees. People were going from their villages to the town, chatting and laughing. The flute and the chant were insistent, and a few passers-by stopped to listen; they sat down on the path and were caught up in the beauty of the chant and the glory of the morning, which were not in any way disturbed by the whistle of a distant train; on the contrary, all sounds seemed to mingle and fill the earth. Even the loud calling of a crow was not jarring.

How strangely we are caught in the sound of words, and how important the words themselves have become to us: country, God, priest, democracy, revolution. We live on words and delight in the sensations they produce; and it is these sensations that have become so important. Words are satisfying because their sounds reawaken forgotten sensations; and their satisfaction is greater when words are substituted for the actual, for 'what is'. We try to fill our inward emptiness with words, with sound, with noise, with activity; music and the chant are a happy escape from ourselves, from our pettiness and boredom. Words fill our libraries; and how incessantly we talk! We hardly dare to be without a book, to be unoccupied, to be alone. When we are alone, the mind is restless, wandering all over the place, worrying, remembering, struggling; so there is never an aloneness, the mind is never still.

Obviously, the mind can be made still by the repetition of a word, of a chant, of a prayer. The mind can be drugged, put to sleep; it can be put to sleep pleasantly or violently, and during this sleep there may be dreams. But a mind that is made quiet by discipline, by ritual, by repetition, can never be alert, sensitive and free. This bludgeoning of the mind, subtly or crudely, is not meditation. It is pleasant to chant and to listen to one who can do it well; but sensation lives only on further sensation, and sensation leads to illusion. Most of us like to live on illusions, there is pleasure in finding deeper and wider illusions; but it is fear of losing our illusions that makes us deny or cover up the real, the actual. It is not that we are incapable of understanding the actual; what makes us fearful is that we reject the actual and cling to the illusion. Getting caught deeper and deeper in illusion is not meditation, nor is decorating the cage which holds us. Awareness, without any choice, of the ways of the mind, which is the breeder of illusion, is the beginning of meditation.

It is odd how easily we find substitutes for the real thing, and how contented we are with them. The symbol, the word, the image, becomes all-important, and around this symbol we build the structure of self-deception, using knowledge to strengthen it; and so experience becomes a hindrance to the understanding of the real. We name, not only to communicate, but to strengthen experience; this strengthening of experience is self-consciousness, and once

caught in its process, it is extremely difficult to let go, that is, to go beyond self-consciousness. It is essential to die to the experience of yesterday and to the sensations of today, otherwise there is repetition; and the repetition of an act, of a ritual, of a word, is vain. In repetition there can be no renewal. The death of experience is creation.

let's begin with some excerpts:

So you and I are the problem, and not the world, because the world is the projection of ourselves and to understand the world we must understand ourselves. The world is not separate from us; we are the world, and our problems are the world's problems. This cannot be repeated too often, because we are so sluggish in our mentality that we think the world's problems are not our business, that they have to be resolved by the United Nations or by substituting new leaders for the old. It is a very dull mentality that thinks like that, because we are responsible for this frightful misery and confusion in the world, this ever-impending war. To transform the world, we must begin with ourselves; and what is important in beginning with ourselves is the intention. The intention must be to understand ourselves and not to leave it to others to transform themselves or to bring about a modified change through revolution, either of the left or of the right. It is important to understand that this is our responsibility, yours and mine; because, however small may be the world we live in, if we can transform ourselves, bring about a radically different point of view in our daily existence, then perhaps we shall affect the world at large, the extended relationship with others.

