

# *A conversation following the Death of John Field*

*From "The reluctant Messiah" by Sidney Field*

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*This is a very long quote copied from pp. 117, 118 and pp. 135-157 from the book "The reluctant Messiah" by Sidney Field, Paragon House, New York 1989, Edited by Peter Hay, ISBN 1-55778-180-X, Copyright 1989 by Sidney Field. Sidney Field was a close friend to Krishnamurti and the book is about all the encounters he had with K. At page 117, Sidney wrote:*

*My brother, John, died early in January, 1972. His death was totally unexpected and a great shock to me. John had been a photographer, a lover of adventure, women and wine, a man of great Latin charm. He had known Krishnaji as long as I had, and had many times delighted him with his stories and personal adventures. Krishnaji had just arrived from Europe and was staying in Malibu at the home of Mrs. Zimbalist. I called him to give him the sad news, saying I wanted to see him, and he asked me to come the following day for lunch.*

*He greeted me most affectionately. At the dining table I came right to the point: "Has John survived his bodily death in a subtler form? Yes or no?" There was a moment's silence. "My gut feeling," I went on, "is that he is here beside me, right now."*

*"Of course he is, right here beside you," said Krishnaji. "He's very close to you, and will continue being close for some time." Two hours later we were still deep into the subject of death and the hereafter. He referred to that part of the personality that survives bodily death as an echo, instead of an astral body, as the Theosophists call it, the echo of the person who lived on earth, the duration of its life on the other side depending on the strength of the individual's earthly personality. "Dr. Besant's echo, for instance," he said, "will go on for a long time, for she had a very strong personality."*

*"Your viewpoint here is very similar to that of the Theosophists," I said.*

*"With one important difference," he replied. "There is no permanent substance that survives the death of the body. Whether the ego lasts one year, ten thousand, or a million years, it must finally come to an end."*

*Krishnaji's remarks during this conversation were among the most revealing and enlightening I had ever heard him make on the subject of death and survival beyond it. At the end of our talk Mrs. Zimbalist remarked that it was a great pity we had not recorded it, for, prodded by insistent questioning and probing on my part, and aided by a sympathetic Mrs. Zimbalist, Krishnaji had explored what to us was a new dimension on this fascinating subject.*

*Krishnaji has an extraordinary capacity for recall, when he wants to use that gift, and a few days later, he Alain Naude and Mrs. Zimbalist recreated the entire conversation, this time recording it, with Naude asking Krishnaji essentially the same questions I had asked. It was staged in a much quieter atmosphere, naturally, and Naude's questions were cool and intellectual. They did not have the same urgency and strong feeling of my approach, for I was hurting at the time. Nevertheless, I was fascinated when I heard the recording. Krishnaji gave me permission to publish it in connection with this memoir, and it appears in the Appendix.*

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## Appendix

### A conversation following the Death of John Field

Participants : Krishnamurti , Alain Naude , Mary Zimbalist

recorded on january 14, 1972

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*Krishnamurti : We said the other day Sidney Field came to see me. His brother John died recently. You knew him. He was very concerned whether his brother was living in a different level of consciousness; whether there was John as an entity born [in the] next life. And did I believe in reincarnation and what did it mean. And so he had a lot of questions. He was having a difficult time with himself because of his brother, whom he loved and whom we have known for years. So out of that conversation two things came up. First, is there a permanent ego? If there is such a thing as a permanent something, then what is its relationship from the present to the future? The future being next life or ten years later. But if you admit or accept or believe or assert that there is a permanent ego, then reincarnation...*

*Alain Naude: ... is inevitable.*

*K: Not inevitable. I wouldn't say inevitable. It is plausible, because the permanent ego, to me, if it is permanent, can be changed in ten years' time. It can incarnate differently in ten years time.*

*A: We read this all the time in the Indian scriptures. We read about children who remember the past life, about a girl who said, "What am I doing here? My home is in some other village. I'm married to so and so. I have three children." And in many cases I believe that this has been verified.*

*K: I don't know. So there is that. If there is no permanent entity, then what is reincarnation? Both involve time, both involve a movement in space. Space being environment, relationship, pressure, all that existing within that space, time.*

