

BEGINNINGS OF LEARNING

Part I Chapter 13

School Dialogue Brockwood Park 17th June 1973

Krishnamurti: The other day we were talking about sanity and mediocrity, what those words mean. We were asking whether living in this place as a community we are mediocre. And we also asked whether we are sane totally, that is bodily, mentally, emotionally. Are we balanced and healthy? All that is implied in the words sane, whole. Are we educating each other to be mediocre, to be slightly insane, slightly off balance?

The world is quite insane, unhealthy, corrupt. Are we bringing about that same imbalance, insanity and corruption in our education here? This is a very serious question. Can we find out the truth of it? - not what we think we should be in terms of sanity, but actually discover for ourselves if we are educating each other to be really sane and not mediocre.

Questioner: Many of us will have a job to which we have to go every day, many people will get married and have children - those are things that are going to happen.

Krishnamurti: What is your place in this world as a human being who is supposed to be educated, who has got to earn a livelihood, where you may, or may not marry, have the responsibility of children, a house and mortgage and may be trapped in that for the rest of your life?

Questioner: Perhaps we are hoping somebody will look after us.

Krishnamurti: That means you must be capable of doing something. You can't just say, "Please look after me" - nobody is going to do it. Don't be depressed by it. Just look at it, be familiar with it, know all the tricks people are playing on each other. The politicians will never bring the world together, on the contrary; there may be no actual war but there is an economic war going on. If you are a scientist you are a slave to the government.

All governments are more or less corrupt, some more, some less, but all are corrupt. So look at all this without getting depressed and saying, "What am I going to do, how am I going to face this, I haven't the capacity?" You will have the capacity; when you know how to look you will have tremendous capacity.

So what is your place in all this? If you see the whole, then you can ask that question, but if you merely say to yourself, "What am I going to do?", without seeing the whole, then you are caught, then there is no answer to it.

Questioner: Surely the first thing is for us to discuss these things openly. But I think people are a little frightened to discuss freely. Perhaps the thing they really care about will be threatened.

Krishnamurti: Are you frightened?

Questioner: If I say what I want is a fast car, then perhaps somebody will question that.

Krishnamurti: It must be questioned. I get letters questioning me all the time; I have been challenged since my childhood.

Questioner: Sir, there is something which always bothers me when these things are discussed. It is said we live in a highly mechanised industrial society and if some of us can opt out of it, it is because there are other people who do go to the office and work and become mechanical.

Krishnamurti: Of course.

Questioner: We couldn't opt out of it without those people fulfilling their mechanised, miserable existence.

Krishnamurti: No. How to live in this world without belonging to it, that is the question. How to live in this insanity and yet be sane?

Questioner: Are you saying that the man who goes to the office and leads an apparently mechanical life could do all that and yet be a different sort of human being? In other words, it isn't necessarily the system...

Krishnamurti: This system, whatever it is, is making the mind mechanical.

Questioner: But does it have to make the mind mechanical?

Krishnamurti: It is happening.

Questioner: All young people are faced with growing up, they see they may have to take a job which entails that. Can there be another response to it?

Krishnamurti: My question is: how to live in this insane world sanely. Though I may have to go to an office and earn a livelihood, there must be a different heart, a different mind. Is this different mind, this different heart happening here in this place? Or are we just treading the mill and getting thrown out into this monstrous world?

Questioner (1): There is no need any more to have a nine-to-five, six day a week job because of automation. What is happening is that this age is now giving us the extra time to attend to our other side.

Questioner (2): But we were saying we want leisure and we don't know how to use leisure.

Questioner (3): There is nothing wrong, surely, in earning a livelihood?

Krishnamurti: I never said it's wrong to earn a livelihood; one has to earn a livelihood. I earn my livelihood by talking to people in many places. I have been doing it for fifty years and I am doing what I love to do. What I am doing is really what I think is right, is true; it is the way of living for me – not imposed on me by somebody - and that is my way of earning a livelihood.

Questioner: I just want to say that you are able to do that because there are people who fly the aeroplanes.

Krishnamurti: Of course, I know that: without them I couldn't travel. But if there were no aeroplanes I would remain in one place, in the village where I was born and I would still be doing the same thing there.

Questioner: Yes, but in this highly mechanised society, where profit is the motive, this is the way things are organized.

Krishnamurti: No, other people do the dirty work and I do the clean work.

Questioner: So one tries to do the clean work?