. . . the transformation of the world is brought about by the transformation of oneself, because the self is the product and a part of the total process of human existence. To transform oneself, self-knowledge is essential; without knowing what you are, there is no basis for right thought, and without knowing yourself there cannot be transformation. One must know oneself as one is, not as one wishes to be which is merely an ideal and therefore fictitious, unreal; it is only that which *is* that can be transformed, not that which you wish to be. To know oneself as one is requires an extraordinary alertness of mind, because what *is* is constantly undergoing transformation, change, and to follow it swiftly the mind must not be tethered to any particular dogma or belief, to any particular pattern of action. If you would follow anything it is no good being tethered. To know yourself, there must be the awareness, the alertness of mind in which there is freedom from all beliefs, from all idealization because beliefs and ideals only give you a colour, perverting true perception. If you want to know what you are you cannot imagine or have belief in something which you are not. If I am greedy, envious, violent, merely having an ideal of non-violence, of non-greed, is of little value. But to know that one is greedy or violent, to know and understand it, requires an extraordinary perception, does it not? It demands honesty, clarity of thought, whereas to pursue an ideal away from what *is* is an escape; it prevents you from discovering and acting directly upon what you are.

most of us believe conflict raging throughout the world is somehow separate from our inner selves. we believe the world has become too complicated and the only thing we can really do is to work within the system as it currently stands. "watch 'the leader'"--"such authorities are the only ones who actually have the kind of power needed to `solve' the ever-increasing current crises"--this kind of thinking is a manifestation of the sort of pervasive ingrained conditioning we are all so deeply distracted by to whatever degree. and just what is it we being distracted from? from keenly and factually being aware of ourselves, of the way we are--not the way we *think* we are or wud like to believe we are, but the way we actually are existing in fact.

of late, i have been observing my own being more consciously. i begin to see more and more instances of deep-seated conflict within myself that are so ubiquitous, it's clear why they "normally" go unobserved--it is an indicator of my own personal degree of conditioning. i am seeing forms of violence i practice daily that i don't give a second thought to--they are "normal" and virtually automatic. driving in a car during traffic, there is treMENDous violent mental energy being given form by drivers everywhere on the

road. how quick i am to willingly--nay eager--to become engaged in this energy. competition to get into a check-out line ahead of the other person approaching is second-nature. how harsh are my own subliminal expectations directed at myself about what i *shud* be doing, how much i *need* to be accomplishing, how there is sooo much i'm not satisfied with! how stern and inflexible is my judging mind when looking at someone and arriving at ALL KINDS of [more often than not negative] conclusions about who they are, without necessarily having ever even seen them before! how instantaneous is my objectification of women i see, especially women i've never seen before-- sexual energy and desire within projected onto women not as human beings but as sexual objects ravenously desired for my own purposes which is in raging conflict with that which yearns for direct, deep emotional communication and sharing. i see my suffocating fear when i am going to bed and think i hear something/one in the house--"did i really lock the back door?"--so afraid of being attacked, of someone "getting" me. i see my selfishness laid bare as i walk into a CD store while a sunburned, dazed homeless person on the sidewalk stares right through me. i am even having moments, virtually anywhere, when deep choking sadness wells up in my throat and i can actually let it float for more than a fleeting moment before my intellectual censor can "regain control...."

these states of being comprise me--in the moments when they arise, i AM the sadness, the violence, the competition, the fear, the disapproval, the confusion, the desire, the conflict. these states are not separate from me. such inner conflict is what i project out onto the world i relate to and interact with. it is both astonishing and revealing to glimpse the actualized state of my conditioning in the following enquiry about just what *are* the "demands" of this society?

The Demands of Society

SAANEN, SWITZERLAND, JULY 1984

Questioner: How can one reconcile the demands of society with a life of total freedom?

KRISHNAMURTI: What are the demands of society? Tell me, please. That you go to the office from nine to five, or the factory, that you go to a nightclub for excitement after all the boredom of the day's work, take a fortnight or three weeks' holiday in sunny Spain or Italy? What are the demands of society? That you must earn a livelihood, that you must live in that particular part of the country all your life, practise as a lawyer, or a doctor, or in the factory as a union leader, and so on. Right? Therefore one must also ask the question: what is this society that demands so much, and who created the wretched thing? Who is responsible for this? The church, the temple, the mosque, and all the circus that goes on inside them? Who is responsible for all this? Is the society different from us, or have we created the society, each one of us, through our ambition, through our greed, our envy, our violence, through our corruption, through our fear, wanting our security in the community, in the nation -- you follow? We have created this society and then blame the society for what it demands. Therefore you ask: can I live in absolute freedom, or