*A: Within time and temporal circumstances ...*

*K: ... That is, culture etcetera ...*

*A: ... Within some sort of social set-up.*

*K: So is there a permanent me? Obviously not. But Sidney said, "Then what is it that I feel, that John is with me? When I enter the room, I know he is there. I'm not fooling myself, I'm not imagining; I feel him there as I feel my sister who was in that room yesterday. It's as clear, as definite as that."*

*A: And also sir, when you say "obviously not" , would you explain that ?*

*K: But wait. So he says, "My brother is there." I said of course he is there, because first of all you have your association and memories of John and that is projected, and that projection is your remembrance.*

*A: So that the John who was contained within you is that.*

*K: And when John lived he was associated with you. His presence is with you. When he was living, you might not have seen him all day, but his presence was in that room.*

*A: His presence was there, and perhaps this is what people mean when they speak of an aura.*

*K: No, aura is different. Let's not push that in yet.*

*Mary Zimbalist: May I interrupt - when you say he was in that room, whether alive or dead, was there something external to his brother and sister that was there, or was it in their consciousness?*

*K: It is both in their consciousness and outside consciousness. I can project my brother and say he was with me last night, feeling he was with me, that may emanate from me; or John, who died ten*

*days ago - his atmosphere, his thoughts, his way of behaving still remaining there, even though physically he might have gone.*

*A: The psychic momentum.*

*K: The physical heat.*

*Z: Are you saying there is a sort of energy, for want of a better word, which human beings give off?*

*K: There was a photograph of a parking lot taken where there had been many cars, and the photo showed, although there were no cars there, the form of the cars that had been there.*

*A: Yes. I saw that.*

*K: That is, the heat that the car had left came on the negative.*

*A: And also one day when we were living in Gstaad, the first time I was your guest at Gstaad, we were living as Les Capris - you left for America before any of us left, and I went into that flat - you were still alive and on your way to America and your presence was there, extremely strong.*

*K: That's it.*

*A: Your presence was so strong, one felt one could touch you. This was not simply because I was thinking about you before I entered the flat.*

*K: So there are three possibilities. I project out of my remembrance and consciousness, or pick up the residual energy of John.*

*A: Like a smell that would linger.*

*K: John's thought or John's existence is still there.*

*A: That's the third possibility.*

*Z: What do you mean by that, John's existence?*

*A: That John is really there as before he died? The third possibility.*

*K: I live in a room for a number of years. The presence of that room contained my energy, my thoughts, my feelings.*

*A: It contains its own energy, and when we go into a new house it sometimes takes time before you are rid of the person who was there before you, even though you may not have known him.*

*K: So those are the three possibilities. And the other is John's thought, because John clings to life. John's desires are there in the air, not in the room.*

*A: Immaterially.*

*K: Yes, they are there just like a thought.*

*A: And does that mean that John is conscious and there is a being who is self-conscious calling himself John, thinking those thoughts?*

*K: I doubt it.*

*A: I think that is what the people who believe in reincarnation would postulate.*

*K: See what happens, Sir. This makes four possibilities and the idea that John whose physical body is gone, exists in thought.*

*A: In his own thought or someone else's?*

*K: In his own thought.*

*A: Exists as a thinking entity.*

*K: As a thinking entity exists.*

*A: As a conscious being.*

*K: That is - listen to this, it's rather interesting - John continues because he is the world of vulgarity, of greed, of envy, of drinking, and of competition. That is the common pattern of man. It continues and John may be identified with that, or is that.*

*A: John is the desires, the thoughts, the beliefs, the associations.*

*K: Of the world.*

*A: Which are incarnate and which are material.*

*K: Which is the world - which is everybody.*

*A: This is a big thing you are saying. It would be nice if you could explain it a bit better. When you say John persists, John continues because there is a continuation of the vulgar in him - the vulgar being worldly, material association.*

*K: That is right: fear, wanting power, position.*

*A: Desire to be as an entity.*

*K: So that, because that is a common thing of the world and the world does incarnate.*

*A: You say the world does incarnate.*

*K: Take the mass of the people. They are caught in this stream and that stream goes on. I may have a son who is part of that stream and in that stream there is John also, as a human being who is caught in it. And my son may remember some of John's attitudes.*

*A: Ah but you are saying something different.*

*K: Yes.*

*A: You are saying that John is contained in all the memories that different people have of him. In that respect we can see that he does exist. Because I remember a friend of mine died not long ago, and it was very clear to me when I thought about it that in fact he was very much alive in the memories of all the people who had loved him.*