Krishnamurti: It comes to that.

Questioner: But apart from earning a living, we have to begin to realize that to live sanely and yet earn a living in this world, there has to be an inner revolution.

Krishnamurti: I am putting the same question differently. How am I to live sanely in this world which is insane? It doesn't mean I am not going to earn a livelihood, that I am not going to marry, that I am not going to take responsibilities. To live in this insane world sanely, I must reject that world and a revolution in me must come about so that I become sane and operate sanely. That's my whole point.

Questioner: Because I've been brought up insanely I have to question everything.

Krishnamurti: That's what education is. You have been sent here, or you came here, contaminated by an insane world. Don't fool yourself, you have been conditioned by that insane world, shaped by past generations - including your parents - and you come here and you have to uncondition yourself, you have to undergo a tremendous change. Does that change take place? Or are we just saying: "Well, we are doing a bit of good work here and there, day after day," and by the time you leave in two or four years' time, off you go with a little patchwork done?

Questioner: There seems to be a conflict between what we want to do, what we desire to do, and what is necessary.

Krishnamurti: What is it you desire to do? I want to be an engineer because I see it brings in a great deal of money, or this or that. Can I rely on that desire? Can I rely on my instincts which have been so twisted? Can I rely on my thoughts? What have I to rely on? So education is to create an intelligence which is not mere instinct or desire or some petty demand, but an intelligence that will function in this world.

Is our education at Brockwood helping you to be intelligent? I mean by that word: to be very sensitive, not to your own desires, to your own demands, but to be sensitive to the world, to what is going on in the world. Surely education is not merely to give you knowledge, but also to give you the capacity to look at the world objectively, to see what is happening - the wars, the destruction, the violence, the brutality. The function of education is to find out how to live differently, not merely to pass exams, to get a degree, become qualified in certain ways. It is to help you to face the world in a totally different, intelligent way, knowing you have to earn a livelihood, knowing all the responsibilities, the miseries of it all. My question is: is this being done here? Is the educator getting educated as well as the student?

Questioner: Your question is also my question, I ask whether this education is happening here.

Krishnamurti: You are asking whether such education is taking place here at Brockwood to help you to become so intelligent, so aware that you can meet this insanity? If not, whose fault is it?

Questioner: What is the basis which makes this education possible?

Krishnamurti: Look, why are you being educated?

Questioner: I really don't know.

Krishnamurti: Therefore you have to find out what education means, mustn't you? What is education? Giving you information, knowledge about various subjects and so on, a good academic training? That has to be, hasn't it? Millions of people are being turned out by the universities and colleges.

Questioner: They give you the tools to live with.

Krishnamurti: But what are the hands that are going to use them? They are the same hands that have produced this world, the wars and all the rest of it.

Questioner: Which means the tools are there but if there is no inner, psychological revolution you will use those tools in the same old way and keep the rotteness going. That's what my question is about.

Krishnamurti: If this revolution does not take place here, then why doesn't it? And if it does, is it actually affecting the mind, or is it still an idea and not an actuality, like having to eat three meals a day. That is an actuality, somebody has to cook, that's not an idea. So I am asking you, is this kind of education we are talking about taking place here? And if it is, let us find out how to vitalise it, give life to it. If it is not, let's find out why.

Questioner: It doesn't seem to be happening in the whole school.

Krishnamurti: Why not? It may be happening with a few individuals here and there - why isn't it happening with all of us?

Questioner: I feel it's like a seed which wants to germinate but the top soil is too heavy.

Krishnamurti: Have you seen grass growing through cement?

Questioner (1): Well, this is a weak seed, you see. (Laughter.)

Questioner (2): But do we realize that we are mediocre and do we want to get out of it? - that's the point.

Krishnamurti: I am asking you: Are you mediocre? I am not using that word in any derogatory sense - I am using the word "mediocre" as it is described in the dictionary. You are bound to be middle class if you merely pursue your own little activities instead of seeing the whole - the whole world and your particular little place in the whole, not the other way round. People don't see the whole, they are pursuing their little desires, their little pleasures, their little vanities and brutalities, but if they saw the whole and understood their place in it, their relationship to the whole would be totally different.

You, living at Brockwood as a student in a small community, in relationship with your teachers and your fellow students, do you see the whole of what is going on in the world? That is the first thing. To see it objectively, not emotionally, not with prejudice, not with a bias, but just look at it. The various governments will not solve this problem, no politician is interested in this. They want more or less to maintain the status quo, with a little alteration here and there. They don't want the unity of man, they want the unity of England. But even there the different political parties don't say, "Let's all join together and find out what is best for man."