rather, can I reconcile with society and myself seek freedom? It is such an absurd question. Sorry, I am not being rude to the questioner. It is absurd because you are society. Do we really see that, not as an idea, not as a concept, or something you must accept? But we, each one of us on this earth for the last 40,000 years or more, have created the society in which we live: the stupidity of religions, the stupidity of the nations arming themselves. For God's sake, we have created it because we insist on being American or French or Russian. We insist on calling ourselves Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and this gives us a sense of security. But it is these very divisions that obstruct the search for security. It is so clear.

So there is no reconciliation between society and its demands and your demands for freedom. The demands come from your own violence, from your own ugly, limited selfishness. It is one of the most complex things to find out for oneself where selfishness is, where the ego very, very subtly hides itself. It can hide politically 'doing good for the country'. It can hide in the religious world most beautifully: 'I believe in God, I serve God', or in social help -- not that I am against social help, don't jump to that conclusion -- but it can hide there. It requires a very attentive, not analytical, but an observing brain to see where the subtleties of the self, of selfishness, are hidden. Then when there is no self, society doesn't exist; you don't have to reconcile with it. It is only the inattentive, the unaware who say, 'How am I to respond to society when I am working for freedom?' You understand?

If I may point out, we need to be re-educated, not through school, college, university -- which also condition the brain -- nor through work in the office or the factory. We need to re-educate ourselves by being aware, seeing how we are caught in words. Can we do this? If we cannot do it we are going to have perpetual wars, perpetual weeping, always in conflict, misery and all that is entailed. The speaker is not pessimistic or optimistic; these are the facts. When you live with facts as they are, not with data produced by the computer, but observing them, watching your own activity, your own egotistic pursuits, then out of that grows marvellous freedom with all its great beauty and strength. -- From *BULLETIN of the Krishnamurti Foundation Trust, England*, No. 48, 1985

some of the feedback from readers regarding these posts states a belief that what Krishnamurti seems to be advocating is "withdrawal" or "isolation" from society. this is not my understanding of his words at all. quite the opposite in fact. to exist/to be in a state of intense, energetic awareness places one at the threshold of the unknown, of the immensity of being that is not limited, that is the void, the infinite. from THIS source originates creative energy. just the kind of energy each one of us can infuse throughout our being and to all we touch. i have sensed for the longest time, 'this system cannot repair itself.' previous to now, it was difficult to articulate this feeling because i didn't have any concrete understanding of what lay beyond this. i begin to have glimpses of what lies beyond.

--[ratitor dave](#)

from *The First And Last Freedom*, by J. Krishnamurti, 1954, pp. 42-49:

CHAPTER IV

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

THE PROBLEMS OF the world are so colossal, so very complex, that to understand and so to resolve them one must approach them in a very simple and direct manner; and simplicity, directness, do not depend on outward circumstances nor on our particular prejudices and moods. As I was pointing out, the solution is not to be found through conferences, blue-prints, or through the substitution of new leaders for old, and so on. The solution obviously lies in the creator of the problem, in the creator of the mischief, of the hate and of the enormous misunderstanding that exists between human beings. The creator of this mischief, the creator of these problems, is the individual, you and I, not the world as we think of it. The world is your relationship with another. The world is not something separate from you and me; the world, society, is the relationship that we establish or seek to establish between each other.

