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First Public Talk in London

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Before we talk about serious things, we should, it seems to me, establish the right relationship between the speaker and yourselves. I mean by that word right a communication. We should establish a communication between ourselves. It is important not only to understand the meaning of words but also to go behind the word, realizing that the word is not the thing. The word, the symbol, is not the actuality. We must penetrate through the word to discover for ourselves the actuality, the fact. Communication is only possible if both of us are listening not only to the meaning of the word but also to the indication, to the substance that lies behind the word.

We are going to talk about our daily existence. Unless we establish for ourselves a right way of living amidst this chaos and confusion, no matter what we seek, our intentions will be frustrated, because reality is in daily life, not something mysterious beyond the fact of daily existence. If we do not understand this whole significance of daily life, with all the conflicts, the miseries, the confusion, the extraordinary mess we are all in - unless that is clarified, any attempt to go beyond is merely an escape; and the more we escape from the actual, the more confusing, the more chaotic it becomes. What we are going to talk over together is not something beyond but rather how to understand the present, and whether we can be totally free from our sorrows, miseries, confusion, and anguish. Having cleared that up, if we can, totally, then perhaps we can begin to inquire whether there is or is not a reality which is other than an idea, a belief, a concept.

What we are going to do together is to examine our daily life. To examine we must be free to look, to perceive; to see things clearly we must be free. That is the first requirement if we are serious enough to want to examine the present state of our own being, our own conduct. This freedom is necessary in order to examine and to perceive. We must be free to listen to what is being said, and we must be free to look. Otherwise we can't see. Whatever we look at will be perverted. Whatever we listen to will have no meaning if we are not capable of listening totally, completely, wholly.

To find out, to examine, to unravel, to penetrate, there must be freedom to listen and freedom to perceive. We all want peace because we all realize that without peace there can be no flowering of goodness. There can be no movement that is not born out of confusion, that is not born out of our own misery. To have peace there must be freedom. We are going to talk over together these two things, peace and freedom. I mean by talking over together exactly what is said. You're not just going to listen to what is being said. We are going to take a journey together; we are going to partake, share, and therefore it is a work that you and I have to do together. You're not just here to listen to what is being said, agreeing or disagreeing intellectually, or agreeing with certain concepts, ideas, and formulas. That does not lead us anywhere, but if we can work together, explore together, not verbally, not intellectually, but factually, then I think that coming together like this will be worthwhile. But if we are merely concerned with definitions and formulas, with argument, then I'm afraid that we shall not get any further than where we are now.

I suggest that in all these talks, cooperation is necessary. We are not discussing ideals, what is right and what is wrong. We are not trying to find out or formulate new concepts. We are fed up with all concepts, all ideals, because they haven't altered our existence. What we are concerned with is a total revolution within consciousness, not in one particular field of consciousness, but with the totality of consciousness, where a total revolution must take place. The problem is not outward, not how to bring about a better society. The problem is a crisis in consciousness, and unless we each meet that crisis totally, not as a scientist, a religious person, a businessman, a poet or an artist, but as a total human being, we shall not bring about a radical revolution. What we are concerned about is whether it is possible to bring about a total revolution so that we can find a different way of living. That is what we are going to be concerned with.

When we use the word freedom, we mean by that word not a revolt, not a reaction; revolt and reaction are not freedom. Freedom from something is not freedom. Freedom from something is a reaction, and freedom has nothing to do with reaction or revolt. It is something by itself, for itself. It isn't a product of a motive, an ideal, or a concept. Unless there is freedom, we cannot have peace. I mean by that word peace not that state outwardly or inwardly between two blank walls, or between two uncertainties or two confusions. Peace isn't a thing that we can seek or find, any more than we can seek and find freedom. There can only be peace if we know how to live peacefully, not as individuals, but as human beings. I think there is a difference between the individual and the human being. The individual is the local entity, the Londoner, the Englishman, the German, or the Russian. He is the individual, the local entity, conditioned by his environment, but the human being is the man, the whole of man, whether he lives in England or India or somewhere else. In understanding the man, we shall understand the individual, not the other way around.