Questioner: But you are not saying it's not possible?

Krishnamurti: They are not doing it.

Questioner: Are we?

Krishnamurti: We are observing, we are first looking at the world. And when you see the whole thing, what is your desire in relation to the whole? If you don't see the whole and merely pursue your particular instinct or tendency or desire, that is the essence of mediocrity, that's what is happening in the world.

You see, in the old days the really serious people said, "We will have nothing to do with the world, we will become monks, we will become preachers, we will live without property, with out marriage, without position in society. We are teachers, we will go round the villages and the country, people will feed us, we will teach them morality, we will teach them how to be good, not to hate each other." That used to happen but we can't do that any more. In India one still can. You can go from the north to the south and from east to west, begging. Put on a certain robe and they will feed you and clothe you because that is part of the tradition of India. But even that is beginning to fade, for there are so many charlatans.

So we have to earn a livelihood, we have to live in this world a life that is intelligent, sane, not mechanical - that is the point. And education is to help us to be sane, non-mechanical and intelligent. I keep repeating this. Now how do we, you and I, discuss this thing and find out first what we actually are and see if that can be totally changed? So first look at yourself, don't avoid it, don't say, "How terrible, how ugly." Just observe whether you have got all the tendencies of the insanity which has produced this ugly world. And if you observe your own particular quirks, find out how to change. Let's talk about it, that is relationship, that is friendship, that is affection, that is love. Talk about it and say, "Look, I am greedy, I feel terribly silly". Can that be changed radically? That is part of our education.

Questioner: It's when I feel insecure that I become silly.

Krishnamurti: Of course. But are you sure? Don't theorize about it. Are you seeking security? - in somebody, in a profession, in some quality, or in an idea?

Questioner: One needs security.

Krishnamurti: You see how you defend it? First find out if you are seeking security; don't say one needs it. Then we will see whether it is needed or not, but first see if you are seeking security. Of course you are! Have you understood the meaning and the implications of that word `depending'? - depending on money, depending on people, on ideas, all coming from outside. To depend on some belief, or on the image you have about yourself, that you are a great man, that you have this or that, you know all this nonsense that goes on. So you have to understand what the implications of that word are and whether you are caught in those things. If you see you depend on somebody for your security than you begin to question, then you begin to learn. You begin to learn what is implied in dependency, in attachment, In security, fear and pleasure are involved. When there is no security you feel lost, you feel lonely; and when you feel lonely you escape, through drink, women or whatever you do. You act neurotically because you haven't really solved this problem.

So find out, learn what the meaning, the significance and the implications of that word are in actuality, not in theory. Learn: that is part of our education. I depend on certain people. I depend on them for my security, for my safety, for my money, for my pleasure, etc. Therefore if they do something which upsets me I get frightened, irritated, angry, jealous, frustrated, and then I rush off and put my claws into somebody else. The same problem goes on all the time. So I say to myself, let me first understand what this means. I must have money, I must have food, clothes and shelter, those are normal things. But when money is involved the whole cycle begins. So I have to learn and know about the whole thing; not after I have committed myself, then it is too late. I commit myself by getting married to somebody and then I am caught, then I am dependent, then the battle begins, wanting to be free yet being caught by responsibility, by the mortgage.

Here is a problem: Tungki says, "I must have security." I answered: before you say "I must", find out what it means, learn about it.

Questioner: I must have food and clothes and a house.

Krishnamurti: Yes, go on.

Questioner: To have that I need to earn enough money.

Krishnamurti: So you do whatever you can. Then what happens?

Questioner: To earn this money I depend on someone...

Krishnamurti: You depend on society, on your patron, on your employer. He chases you around, he is brutal, and you put up with it because you depend on him. That is what is happening right round the world. Please look at it first, as you look at a map. You say: I have to earn a livelihood. I know in earning a livelihood I am dependent on society as it exists. It demands so many hours a day for five or six days a week and if I don't earn a livelihood I have nothing. That's one thing. And I also depend inwardly on my wife or a priest or a counsellor - you understand?

Questioner: So knowing all that I won't marry. I see the dependency, all the trouble that will come.