So you and I are the problem, and not the world, because the world is the projection of ourselves and to understand the world we must understand ourselves. The world is not separate from us; we are the world, and our problems are the world's problems. This cannot be repeated too often, because we are so sluggish in our mentality that we think the world's problems are not our business, that they have to be resolved by the United Nations or by substituting new leaders for the old. It is a very dull mentality that thinks like that, because we are responsible for this frightful misery and confusion in the world, this ever-impending war. To transform the world, we must begin with ourselves; and what is important in beginning with ourselves is the intention. The intention must be to understand ourselves and not to leave it to others to transform themselves or to bring about a modified change through revolution, either of the left or of the right. It is important to understand that this is our responsibility, yours and mine; because, however small may be the world we live in, if we can transform ourselves, bring about a radically different point of view in our daily existence, then perhaps we shall affect the world at large, the extended relationship with others.

As I said, we are going to try and find out the process of understanding ourselves, which is not an isolating process. It is not withdrawal from the world, because you cannot live in isolation. To be is to be related, and there is no such thing as living in isolation. It is the

lack of right relationship that brings about conflicts, misery and strife; however small our world may be, if we can transform our relationship in that narrow world, it will be like a wave extending outward all the time. I think it is important to see that point, that the world is our relationship, however narrow; and if we can bring a transformation there, not a superficial but a radical transformation, then we shall begin actively to transform the world. Real revolution is not according to any particular pattern, either of the left or of the right, but it is a revolution of values, a revolution from sensate values to the values that are not sensate or created by environmental influences. To find these true values which will bring about a radical revolution, a transformation or a regeneration, it is essential to understand oneself. Self-knowledge is the beginning of wisdom, and therefore the beginning of transformation or regeneration. To understand oneself there must be the intention to understand--and that is where our difficulty comes in. Although most of us are discontented, we desire to bring about a sudden change, our discontent is canalized merely to achieve a certain result; being discontented, we either seek a different job or merely succumb to environment. Discontent, instead of setting us aflame, causing us to question life, the whole process of existence, is canalized, and thereby we become mediocre, losing that drive, that intensity to find out the whole significance of existence. Therefore it is important to discover these things for ourselves, because self-knowledge cannot be given to us by another, it is not to be found through any book. We must discover, and to discover there must be the intention, the search, the inquiry. So long as that intention to find out, to inquire deeply, is weak or does not exist, mere assertion or a casual wish to find out about oneself is of very little significance.

Thus the transformation of the world is brought about by the transformation of oneself, because the self is the product and a part of the total process of human existence. To transform oneself, self-knowledge is essential; without knowing what you are, there is no basis for right thought, and without knowing yourself there cannot be transformation. One must know oneself as one is, not as one wishes to be which is merely an ideal and therefore fictitious, unreal; it is only that which *is* that can be transformed, not that which you wish to be. To know oneself as one is requires an extraordinary alertness of mind, because what *is* is constantly undergoing transformation, change, and to follow it swiftly the mind must not be tethered to any particular dogma or belief, to any particular pattern of action. If you would follow anything it is no good being tethered. To know yourself, there must be the awareness, the alertness of mind in which there is freedom from all beliefs, from all idealization because beliefs and ideals only give you a colour, perverting true perception. If you want to know what you are you cannot imagine or have belief in something which you are not. If I am greedy, envious, violent, merely having an ideal of non-violence, of non-greed, is of little value. But to know that one is greedy or violent, to know and understand it, requires an extraordinary perception, does it not? It demands honesty, clarity of thought, whereas to pursue an ideal away from what *is* is an escape; it prevents you from discovering and acting directly upon what you are.

The understanding of what you are, whatever it be--ugly or beautiful, wicked or mischievous--the understanding of what you are, without distortion, is the beginning of virtue. Virtue is essential, for it gives freedom. It is only in virtue that you can discover, that you can live--not in the *cultivation* of a virtue, which merely brings about

respectability, not understanding and freedom. There is a difference between being virtuous and becoming virtuous. Being virtuous comes through the understanding of what *is*, whereas becoming virtuous is postponement, the covering up of what *is* with what you would like to be. Therefore in becoming virtuous you are avoiding action directly upon what *is*. This process of avoiding what *is* through the cultivation of the ideal is considered virtuous; but if you look at it closely and directly you will see that it is nothing of the kind. It is merely a postponement of coming face to face with what *is*. Virtue is not the becoming of what is not; virtue is the understanding of what *is* and therefore the freedom from what *is*. Virtue is essential in a society that is rapidly disintegrating. In order to create a new world, a new structure away from the old, there must be freedom to discover; and to be free, there must be virtue, for without virtue there is no freedom. Can the immoral man who is striving to become virtuous ever know virtue? The man who is not moral can never be free, and therefore he can never find out what reality is. Reality can be found only in understanding what *is*; and to understand what *is*, there must be freedom, freedom from the fear of what *is*.

