

Jiddu Krishnamurti

First Public Talk in the Oak Grove

From the series:

Six Public Meetings in Ojai, California - 1966

Saturday, October 29, 1966

First Public Talk in the Oak Grove

I do not know how you regard these meetings. It is really quite a serious gathering, not an afternoon picnic, nor have we gathered to have an amusing time here. Presumably we have come together to talk over the many problems that every human being throughout the world is faced with. And, as we are going to go into it, not only in detail if there is time, but also to go into it seriously, with a deliberate intention, one must come to these talks and discussions not in any sense of being entertained intellectually, or emotionally excited, but rather to go into the many human problems seriously, with a great deal of hesitation and understanding. Then perhaps these meetings will be worthwhile.

First of all, I think we should be clear that we are not discussing any particular philosophy. The speaker does not belong to the Orient or to the Occident. He has no particular philosophy, nor formulated ideas which one must accept or reject. But what is, it seems to me, necessary is that we should together examine the very complex problems of our lives, the very urgency of these problems. Most of us try to run away from them because we do not understand, or escape has become such a habit that we easily slip, without thought, without any intention, into this network of escapes that man has cultivated through centuries upon centuries.

What is necessary is to examine unemotionally, not merely intellectually. Because the intellect doesn't solve any problem; it can only invent a lot of ideas, theories. Nor can emotion dissipate the urgency of the problems that one has to face and resolve. What is necessary, it seems to me, is a mind that is capable of examination. To examine, there must be freedom from personal views, with a mind that is not guided by one's own temperament, inclination, nor is compelled by circumstances. And that's quite a difficult task because we are accustomed to examine everything from a personal point of view: of like or dislike, to certain commitments, to certain philosophies, to certain formulas. And therefore we're always translating these problems according to our particular limitation; but, if we would translate or understand these problems deeply and fully, it seems to me that one must look at them, not as an individual, but as a human

being. I think there is a vast difference between the two. The individual is the local entity, the American, the man who lives on the West Coast or the East Coast, or in the Midwest. The individual is the Indian, far away, with his outlook, with his limitations, with his superstitions, with his innumerable religions and doctrines and beliefs. The individual is caught in his nationalities, by the division of the sectarian spirit, whether it be Catholic or Protestant, or the various nationalistic divisions with their Democratic, Republican political parties, and so on and on and on. In that frame the individual exists. But I think the human being supersedes the individual. Whether they live in Russia, China, India, America, or in any other part of the world, human beings have the same common factor of sorrow, of joy, of unresolved miseries, despairs, the immense loneliness of modern existence, the utter meaninglessness of life as it is lived now throughout the world - the wars, the continuation of hatred, the national divisions, the utter despair of life. At that level is the human being, though the individual does partake of all that; but if we merely consider the individual, we shall not inquire much, very deeply. It is like cultivating one's own little backyard, and to cultivate that little backyard is necessary. But that little land is in relation to the whole of the earth upon which man lives as a human being, in travail, in despair, in agony - this endless sorrow, this fleeting love, and the ending of life.

So, if we could consider these problems as human beings, not as an American unrelated to the rest of the world, unrelated to the vast hungry East, but rather as a human being with all the innumerable problems, then perhaps we can intelligently, with care, resolve our problems. And into that we are going together, taking a journey together. When we take a journey, both of us give attention to every step that we take. It isn't that you are listening this evening to a speaker, but rather sharing together the whole of life's problems. And, to share together, the responsibility is yours as well as the speaker's. You can't just sit there and be told what to do or not to do, what to believe and what not to believe, or what to follow, and so on - which becomes rather immature and rather childish - but to share together any problem, both of us must, both the speaker and you must be alert, attentive, see the urgency of the problems, and give one's mind and heart, everything that one has, to find out, to inquire. Because, what we are going to do in all these talks and discussions is to inquire, to examine, and thereby find out for oneself. Because there is no guide, no philosopher, no teacher; no one can lead you, because all that has been tried. There have been teachers; there have been gurus; there have been systems, saviors, priests, little sectarian leaders with their particular idiosyncrasies and philosophies. But all these priests, leaders, teachers, saviors have not solved the human problems of war, of our daily misery, of our despair, our innermost agonies and loneliness. They have helped to escape, to bring about some kind of narcotic which will give us some vague hope, or gives visions of a new life; but actually the change does not take place. It is like those people who take LSD, hoping thereby to escape into some reality of a life of a great vision, but actually these innumerable drugs, or many drugs, do not fundamentally, radically, alter the human mind.