*K: That's just it.*

*A: Therefore, he was not absent from the world, he was still in the stream of events which we call the world, which is the lives of different people who had associated with him. In that sense we see that he can perhaps live forever.*

*K: Unless he breaks away from it - breaks away from the stream. A man who is not vulgar - let's use that word, vulgar, representing all this ... greed, envy, power, position, hatred, desires, all that - let's call that vulgar. Unless I am free from the vulgar, I will continue representing the whole of vulgarity, the whole vulgarity of man.*

*A: Yes, I will be that vulgarity by pursuing it, and in fact incarnating in it, giving it life.*

*K: Therefore I incarnate in that vulgarity. That is, first I can project John, my brother.*

*A: In my thought and imagination or remember him. The second point, I can pick up his kinetic energy, which is still around.*

*K: His smell, his taste, his saying the words.*

*A: The pipe which is unsmoked on the desk, the half-finished letter.*

*K: All that.*

*A: Flowers he picked in the garden.*

*K: Third, the thought remains in the room.*

*A: Thought remains in the room?*

*K: Feelings ...*

*A: One might say, the psychic equivalent of his kinetic energy.*

*K: Yes.*

*A: His thought remains almost as a material smell. As a physical smell.*

*K: That's right.*

*A: The energy of thought remains like an old coat that you hang up.*

*K: Thought, will, if he has a very strong will; active desires and thought, they also remain.*

*A: But that's not different from the third point. The third point is that thought remains, which is will, which is desire.*

*K: The fourth point is the stream of vulgarity.*

*A: That's not very clear.*

*K: Look, sir, I live an ordinary life, like millions and millions of people.*

*A: Yes, pursuing goals, hopes and fears.*

*K: I live the usual life. A little more refined, a little bit higher or lower, along the same current, I follow that current. I am that current. Me, who is that current, is bound to continue in that stream, which is the stream of me. I'm not different from millions of other people.*

*A: Therefore are you saying, sir, even, dead I continue because the things which were me are continuing.*

*K: In the human being.*

*A: Therefore, I survive. I was not different from the things which filled and preoccupied my life.*

*K: That's right.*

*A: Since these things which filled and occupied my life survive, in a manner of speaking I survive since they do.*

*K: That's right. That's four points.*

*A: The question is about the fifth. Is there a conscious thinking entity who knows that he is conscious when everybody has said, "There goes poor old John," even put him in the ground. Is there a conscious entity who immaterially says, "Good gracious, they've put that body in the ground but I have consciousness of being alive."*

*K: Yes.*

*A: That is the question which I think is difficult to answer.*

*K: Sidney was asking that question.*

*A: Because we see that everybody does exist in these other ways after death.*

*K: Now, you are asking the question, Does John, whose body is burned - cremated - does that entity continue to live?*

*A: Does that entity continue to have its consciousness of its own existence?*

*K: I question whether there is a separate John.*

*A: You said at the beginning, is there such a thing as a permanent ego? You said obviously not.*

*K: When you say that John, my brother, is dead and ask whether he is living, living in a separate consciousness, I question whether he was ever separate from the stream.*

*A: Yes.*

*K: You follow what I am saying, sir?*

*A: Was there a John alive?*

*K: When John was alive, was he different from the stream?*

*A: The stream filled his consciousness of himself. His consciousness of himself was the stream knowing himself.*

*K: No, sir, just go slowly. It's rather complicated. The stream of humanity is anger, hate, jealousy, seeking power, position, cheating, corrupt, polluted. That is the stream. Of that stream is my brother John. When he existed physically, he has a physical body, but psychologically he was of this. Therefore was he ever different from this? From the stream? Or only physically different and therefore thinking he was different. You follow my point?*

*A: There was an entity who was self-conscious ...*

*K: ... As John.*

*A: He was self-conscious, and the stream was in relationship to himself.*

*K: Yes.*

*A: My wife, my child, my love.*

*K: But was John inwardly different from the stream? That's my point. Therefore what is dead is the body. And the continuation of John is part of that stream. I, as his brother, would like to think of him as separate because he lived with me as a separate being physically. Inwardly he was of the stream. Therefore, was there a John who was different from the stream? And, if he was different, then what happens? I don't know if you follow.*

