

Dec 6. The Theosophy of Jiddu Krishnamurti - Pablo Sender

Download Handouts

The word Theosophy is used to refer to different, though related, things. Theosophical teachings didn't start with the founding of the Theosophical Society and therefore Theosophy is not limited to a definite body of teachings given by a person or group of people. The term theosophia refers to a state of enlightenment, a state of wisdom which is divine, not human. Thus, the teachings of any illuminated sage of any age can be genuinely regarded as part of Theosophy.

This doesn't mean that any teachings loosely considered as religious or spiritual would be theosophical. There are pseudo-spiritual teachers whose doctrines do not really lead the aspirant to a state of divine wisdom. Discrimination is needed on the part of the aspirant to determine whether a teaching is theosophical or not.

Although Krishnamurti was clearly not interested in metaphysics, his view regarding the nature of the (lower) ego and how to transcend it is very much in tune with the mystical aspect of modern Theosophy. In fact, his teachings highlight an essential approach which is present, though not usually emphasized, in the bulk of modern theosophical literature.

The group should first read the two handouts provided here on Krishnamurti, ideally, before the class begins.

Discussion questions:

1-Krishnamurti (K): "Man, in order to escape his conflicts, has invented many forms of meditation. These have been based on desire, will, and the urge for achievement, and imply conflict and a struggle to arrive. This conscious, deliberate striving is always within the limits of a conditioned mind, and in this there is no freedom. All effort to meditate is the denial of meditation. Meditation is the ending of thought. It is only then that there is a different dimension which is beyond time." Do you agree with K that all effort to meditate is a denial of meditation?

2- K calls meditation an ending of thought. "Meditation is the emptying of the mind of all thought, for thought and feeling dissipate energy. They are repetitive, producing mechanical activities which are a necessary part of existence. But they are only part, and thought and feeling cannot possibly enter into the immensity of life. Quite a different approach is necessary, not the path of habit, association and the known; there must be freedom from these. Meditation is the emptying of the mind of the known. It cannot be done by thought or by the hidden prompting of thought, nor by desire in the form of prayer, nor through the self-effacing hypnotism of words, images, hopes, and vanities. All these have to come to an end, easily, without effort and choice, in the flame of awareness."

How would you contrast this definition of meditation with that of Buddhist Vipassana teachers who describe meditation as watching your thoughts.

3- K : "Meditation is one of the greatest arts in life-perhaps **the** greatest, and one cannot possibly learn it from anybody, that is the beauty of it. It has no technique and therefore no authority. When you learn about yourself, watch yourself, watch the way you walk, how you eat, what you say, the gossip, the hate, the jealousy-if you are aware of all that in yourself, without any choice, that is part of meditation." What are the advantages and disadvantages over adopting K's opinion that mediation cannot be learned from another and that it has "no technique and no authority."

4- K: "Fear is always in relation to something; it does not exist by itself. There is fear of what happened yesterday in relation to the possibility of its repetition tomorrow; there is always a fixed point from which relationship takes place. How does fear come into this? I had pain yesterday; there is the memory of it and I do not want it again tomorrow. Thinking about the pain of yesterday, thinking which involves the memory of yesterday's pain, projects the fear of having pain again tomorrow. So it is thought that brings about fear. Thought breeds fear; thought also cultivates pleasure. To understand fear you must also understand pleasure – they are interrelated; without understanding one you cannot understand the other. This means that one cannot say 'I must only have pleasure and no fear'; fear is the other side of the coin which is called pleasure. Thinking with the images of yesterday's pleasure, thought imagines that you may not have that pleasure tomorrow; so thought engenders fear. Thought tries to sustain pleasure and thereby nourishes fear.

Considering the above statement by K on fear and pleasure, what is it, then, that he seems to be telling his listeners to do?

5- One might argue that the essence of K's entire teaching is summarized in the following two paragraph quotations. Read slowly Aloud as a group. "How is the mind which functions on knowledge – how is the brain which is recording all the time – to end, to see the importance of recording and not let it move in any other direction? Very simply: you insult me, you hurt me, by word, gesture, by an actual act; that leaves a mark on the brain which is memory. That memory is knowledge, that knowledge is going to interfere in my meeting you next time – obviously. ... Knowledge is necessary to act in the sense of my going home from here to the place I live; I must have knowledge for this; I must have knowledge to speak English; I must have knowledge to write a letter and so on. Knowledge as function, mechanical function, is necessary. Now if I use that knowledge in my relationship with you, another human being, I am bringing about a barrier, a division between you and me, namely the observer. That is, knowledge, in relationship, in human relationship, is destructive. That is knowledge which is the tradition, the memory, the image, which the mind has built about you, that knowledge is separative and therefore creates conflict in our relationship."^[105]