What we are concerned with is freedom and peace for human beings. If the individual merely revolts against the environment, it does not necessarily mean that he is free or that he will have peace. There can be peace only when there is a way of life which is peaceful, when man isn't divided into nationalities, into religious groups, cultivating certain formulas, concepts. It is these that destroy peace. The organized religious concepts deny peace. We observe what is taking place in the world and see that the world is divided into political, governmental, nationalistic areas. You're English; I'm a Russian or a German. Each has his particular conditioning, politically and economically. We are also divided in our beliefs, in our dogmas. You believe in a particular religious formula, and the whole of Asia believes in another set of formulas. There is conflict, and to have peace, surely there must be freedom from religious conditioning. That's first - freedom from conditioning. That is extremely difficult because we may rationally, outwardly, superficially deny certain religious concepts and formulas, but unconsciously, deeply, we are heavily conditioned. We must be free from all conditioning in order to have peace. If there is no peace, we cannot flower, both outwardly and inwardly. We'll always meet frustrations, and there will always be a reaction, a revolt.

What we are concerned with is the total revolution of man. How is this to happen? If we have ever thought about this, how do we answer this question? How can human beings have lived for two million years and more, carrying on in the same pattern inwardly? Though outwardly there have been tremendous changes,

inwardly we are more or less what we have been: greedy, envious, ambitious, competitive, ruthless, cruel, self-centered, battling with each other for position and prestige. This has been going on for thousands of years, and man has suffered. Sorrow has been his lot. He's afraid of life and of death. Being afraid, he invents escapes, gods, and all the various forms of amusements. We have lived that way and we accept that as the norm of life, as the way of life. We see all this; we know all this fairly well. Seeing it all, not only outwardly but inwardly, is it possible, we ask, to change radically, completely; and if it is possible, how is that change to take place?

I am the result of the country in which I was born. The religious, social, economic, and climatic influences, the food and the clothes, all have influenced and shaped the mind. One has lived with anxiety, with fear, with despair, with many frustrations. One is almost on the verge of a neurotic state, if one is not already there. One sees no significance in living at all. One sees the boredom of it, the uselessness, the individual death, the endless sorrow, the conflict within and without. Seeing all this, is it possible to change completely?

If we say it is not possible, as man has said, then there is no way out. The moment we say it is not possible, we have blocked ourselves. To find out if it is possible, one has to examine, and to examine there must be freedom - freedom to perceive the actual fact, not an idea, but the actual fact of fear, and that is very difficult to see. The word fear is not fear. One must understand and be free of the word in order to face the fact of fear.

Similarly, is it possible to change so completely that our way of living, our way of looking at life is entirely different? It's a totally different dimension. That's what we are going to find out. And if it is possible to change, how is this change to take place? First of all, we must understand what it means to look, to perceive, to see. To see anything clearly, the thought, the word, the idea must not interfere. When we look at a tree or a flower, perceive it, we can look at it with botanical knowledge about the tree. In that case we are not actually looking at the tree. We are looking through words, through knowledge, through experience, and our experience keeps us from looking directly. I do not know if you have ever experimented, if you have ever looked at a tree directly, free from the word, from the image which that word has created, without any sense of judgment or evaluation. You cannot actually look otherwise, and that look isn't a blank state. On the contrary, it is tremendously attentive.