So, what we are going to attempt to do is to explore, and to explore there must be freedom. That's the first thing: freedom to inquire, which obviously means freedom from any commitment, intellectual or otherwise, from any philosophy, from any dogma, so that the mind can look. And a mind can only look, explore, when it is not caught - for the time being, at least - in its own problems, or in its own hopes. It is not committed to any philosophy, to any dogma, to any church. And this, it seems to me, is one of the most difficult things to do. To look attentively at our own problems as human beings demands not only freedom but attention. To attend implies, surely, doesn't it, to give your mind and heart to it, totally - with your nerves, with your ears, with your eyes, with your heart, with your mind - to give totally to understand something. And to give so attentively, totally, there needs to be no motive, no persuasion. You do it naturally because the urgency of the problem is so great that it must be solved. But if we have a motive - and all our urgency generally is based on some limited motive - our problems continue.

The task for the listener, for you, is very great, because most of us don't want to solve these problems: the problems of love, death, and how to live. And that's what we're going to discuss; that's what we're going to inquire into: whether it is at all possible for human beings to be totally rid of all despair, which means to be

totally free of all fear, and therefore to lead a life, not in the future, but a life that is not limited by time as yesterday, today, and tomorrow; and whether it is at all possible to free the mind from all the centuries upon centuries of conditioning by the propaganda of churches, religions, by the propaganda of society, the whisper of the neighbor, of the magazines, of the newspapers, of the politicians, of the priests, so that the mind is free. Otherwise, man will live everlastingly in pain, misery, and sorrow.

We are asking ourselves whether it is at all possible for human beings, living in this world - not running away into a monastery or to some peculiar philosophy, or taking drugs - to change radically. Because the more intelligent you are, the more aware you are of the world's problems, the more there is despair, there is no meaning, and so drugs are a way of escape. By escape we think we are going to resolve the problems. On the contrary. So, can we bring about a radical change in our way of thinking, living, feeling?

Obviously, considering what the world is, the more aware one is of these extraordinarily complex problems, the more one wants a change; one wants a deep, revolutionary change - not at the economic or social level, because they never do really solve any human problem, as the communist revolution has proved. After killing millions and millions of people, they've come back to the same pattern. But what we are talking about is a revolution at a totally different level, a revolution in the psyche, in the mind itself; and whether it is at all possible to bring about that change, that revolution, not guided by our inclination, by our temperament, or compelled by circumstances, society.

One can see that one does change a certain amount, to a certain degree, by circumstances, by influence, through some form of compulsion, an invention. That's going on all the time in our life. Some environmental compulsion makes us, whether we are willing or not willing to change, modify; but such modification doesn't alter the fundamental issues of life. First, one of the fundamental issues of life is freedom, and it requires tremendous inquiry, intelligence, sensitivity to find out what it is to be free. Revolt is not freedom. Revolt against the present structure of society, which is completely bourgeois, middle-class, the revolt against prosperity - going about with long hair, dirty, and all the rest of it - that's not freedom, surely. And we always, it seems to me, regard freedom as from something: from despair, from psychological states. We always regard freedom as going from one state to another state; this we call freedom. If we examine it a little closely, such freedom is merely a reaction; and a reaction invariably produces other reactions; and in that one is caught, and therefore it is not freedom at all. Therefore, freedom is not from something but per se, in itself.