*A: There is a stream from outside and there is a stream from inside. Vulgarly seen in the street is from the man who feels himself to be acting in the moment of that vulgarity. I insult somebody. This is vulgarity. You see that vulgarity from the outside and say there is a vulgar act. I who am insulting somebody see the act in a different way. I feel self-conscious life at the moment when I insult. In fact I insult because there is a conscious thinking about me. I am protecting myself, so I insult.*

*K: My point is, this is what is happening with one hundred million people. Millions of people. As long as I swim in that stream, am I different? Is the real John from the stream?*

*A: Was there ever a John?*

*K: That's all my point.*

*A: There was conscious determination which felt itself to be John.*

*K: Yes, but I can imagine. I can invent because I am different.*

*A: There was imagination, thought, calling itself John.*

*K: Yes, sir.*

*A: Now, does that thought still call itself John?*

*K: But I belong to that stream.*

*A: You always belong to the stream.*

*K: There is no separate entity as John who was my brother, who is now dead.*

*A: Are you saying that there is no individual?*

*K: No, this is what we call permanent. The permanent ego is this.*

*A: What we think is individual.*

*K: Individual, the collective, the self.*

*A: Yes, the creation of thought which calls itself self.*

*K: It is of this stream.*

*A: That's right.*

*K: Therefore, was there ever a John? There is only a John when he is out of the stream.*

*A: That's right.*

*K: So first we are trying to find out if there is a permanent ego which incarnates.*

*A: The nature of the ego is impermanent.*

*K: Reincarnation is in the whole of Asia, and the modern people who believe in it say there is a permanent ego. You take many lives so that it can become dissolved and be absorbed in Brahma and all that. Now, is there from the beginning a permanent entity, an entity that lasts centuries and centuries? There is no such entity, obviously. I like to think I'm permanent. My permanence is identified with my furniture, my wife, my husband, circumstances. These are words and images of thought. I don't actually possess that chair. I call it mine.*

*A: Exactly. You think it's a chair and you own it.*

*K: I like to think I own it.*

*A: But it's just an idea.*

*K: So, watch it. So there is no permanent self. If there was a permanent self, it would be this stream. Now, realizing that I am like the rest of the world, that there is no separate K, or John, as*

*my brother, then I can incarnate if I step out of it. Incarnate in the sense that the change can take place away from the stream. In the stream there is no change.*

*A: If there is permanence, it is outside the stream.*

*K: No, sir, permanency, semipermanency, is the stream.*

*A: And therefore it is not permanent. If it is permanent, it is not the stream. Therefore, if there is an entity, then it must be out of the stream. Therefore, that which is true, that which is permanent, is not a something.*

*K: It is not in the stream.*

*A: That's right.*

*K: When Naude dies, as long as he belongs to the stream, that stream and its flow is semipermanent.*

*A: Yes, It goes on. It's a historical thing.*

*K: But if Naude says, I will incarnate, not in the next life, now, tomorrow, which means I will step out of the stream, he is no longer belonging to the stream; therefore there is nothing permanent.*

*A: There is nothing to reincarnate. Therefore, that which reincarnates, if reincarnation is possible, is not permanent anyway.*

*K: No, it's the stream.*

*A: It's very temporal.*

*K: Don't put it that way.*

*A: A separate entity is not real.*

*K: No, as long as I belong to the stream ...*

*A: I don't really exist ...*

*K: There is no separate entity. I am the world.*

*A: That's right.*

*K: When I step out of the world, is there a me to continue?*

*A: Exactly, It's beautiful.*

*K: So, what we are trying to do is justify the existence of the stream.*

*A: Is that what we are trying to do?*

*K: Of course, when I say I must have many lives and therefore I must go through the stream.*

*A: What we are trying to do, then, is we are trying to establish that we are different from the stream.*

*K: We are not.*

*A: We are not different from the stream.*

*K: So, sir, then what happens? If there is no permanent John or K or Naude or Zimbalist, what happens? You remember, sir, I think I read it in the Tibetan tradition or some other tradition, that when a person dies, is dying, the priest or the monk comes in and sends all the family away, locks the door and says to the dying man, "Look you're dying - let go - let all of your antagonisms, all your worldliness, all your ambition, let go, because you are going to meet a light in which you will be absorbed, if you let go. If not, you'll come back. Which is, come back to the stream. You will be the stream again.*