To understand that process there must be the intention to know what *is*, to follow every thought, feeling and action; and to understand what *is* is extremely difficult, because what *is* is never still, never static, it is always in movement. The what *is* is what you are, not what you would like to be; it is not the ideal, because the ideal is fictitious, but it is actually what you are doing, thinking and feeling from moment to moment. What *is* is the actual, and to understand the actual requires awareness, a very alert, swift mind. But if we begin to condemn what *is*, if we begin to blame or resist it, then we shall not understand its movement. If I want to understand somebody, I cannot condemn him: I must observe, study him. I must love the very thing I am studying. If you want to understand a child, you must love and not condemn him. You must play with him, watch his movements, his idiosyncrasies, his ways of behaviour; but if you merely condemn, resist or blame him, there is no comprehension of the child. Similarly, to understand what *is*, one must observe what one thinks, feels and does from moment to moment. That is the actual. Any other action, any ideal or ideological action, is not the actual; it is merely a wish, a fictitious desire to be something other than what *is*.

To understand what *is* requires a state of mind in which there is no identification or condemnation, which means a mind that is alert and yet passive. We are in that state when we really desire to understand something; when the intensity of interest is there, that state of mind comes into being. When one is interested in understanding what *is*, the actual state of the mind, one does not need to force, discipline, or control it; on the contrary, there is passive alertness, watchfulness. This state of awareness comes when there is interest, the intention to understand.

The fundamental understanding of oneself does not come through knowledge or through the accumulation of experiences, which is merely the cultivation of memory. The understanding of oneself is from moment to moment; if we merely accumulate knowledge of the self, that very knowledge prevents further understanding, because accumulated knowledge and experience becomes the centre through which thought focuses and has its being. The world is not different from us and our activities because it

is what we are which creates the problems of the world; the difficulty with the majority of us is that we do not know ourselves directly, but seek a system, a method, a means of operation by which to solve the many human problems.

Now is there a means, a system, of knowing oneself? Any clever person, any philosopher, can invent a system, a method; but surely the following of a system will merely produce a result created by that system, will it not? If I follow a particular method of knowing myself, then I shall have the result which that system necessitates; but the result will obviously not be the understanding of myself. That is by following a method, a system, a means through which to know myself, I shape my thinking, my activities, according to a pattern; but the following of a pattern is not the understanding of oneself.

Therefore there is no method for self-knowledge. Seeking a method invariably implies the desire to attain some result--and that is what we all want. We follow authority--if not that of a person, then of a system, of an ideology--because we want a result which will be satisfactory, which will give us security. We really do not want to understand ourselves, our impulses and reactions, the whole process of our thinking, the conscious as well as the unconscious; we would rather pursue a system which assures us of a result. But the pursuit of a system is invariably the outcome of our desire for security, for certainty, and the result is obviously not the understanding of oneself. When we follow a method, we must have authorities--the teacher, the guru, the saviour, the Master--who will guarantee us what we desire; and surely that is not the way to self-knowledge.

Authority prevents the understanding of oneself, does it not? Under the shelter of an authority, a guide, you may have temporarily a sense of security, a sense of well-being, but that is not the understanding of the total process of oneself. Authority in its very nature prevents the full awareness of oneself and therefore ultimately destroys freedom; in freedom alone can there be creativeness. There can be creativeness only through self-knowledge. Most of us are not creative; we are repetitive machines, mere gramophone records playing over and over again certain songs of experience, certain conclusions and memories, either our own or those of another. Such repetition is not creative being--but it is what we want. Because we want to be inwardly secure, we are constantly seeking methods and means for this security, and thereby we create authority, the worship of another, which destroys comprehension, that spontaneous tranquillity of mind in which alone there can be a state of creativeness.