"The brain has been trained to record for in that recording there is safety, security, a sense of vitality; in that recording the mind creates the image about oneself. And that image will constantly get hurt. Is it possible to live without a single image about yourself, or

about your husband, wife, children, or about the politicians, the priests, or about the ideal? It is possible, and if it is not found you will always be getting hurt, always living in a pattern in which there is no freedom. When you give complete attention there is no recording. It is only when there is inattention that you record. That is: you flatter me; I like it; the liking at that moment is inattention therefore recording takes place. But if when you flatter me I listen to it completely without any reaction, then there is no center which records."

In your own words and experience, what exactly does K mean when he explains, "When you give complete attention there is no recording. It is only when there is inattention that you record"? What does he mean when he says when there is inattention you record? Why do you not record when there is attention?

6- "The brain is the source of thought. The brain is matter and thought is matter. Can the brain – with all its reactions and its immediate responses to every challenge and demand – can the brain be very still? It is not a question of ending thought, but of whether the brain can be completely still? This stillness is not physical death. See what happens when the brain is completely still." What is K describing when he talks about a stillness that is not about ending thought? How can you have stillness and thought?

Proposed Activities

1- Though Krishnamurti did not always seem in favor of formal meditation, he was certainly a proponent of one of the primary effects of meditation, i.e., stillness of mind. K: "The way to the supreme does not lie through will, through desire. The supreme can come into being only when the maker of effort is not. When the mind which is put together through desire comes to an end, not through effort, then in that stillness, which is not a goal, reality comes into being." (JK, *Commentaries on Living*, Series I - Ch 78, "Stillness and Will")

Break into groups and have each spend 5-20 minutes designing a sparse script that would encourage the "way to supreme" as K described it above. Use the script created by one or both groups and have one person read the script while the rest meditate, shutting eyes, in a comfortable position, spine as straight as possible in chair, lotus, or lying down. (10 minutes).

2- Krishnamurti founded several schools around the world. When asked, he enumerated the following as his 3 primary educational aims:

A. *Global outlook*: A vision of the whole as distinct from the part; there should never be a sectarian outlook, but always a holistic outlook free from all prejudice.

B. *Concern for man and the environment*: Humanity is part of nature, and if nature is not cared for, it will boomerang on man. Only the right education, and deep affection between people everywhere, will resolve many problems including the environmental challenges.

C. Religious spirit, which includes the scientific temper: The religious mind is alone, not lonely. It is in communion with people and nature.

Divide into small groups. Each group will create a curriculum for a Grade School based on K's educational aims. Your group should come up with guidelines for the topics that would be taught, classroom instruction format, and atmosphere of the teaching process. Along with each study topic give a couple sentences describing how that topic will be explored by teacher and students. After 20-25 minutes each group should share their vision.

Proposed activities:

Resources:

Books

- Jayakar, Pupul, *Krishnamurti : a Biography*, B K897 JAY KB
- Krishnamurti, J., *The Collected works of J. Krishnamurti*, T K897 CWJK V.1
- Krishnamurti, J., *The First and Last Freedom*, T K897 FLF
- Krishnamurti, J., *Life in Freedom*, T K897 LF
- Krishnamurti, J., *Living : Down to Earth Observations on the Meaning of Life*, T K897 L
- Smith, Ingram, *Truth is a Pathless land : a Journey with Krishnamurti*, T K897 SMI TPL

Sound recordings

(AR: audiocassette; CDA: Compact Disc)

- Krishnamurti, J., *Meditation*, AR 0400
- Ravindra, Ravi., *Krishnamurti and Eastern philosophy*, CDA 0413
- Krishnamurti, J., *This Light in Oneself*, AR 0351
- Krishnamurti, J. *Thought Breeds Fear*, AR 4053

Videorecordings

(VR = VHS Videocassette)

- Krishna, P., *Right Education for Children*, AR 4703
- Krishnamurti, J., *Krishnamurti with Dr. Jonas Salk : Can We Condition Ourselves?*, VR 0109
- Krishnamurti, J., *Krishnamurti with Pupul Jayakar*, VR 0112 PT.1
- Krishnamurti, J., *Love and Pleasure : Dialogue #12*, VR 0091