Krishnamurti: You are not learning. Don't say you won't marry, see what the problem is first. I need food, clothes and shelter, those are primary needs and for those I depend on society as it is, whether it is communist or capitalist. I know that and I am going to look in other directions; I need security emotionally, that means dependence on somebody, on my wife, friends, neighbours, it doesn't matter who it is. And when I depend on somebody, fear always exists. I am learning, I am not saying what to do yet. I depend on you, you are my brother, my wife, my husband, and the moment you go away I am lost, I am frightened - I do neurotic things. I see dependence on people leads to that.

Also I ask: do I depend on ideas? On a belief that there is a God - or not - that we must have universal brotherhood, whatever it is; that is another dependence. And you come along and say, "What rubbish this is, you are living in a world of illusion." So I get shaken and I say, "What am I to do?" Then instead of learning about it I join some other cult. Do you see all this? Do you discover that in yourself you are insufficient and therefore you are dependent? Then you seek sufficiency in yourself: "I am all right, I have found God, what I believe is true, my experience is the real thing." So you ask: what is there that is so completely secure that it is never disturbed?

Questioner: I don't see the dependency on the two things you were talking about...

Krishnamurti: We're asking what the implications of wanting security mean. We're looking at the map of security. It shows that I depend on food, clothes and shelter by working in a society that is corrupt - and I see what depending on people does. I am not saying this should be or that should not be. The map says: look, this road leads to fear, pleasure, anger, fulfilment, frustration and neurosis. And it also says: look at the world of ideas, depending on ideas is the most flimsy form of security, they are only words which have become a reality as an image; you live on an image. And that map says: be self-sufficient. So I depend on myself, I must have confidence in myself. What is yourself? You are the result of all this. So the map has shown you all these things and you ask now, "Where is there complete security - including a job and all the rest of it?" Where will you find it?

Questioner: You find it when you have no fears.

Krishnamurti: You haven't understood what I am saying. Put a map of this in front of you. Look at it all: physical security, emotional security, intellectual security, and security in your own thoughts, in your own feelings, in your self-confidence. You say, how flimsy all this is. Looking at it all and seeing the flimsiness, the invalidity, the lack of reality behind it, where is security then? It is learning about this which brings intelligence. So in intelligence there is security. Have you understood it?

Questioner: Can one live without security?

Krishnamurti: You haven't learned to look first. You have learned to look through your particular image; that image has given you the feeling of security. So first learn to look at the map, put aside the image of what you think is security - that you must have it - and just look. What are the implications of wanting security? When you find there is no security in anything that you have sought, that there is no security in death, no security in living, when you see all that, then the very seeing of the fact that there is no security in the things in which one had sought it, is intelligence. That intelligence gives you complete security.

So learning is the beginning of security. The act of learning is intelligence, and in learning there is tremendous security. Are you learning here?

Questioner: In the family they say one must manage to earn a living, have a certain amount of knowledge. There is this idea about security, this basic necessity.

Krishnamurti: Yes, Tungki, that's quite right. Your family, the tradition says you must have physical security, you must have a job, you must have knowledge, a technique, you must specialise, you must be this, you must be that, in order to have that security.

Questioner: It's an idea.

Krishnamurti: I need money, that's not an idea - everything else is an idea. The physical continuity in security is the real thing; everything else has no reality. And to see that is intelligence. In that intelligence there is the most complete security; I can live anywhere, in the communist world or in a capitalist world.

Do you remember we said the other day that meditation is to observe? That is the beginning of meditation. You cannot observe this map if you have the slightest distortion in your mind, if your mind is distorted by prejudice, by fear. To look at this map is to look without prejudice. So learn in meditation what it is to be free of prejudice; that is part of meditation, not just sitting cross-legged in some place. It makes you tremendously responsible, not only for yourself and your relationship but for everything else, the garden, the trees, the people around you - everything becomes tremendously important.

To be serious is also to have fun. You can't be serious without having fun. We talked the other day about yoga, didn't we? I showed you some breathing exercises. You must do it all with fun, enjoy things - you follow?

Questioner: There are certain things like learning. I don't think it's possible to discuss them with a sense of fun.

Krishnamurti: Oh yes! It is. Look, Tungki, learning is fun. To see new things is great fun; it gives you tremendous energy if you make a great discovery for yourself - not if someone else discovers it and tells you about it, then it's secondhand. When you are learning it is fun to see something totally new, like discovering a new insect, a new species. To discover how my mind is working, to see all the nuances, the subtleties: to learn about it is fun.

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