Surely our difficulty is that most of us have lost this sense of creativeness. To be creative does not mean that we must paint pictures or write poems and become famous. That is not creativeness--it is merely the capacity to express an idea, which the public applauds or disregards. Capacity and creativeness should not be confused. Capacity is not creativeness. Creativeness is quite a different state of being, is it not? It is a state in which the self is absent, in which the mind is no longer a focus of our experiences, our ambitions, our pursuits and our desires. Creativeness is not a continuous state, it is new from moment to moment, it is a movement in which there is not the 'me', the 'mine', in which the thought is not focused on any particular experience, ambition, achievement, purpose and motive. It is only when the self is not that there is creativeness--that state of

being in which alone there can be reality, the creator of all things. But that state cannot be conceived or imagined, it cannot be formulated or copied, it cannot be attained through any system, through any philosophy, through any discipline; on the contrary, it comes into being only through understanding the total process of oneself.

The understanding of oneself is not a result, a culmination; it is seeing oneself from moment to moment in the mirror of relationship-- one's relationship to property, to things, to people and to ideas. But we find it difficult to be alert, to be aware, and we prefer to dull our minds by following a method, by accepting authorities, superstitions and gratifying theories; so our minds become weary, exhausted and insensitive. Such a mind cannot be in a state of creativeness. That state of creativeness comes only when the self, which is the process of recognition and accumulation, ceases to be; because, after all, consciousness as the `me' is the centre of recognition, and recognition is merely the process of the accumulation of experience. But we are all afraid to be nothing, because we all want to be something. The little man wants to be a big man, the unvirtuous wants to be virtuous, the weak and obscure crave power, position and authority. This is the incessant activity of the mind. Such a mind cannot be quiet and therefore can never understand the state of creativeness.

In order to transform the world about us, with its misery, wars, unemployment, starvation, class divisions and utter confusion, there must be a transformation in ourselves. The revolution must begin within oneself--but not according to any belief or ideology, because revolution based on an idea, or in conformity to a particular pattern, is obviously no revolution at all. To bring about a fundamental revolution in oneself, one must understand the whole process of one's thought and feeling in relationship. That is the only solution to all our problems--not to have more disciplines, more beliefs, more ideologies and more teachers. If we can understand ourselves as we are from moment to moment without the process of accumulation, then we shall see how there comes a tranquillity that is not a product of the mind, a tranquillity that is neither imagined nor cultivated; and only in that state of tranquillity can there be creativeness.

Then we come again to this extraordinary question of the nature of death. That must be answered, neither with fear, nor by escaping from that absolute fact, nor by belief, nor hope. There is an answer, the right answer, but to find the right answer one has to put the right question. But you cannot possibly put the right question if you are merely seeking a way out of it, if the question is born of fear, of despair and of loneliness. Then if you do put the right question with regard to reality, with regard to man's relationship to man, and what that thing called love is, and also this immense question of death, then out of the right question will come the right answer. From that answer comes right action. Right action is in the answer itself. And we are responsible. Don't fool yourself by saying `What can I do? What can I, an

individual, living a shoddy little life, with all its confusion and ignorance, what can I do?' Ignorance exists only when you don't know yourself. Self-knowing is wisdom. You may be ignorant of all the books in the world (and I hope you are), of all the latest theories, but that is not ignorance. Not knowing oneself deeply, profoundly, is ignorance; and you cannot know yourself if you cannot look at yourself, see yourself actually as you are, without any distortion, without any wish to change. Then what you see is transformed because the distance between the observer and the observed is removed and hence there is no conflict.

Talks in Europe 1968, Paris, April 16, 1968, p. 56