*A: Yes.*

*K: So what happens to you if you step out of the stream?*

*A: You step out of the stream, you cease to be, but the you which was, was only created by thought, anyway.*

*K: Which is the stream.*

*A: Vulgarly.*

*K: Vulgarity. What happens if you step out of the stream? The stepping out is the incarnation. Yes, sir, but that is a new thing you are coming into. There is a new dimension coming into being.*

*A: Yes.*

*K: Now, what happens? You follow? Naude has stepped out of the stream. What happens? You are not an artist. Not a businessman. You are not a politician, not a musician, all that identification is part of the stream.*

*A: All the qualities.*

*K: All the qualities. When you discard that, what happens?*

*A: You have no identity.*

*K: Identity is here. Say, for instance, Napoleon, or any of these so-called world leaders: they killed, they butchered, they did every horror imaginable, they lived and died in the stream, they were of the stream. That is very simple and clear. There is a man who steps out of the stream.*

*A: Before physical death?*

*K: Of course; otherwise there is no point.*

*A: Therefore, another dimension is born.*

*K: What happens?*

*A: The ending of the dimension which is familiar to us is another dimension, but it cannot be postulated at all because all postulation is in terms of the dimension we are in.*

*K: Yes, but suppose you, living now ...*

*A: Step out of it.*

*K: Step out of the stream. What happens?*

*A: This is death, sir.*

*K: No, sir.*

*A: This is death, but no physical death.*

*K: You see, you step out of it. What happens?*

*A: Nothing can be said about what happens.*

*K: Wait, sir. You see, none of us step out of the river, and we are always from the river, trying to reach the other shore.*

*A: it's like people talking about deep sleep from awakeness.*

*K: That's it, sir. We belong to this stream, all of us. Man does belong to the stream and from the stream he wants to reach that shore, never leaving the river. Now the man says, all right, I see the fallacy of this, the absurdity of my position.*

*A: You can't state another dimension from the old dimension.*

*K: So I leave that. So the mind says, "Out!". He steps out and what takes place? Don't verbalize it.*

*A: The only thing one can say about it in terms of the stream is silence. Because it is the silence of the stream, and one can also say it is the death of the stream. Therefore, in terms of the stream it is sometimes called oblivion.*

*K: You know what it means to step out of the stream: no character.*

*A: No memory.*

*K: No, sir, see: no character, because the moment you have character it's of the stream. The moment you say you are virtuous, you are of the stream - or not virtuous. To step out of the stream is to step out of this whole structure. So, creation as we know it is in the stream. Mozart, Beethoven, you follow, the painters, they are all here.*

*A: I think perhaps, sir, sometimes that which is in the stream is vivified, as it were from something which is beyond.*



*K: No, no, can't be. Don't say these things because I can create in the stream. I can paint marvelous pictures. why not? I can compose the most extraordinary symphonies, all the techniques ...*

*A: Why are they extraordinary?*

*K: Because the world needs it. There is the need, the demand, and the supply. I'm saying to myself what happens to the man who really steps out. Here in the river, in the stream, energy is conflict, in contradiction, in strife, in vulgarity. But that's going on all the time ...*

*A: Me and You.*

*K: Yes, that's going on all the time. When he steps out of it, there is no conflict, there is no division as my country, your country.*

*A: No division.*

*K: No division. So what is the quality of that man, that mind that has no sense of division? It is pure energy, isn't it? So our concern is this stream and stepping out of it.*

*A: That is meditation, that is real meditation, because the stream is not life. The stream is totally mechanical.*

*K: I must die to the stream.*

*A: All the time.*

*K: All the time. And therefore I must deny - not deny, I must not get entangled with - John who is in the stream.*

*A: One must repudiate the things of the stream.*

*K: That means I must repudiate my brother.*

*A: I must repudiate having a brother. You see what that means?*

*K: I see my brother belonging to this, and as I move away from the stream my mind is open. I think that is compassion.*

*A: When the stream is seen from that which is not of the stream.*

*K: When the man of the stream steps out and looks, then he has compassion.*

*A: And love.*

*K: So, you see, sir, reincarnation, that is, incarnating over and over again, is the stream. This is not a very comforting thing. I come to you and tell you my brother died yesterday, and you tell me this. I call you a terribly cruel man. But you are weeping for yourself, you are weeping for me, for the stream. That's why people don't want to know. I want to know where my brother is, not whether he is.*