To observe, to see, is the first thing - to see what we actually are, not what we think we ought to be or should be; to see our greed, envy, ambition, anxiety, fear, actually as it is, without any interpretation, without any judgment. In that state of observation there is no effort involved at all. This we have to understand clearly, because we are conditioned to make effort. Everything we do is an effort, a struggle. If I want to change myself - if for instance I want to stop smoking - I have to struggle, force myself, determine, and at the end perhaps I may be able to give it up, but all my energy has gone into the battle. Is it not possible to give up something without effort? Smoking is a very trivial affair. To give up pleasure in all its forms, because pleasure always produces pain, is a tremendously complex problem which we will go into during one of these talks. What we are concerned with now is, is it possible to give up, to do things without effort? Because peace means that, doesn't it really? A peace that is achieved through battle within is no longer peace. It's exhaustion, and peace cannot possibly come about through effort. It comes only when there is understanding. That word is a rather difficult word. Understanding does not mean intellectual understanding. When we say we understand something, we generally mean an intellectual, conceptual grasp. Understanding can only take place when there is total attention. Total attention is only possible when we give ourselves completely. The mind, the body, the nerves, the whole being - all are tremendously attentive. Then only is there understanding.

We have to understand our lives as human beings. For us life is a chaotic contradiction. We're not describing sentimentally, emotionally, in any way except actually. We are confused, miserable, anxious,

frightened, in despair. There is always this haunting fear and sorrow. That's our life, and inevitably there is death at the end of it all. That's all we know. We can imagine, we can have many ideals, formulas, and escapes from all this, but the more we escape, the more the contradiction, the deeper the conflict.

Can we look at our life as it is actually, not as it should be? Ideals are utterly futile. They have no meaning whatsoever. It's like the people who believe in nonviolence. Actually they're violent. That's a fact. Human beings are violent. Their words, their gestures, their acts, and their feelings show that they are violent. They have cultivated the ideal of not being violent, which is to have peace, nonviolence. There is the fact, and 'what should be'. Between what is and what is desirable, between the fact and the idea - the utopia, the 'what should be' - there is that time interval. In the pursuit of 'what should be', we see that violence is being sown all the time. It is deception; it is a hypocritical way of looking at life. There is no need surely to have any ideal at all if we know how to look at a fact and be free of it. Because we don't know how to look at facts and be free of them, we think that by having an ideal we shall solve the fact. Actually the ideal, the 'what should be', the utopia, is an escape from reality. Now that we know how to look at violence, perhaps a different kind of action can take place. Let us go into it a little.

I am violent and I see that any form of escape from that reality, from the fact that I am violent, any escape - through drink, through ideals - diminishes my energy to look at the fact. I need energy to look, to be completely attentive. That again is a simple fact. If you will look at anything, you must have great energy. If you are half attentive because you have ideals you should not have, then you are dissipating energy and are therefore incapable of looking. Looking is a process which needs all your attention. You can only look if there is no sense of an idealistic pursuit or a desire to change what is.

The desire to change what is arises only when the fact is unpleasant. When the fact is pleasurable, we don't want to change it. What we are concerned with is the pursuit of pleasure and the denial of pain. Our chief concern is pleasure, not violence or nonviolence, goodness, or anything else. We want pleasure, and to achieve and to gain that pleasure, we will do anything. As long as we are looking at the fact with an intention to change it, we are incapable of changing it because our chief concern is to change it in terms of pleasure, however noble that pleasure may be. We should see this very clearly because our values - moral, ethical, and religious - are all based on pleasure. This is an actual fact, not an imaginary fact, as we will find if we look at ourselves very deeply and look at all the values that we have set up. Where there is the pleasure principle, there must be pain. We look in order to change violence to a pleasure in which there will be greater pleasure, so we are incapable of changing the fact that we are violent. We look at life in terms of pleasure.

Human beings are violent, deeply, for various reasons. One central reason is that their activity is the perpetuation of the 'me', the self. Self-centered activity is one of the reasons for violence. Again, to bring about a radical revolution I must understand the whole principle of pleasure. I love my gods; it gives me tremendous satisfaction. You love your gods, your formulas, your nationality, your flag. So do I. All that is based on pleasure. I may call it by different names, but it doesn't matter. That is the fact. And is it possible to look at violence without trying to change it in terms of pleasure, just to observe the fact that I am violent?