One is aware of the utter meaninglessness of life. One may have money, property, live in a comfortable house, with three meals a day, and all the rest of it, but through all that runs a thread of utter hopelessness - the utter meaninglessness of going to an office every day for the next forty years, or spending the rest of the years cooking, cooking, cooking, and washing dishes. I know one does it automatically, or one is compelled to do it, or one says, "That's part of life and one has to go through with it." At the end of it all, life has no meaning, except that one has had pleasure, sexual or otherwise: pleasure looking at the blue sky, the light through the leaves, the stars of an evening, and the movement of water in the moonlight. There is great delight in all that. But that soon passes away and becomes a memory, an ash, ashes. One wants to be free from this utter boredom of life, and therefore that freedom is translated into revolt, saying that there are the young and the old, that the old do not understand the younger generation, and so on, and all the rest of that business.

Freedom comes not through revolt; it comes naturally when there is the intention, when there is the urgency and attention in examining the social, psychological structure of what we are, examining as human beings what we are. Because, we are the result of a social structure. The society is you, and you are the society. You have built this society according to your particular idiosyncrasies, greed, and all the rest of it. The psychological structure of what we are is the result of thousands of years of society, of communities, with their beliefs, dogmas, superstitions, with their hopes, with their gods, and all the rest of it. It is that one

has to understand, and one has to go very deeply to be free from the turmoil of the social structure, this psychological structure of what we are. You may run away, take to drink, start new religions, take LSD, and all the rest of it; but, unless you are free of this psychological structure, there will be no escape. There can be understanding only when there is tremendous urgency. And when there is an urgency, there is attention, and out of that comes freedom. Then you can look. Then you can go much further. Then you can begin to inquire if there is any truth.

There is something far beyond that which thought has put together. Man, throughout the historical process, has always inquired into the something beyond this everyday, monotonous, routine life. And when he inquired, it was an escape from the daily existence, with all its despairs, miseries, and conflicts. When he inquired it was an invention, a projection of his own desires, hopes. And it's only a free mind, and therefore a new mind, that can discover something far beyond that which man, out of his fear, despair, and boredom created, something which man calls God.

Our task, during these talks here, is not to be stimulated to inquire. If you are relying on being stimulated in order to inquire, then you depend on another. You are already committed, and therefore you cease to examine. One inquires because of the urgency. Know what is happening in the world. There's a war; people are killing each other. And there are those who say, "This is not my war, my favorite war; I like another war." There are those who justify killing. And this has been going on for five thousand years. An archaeologist said that in Babylon, on a brick, a man had written that he hoped this would be the last war - five thousand years ago. And man, until now, has chosen war as the way of life - not only war outwardly, but inwardly. Our life is a battlefield of resentment, hate, conflict, struggle, endless competition. We may deny the outward war - intelligent people generally do; and when they do, they do not belong to any religion, to any class, to any group, to any nationality, to any system of thought. We may reject outward war, but inwardly we are in battle with ourselves and with another; and that's our life. And that we are incapable of facing and understanding and going into and being utterly free of. We are afraid to understand it, go into it, because it may produce a totally different kind of revolution from that which we want.

So we avoid, and hence we continue with war; and that's our way of life. And one may talk of love, talk about it, go to church, and all that immature, idiotic stuff, but we continue to live in a way that produces wars. To live without war means to live peacefully, without competition, without envy, without resentment. People store resentment and carry on for years.

So, if we would bring about a different world - and we must; that's man's only hope - we must have a different mind, a mind that has observed all this, observed how man has divided the world into nationalities, into races, into colors, into religions. Observing all these inventions, putting them all aside completely, then only can one live peacefully. Then only can there perhaps be a world where there will be no wars, where there will be no envy. In this country there is immense prosperity. And in the East there is nothing at all. There is hunger, misery. Naturally, they are envious, and the self-centered prosperity will only lead to further wars, further misery. There is only one political problem, which is the unity of man-kind - not according to the democratic, or the communist, or this or that policy, but actual unity of mankind. All this is not possible when thought is guided by personal inclination and temperament, or compelled by circumstances. What will bring about a radical revolution in the mind? A radical, fundamental mutation of the mind is only possible when we are capable of examining, not something else, but ourselves, not through a psychologist or analyst - that will lead nowhere. It may temporarily alleviate the problems of certain types of people who are neurotic, and so on, but even then that's another problem. To resolve anything, one has to watch without time, to see the thing immediately, and thereby bring about a total mutation in oneself.

I think I've talked enough for this afternoon. Perhaps you'll ask questions.

Questioner: If you had to choose between the church within and the war, which way would you go?

Krishnamurti: The questioner says, "The church within, between that church and war, what would you choose?"

First of all, we must understand this word choice. I'm not quibbling, please. Where there is choice, there is confusion. It's only the confused mind that chooses. A clear mind that sees things clearly has no choice. [Laughter] No, sir, please, don't pass it off by laughing and being amused by a statement. Most of us are very much confused because we have been told so many different things by so many experts, specialists, by the priests, by the books, by religions, by propaganda; everything is contradictory, and we are the result of all that contradiction. So, out of that contradiction, out of that confusion, we say, "I must choose between this and that, between this inward church" - follow it, sir, right to the end, follow it, sir - "and the war." Before I choose I must inquire, surely, what the element is, the factor that chooses. Who is the chooser? The chooser is the center who says, "I will" and "I will not," "I will do this, I will join the war," or, "I won't join the war." And can a confused mind choose? And when it does choose, will not its choice always be confused? Please do listen to this a little. Please listen to it; I'm not asking you to agree with me.

You know, one of the most difficult things to do is to listen. Because, after all, sir, you have your own opinion; you have your "This is right." But we are not trying to convince you of anything; we are just examining. We said that, when a mind is confused - and most minds are confused - out of that confusion, to choose only produces more chaos, more confusion. Whereas, if one is capable of looking, if one looks very clearly, with a clear mind, with a mind that is not burdened with personal views - and that's very difficult, to be free of personal views - with a mind that is capable of giving its whole attention, then there is no choice. Then you don't choose between this church inside and the war outside. Then there is only one action, and that action comes when there is no choice at all.

Questioner: You say it is necessary for people to think clearly. How is it possible for them to think clearly when they are not very healthy, and they are continually getting sicker every day all over the world, especially in this country?

Krishnamurti: Sir, I have to repeat the question, so would you mind making the question short?

Questioner: Yes. The people in this country, and all over the world, are sick and getting sicker. How can they think clearly when they are sick?

Krishnamurti: Obviously not. Obviously, physical sickness does confuse the issue. But to be physically healthy, you also have to be psychologically very healthy. Mere physical health doesn't solve the problem. You cannot separate physical health from psychological health.

Questioner: You spoke of urgency when speaking of freedom. Would you explain further what you meant by urgency?

Krishnamurti: When we are in acute physical pain, there is an urgency, and you act. There is not all the tremendous intellectual, complex motivation, and all the rest of it. You act. And the psychological urgency - and that urgency is much more important than the physical urgency - we neglect; we postpone the urgency of a man who is frightened, the urgency to resolve it and to find out if it is at all possible, psychologically, to be totally free from fear. And that is the urgency: to inquire into this whole question of fear, whether it is possible to examine, to find out what is involved in the question of fear. There is not only fear, which we shan't go into now because it's a very complex problem. In that problem is involved the whole process, the machinery of thinking: what brings on fear, whether it's thought, or purely physical danger. So, to inquire into it and to resolve it demands urgency, and that's what we mean by that word urgent.

Questioner: Krishnaji, historically there is an urgency at this time. Historically, we are coming to the end of an age, the Judeo-Christian age, and we will be entering a new age of man. Now, do you see this mutation that you speak of coming about rather automatically, if we just don't stand in the way of it?

Krishnamurti: First of all, I don't quite see how this historical thing is coming to an end because the churches have tremendous vested interest - vested interest in property and also in each one of us. If we disregard a particular church, or a particular group of beliefs, we'll invent our own because we are frightened people. A mind, if it is not free from fear, may see the futility of a particular organization of churches, but because it is afraid, because it seeks comfort, because it seeks various answers for its despair, it will invent another. This has happened historically. Our concern, surely, is not whether certain forms of religious activities come to an end but rather whether man, the human being, can be free from fear, totally, right through his being. To go into that - perhaps we shall do it the next time we meet here - requires a great deal of understanding, a great deal of open inquiry, not personal prejudice of fear and hope.