One must understand what it means to look and to listen. To listen is one of the most difficult things to do because what one hears, one interprets; one either agrees or disagrees. The mind, the brain is incessantly active in listening, either refuting what is said or accepting it, denying it or following it. To really listen implies complete quietness; otherwise, one can't listen. What usually takes place is that we are not listening to what is being said, or to a bird, or the breeze among the leaves. We actually are not listening. We have already translated in terms of words, images, and we look at things with these images and words and experiences - with knowledge. After all, to listen to your friend, to listen to your wife or husband is one of the most difficult things to do because you have an image about your friend, about your wife, and she has an image about you. The relationship is between these two images, and these images are talking to each

other - the images being memories, experiences, all the hurts, and all that. There is not an actual listening. To listen one must be free of the image.

In the same way, to see there must be no interference of the image. Then we can look at violence; then we can find out whether the word is creating the feeling, or the feeling of violence is independent of the word, because the word is not the thing. Though the brain is active, it is in a state of negation in looking because there is no longer the image that is looking. Each of us has an image of himself and of another. You're not actually looking at me. You're looking at the image you have about me, as you have an image about your wife or your husband, your children, and your country. We have relationships between these images, what we call relationships. When we want to listen or to look, the images interfere. The images of hurt, of what has been said, the memories, the accumulated experiences - these interfere and therefore there is no looking at all and no actual relationship between two people. There can only be a relationship between people when there is no image.

When you can look without an image about violence, what is the state of the mind or the brain that is looking? If you have no image about your wife or she about you, no image whatsoever, what is the state of your mind and her mind, your brain and her brain; what is taking place? You have no image as an Englishman, as a Christian or as a Hindu, or as a husband, a wife. There is no image at all. To be free of that image, you have to investigate very deeply into the whole question of forming images, and if you have gone into it, examined scrupulously, carefully, then your brain is not blank; it's not in a state of dullness. On the contrary, it's tremendously active, but that very activity is not the activity of the image-former.

With that attention you can look. To look at a tree or a flower or a bird is fairly simple, but to look inwardly in the same way at our violence, our pleasures, our pains is another matter. We can look and listen only when the mind, when the brain is completely quiet; otherwise, we can't see. Change is only possible, a total revolution is only possible when there is this attention that looks, an attention in which there is no longer the image-forming process of pleasure or the values of pleasure. That's what it means to be free. Freedom surely means the capacity to look, to observe, because the very seeing is the doing.

We see the whole implication of violence, both historically and actually. We know what it means. There have been, I am told, fifteen thousand wars in the last five thousand five hundred years, two and a half wars every year. We may not have them here, but in the world they are going on. In spite of religions, in spite of all the goodness, we have accepted war as the way of life. Man has accepted the violence as the way of life. The politicians, the religious people, all talk about peace. We cannot have peace if we do not live peacefully. To live peacefully there must be no violence. That requires tremendous inquiry and examination. A change, a radical revolution in consciousness is only possible when we can observe, see, listen, and know that every observation and all seeing is acting. Is it possible to end violence in ourselves immediately, instantly, not in terms of time? We are so conditioned that we say to ourselves, "I will gradually get rid of violence." We are used to gradualness and evolution, but is it possible to end violence instantly within ourselves? I say it is possible to end violence instantly when we can observe the fact completely, with total attention, in which there is no image of any kind. It's like a person who is aware of an abyss, a danger; unless he is neurotic, unbalanced, he will move away from the danger, and that action is immediate. To see the danger, to actually see it, is to be free from images. Then we can look with complete quietness, complete silence. Then we will see that the fact has undergone a total mutation.

A revolution in the whole psyche of man cannot be brought about through will - will being desire, determination, a planned way of life which will lead to peace. It is only possible when the brain can be quiet and yet active to observe without creating images according to its experience, knowledge, and pleasure. Peace is essential because only in peace can one flower in goodness and beauty. That is only possible when one can listen to the whole of existence with all its turmoil, misery, confusion, and agony - just listening to it without any desire to change it. The very act of listening is the acting that will bring about a revolution.