Questioner: When there is urgency, fear, or some other kind, it demands action and, at that moment, how can there be awareness?

Krishnamurti: Again, those two words action and awareness need a great deal of inquiry. What is action? And what is it to be aware? To be aware implies to be aware of the trees, of the colors, of the people, and so on and so on and so on, all that - externally, objectively, to be aware - and also inwardly to be aware of what is going on - one's own prejudices, one's own inclinations, tendencies, compulsions, all the rest of it - to be aware both outwardly and inwardly. It is not that I'm aware outwardly and totally unaware inwardly. If I am outwardly aware and not inwardly aware, there is a contradiction; and that contradiction obviously leads to confusion, and so on.

This requires a great deal of not only verbal exposition, but also actual experimentation, because awareness implies choicelessness. To be aware of a tree, you can be aware of it botanically - with knowledge, with thought - aware of it; but with that awareness you don't see the whole tree; you are never in contact with that tree. You are in contact with the image that you have created about that tree, or the person you have created in your relationships, and so on. One may be aware of that person, but actually you are aware of the image which you have created about that person. Again, to go into awareness, one has to spend a little time. And also action; again, that's a tremendous word, so heavily loaded. Most of our action is based on an idea, on a formula. I have an idea of what I should do or should not do, or an action based upon a technique which I have learned, and so on and so on. So, there is the formula, the idea, and action corresponding to that idea. There is a division between the idea and action, and to find out what action is, one must ask: Is idea necessary at all?

Sir, just a minute; I haven't finished yet. I've not finished this particular question. Sir, please, if you would kindly listen. One question rightly asked will answer all the rest of the questions. And also, please, if I may request you, don't take photographs and all the rest of it. This isn't a circus. We are supposed to be serious people.

You know, sirs, to ask a question is very easy. And one must ask questions, endlessly, because questioning implies a certain skepticism. There must be skepticism, not accepting - which doesn't mean that you deny everything. To ask a right question is one of the most difficult things; and, in asking the right question, in the very asking of it is the answer. But we never ask fundamental questions; we never ask a fundamental question and remain with that question, not easily finding an answer. Nobody, no one on earth or in heaven can answer a fundamental question except yourself, and to ask a right question demands a great deal of intelligence and sensitivity - which doesn't mean that the speaker is preventing you from asking questions.

We're asking just now: What is awareness and what is action? The action that we know is always based on this formula: first, the idea, the concept, the what should be, what has been, and, from that, act in approximation to that. This is our life. We are violent - that's an obvious fact - and we have an idea of nonviolence. And we're always approximating violence in terms of nonviolence. Whereas, the idea is idiotic, is unreal. Nonviolence is unreal to a man who is violent. The understanding of that violence is urgent,

immediate, and the action of a mind that is pursuing nonviolence and yet is violent is merely sowing violence all the time.

What is essential is the understanding of violence, and the understanding of violence is not through nonviolence. You have to face it; you have to look at it. And when you know, when you are aware of the whole implication of violence, then it comes to an end immediately - which means inquiry into the whole question of time, because we use time as a means of solving our problems, and so on. This is not the time to go into it.

Questioner: Would you like to enlarge your thoughts of love, that you mentioned several times before?

Krishnamurti: We'll go into it perhaps during the next few talks, but I would have thought that most of us would ask, "I see the urgency of change, radical revolution, mutation in the mind. I see it. It is necessary. How is one to do it?" I should have thought that would be the most urgent question, wouldn't you? Is it possible for a human being who is so heavily conditioned, either as a communist or a capitalist or a Catholic or whatever you will, to break down that conditioning completely, not at some future date, but immediately? Is it at all possible? It is only possible if you understand, first, what the nature and the structure of this conditioning is, the meaning of it. Then one also has to inquire into time, and what the entity is that is going to bring about this change, and so on. These are the problems involved in this.

I think we had better stop. We have gone over an hour. Perhaps we'll continue tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock.