

The Role of Education in the rejection of the Fragmented Self in Krishnamurti's Thought

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Abstract

Krishnamurti is one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century, who not only engaged with people from different cultures but also attempted to transform his ideas into practice in the form of schools. Krishnamurti's emphasis on the self is at the core of transformation that he wished to bring in the life of (wo)man and the entire world. He envisioned an expansive self that begins with the individualistic monadic self that is preoccupied with itself, but extends to include the various others in itself to the extent that the differences between the self and the other itself become arbitrary and immaterial. In such an understanding of the self, fragmentation and division is nothing more than an obstacle to be overcome to silence one's mind in order to truly know oneself and the world. This paper is an attempt to reflect on Krishnamurti's implicit denial of the fragmented self and an explication of his idea of a wholeness without self.

Krishnamurti views our age as the age of reason and technological progress, but one in which there is a lot of fragmentation. This fragmentation, according to Krishnamurti, is a result of both the social context as well as one's own self, however, he emphasises the role of a person's own self more than the society in reference to his/her own fragmentation. He perceived the social structures to be essentially limiting and oppressive, which does not care about the individual person, but intends to mould everyone as per the need of the market. The person, he found, has given away her freedom for the false security of the nation, leisure, work, and possessions that makes the social control and coercion almost justifiable. Thus, Krishnamurti's call is for 'freedom from the known', which entails that women must shed the sense of security and predictability that arises from all that is known, in order to quest for that which is unknown, unpredictable, and transcendent.

The role of education in his perspective is not that of an instrument or a tool to fulfil personal, national, or other social aims, since institutionalised education may not only be a tool for social mobility, but could also be used as a tool of oppression and suppression. Rather, for Krishnamurti, the central questions for an education would be the eternal questions of life, such as 'who I am?', 'What I want to be?' 'What is the purpose of my existence?'. These questions come to us sooner when we lose what we care about, but in a life of luxury these questions hide in the corners of our comfort or under the rug of avoidance or indulgence. Sometimes one finds easy solution to these problems in conformity with the ready-made meanings available outside oneself: in systems, with the prevalent norms, in accordance with the majority; or under pressure. Would such conformity be able to justify one's existence for long or is this way of existing inauthentic? For Krishnamurti, the centre of disorder is within the human self

and if one intends to engage with the challenges in the social-political context, then one must first engage with the human self (Krishnamurti, 1981, p. 93–94).

Krishnamurti endeavoured for social and personal transformation in a way that is not rooted in any particular religious or philosophical tradition(s), but on one's honest reflection and unwavering commitment to truth. In this sense, he did not depend on any instrument but kept his focus on the aim. For him "external instrument or tool for existence but on an inner discovery that sought to go beyond the physical body and bring about a 'mutation' in the human mind" (Thapan, 2001, p.353).

He did not believe that any critical change may rise up out of seeking after outer ways, regardless of political upheavals or social developments, however a real change may emerge only through an entire transformation of the human self. His pursuit of the transformed person can be understood akin to the existential understanding of living authentically.

Living under coercion, pressure, and without personal choice is, for Krishnamurti, a denial of the creative self. As opposed to the conforming individual, education should help create a totally different society and a different way of life. It should move towards helping us to find our individual vocation. For this, in Krishnamurti schools, a lot of emphasis is placed on discovering and knowing oneself, however it is most difficult to find out what you really love to do, which is also essential to realise one's own potential. Krishnamurti believes that "Right education is to help you to find out for yourself what you really, with all your heart, love to do" (Rao, 2010, p.188).

Thus, for Krishnamurti, education is not just to enter an occupation, for that may not enable one to understand oneself. True education includes the education of emotions and feelings along with the education of reason and skills. The "true purpose of education to help you to find out, so that as you grow up you can begin to give your whole mind, heart and body to that which you really love to do" (Krishnamurti, 2011, p.105).

Krishnamurti denies the separation of social self, personal self, political self, and so on, for he finds this as nothing more than a reiteration of the fragmentation that he wishes to overcome. He places freedom at the root of this holistic and authentic self. He was of the opinion that "freedom is at the beginning, it is not something to be gained at the end" (Krishnamurti, 1955). But this freedom is not from something or for something, because to intend is to will and to will is to will towards something and away from something, which itself implies preferences and choices. For Krishnamurti, to "Will is the very essence of violence" (Krishnamurti, 1973, p. 78), for to choose something is to reject something else. Every act of choice is a move towards the known. This movement from known to known is what Krishnamurti thinks is the real hindrance in truly knowing oneself and the 'other'; for there is no difference in the self and the other in that true knowledge. "The real can be discovered only when thought comes to an end" (Krishnamurti, 16th July 1950). Thus, the central question for Krishnamurti is:

"how does the mind free itself of its accumulated violence, cultured violence, self-protective violence, the violence of aggression, the violence of competition, the violence of trying to be somebody, the violence of

trying to discipline oneself according to a pattern, trying to become somebody, trying to suppress and bully oneself, brutalise oneself, in order to be non-violent - how is the mind to be free of all such forms of violence?" (Krishnamurti, 1973, p. 74)

The thought has a continuity and congruity since it generally observes the present in connection to the past which we call as self. Thus, for Krishnamurti, self "is an experiential, or phenomenological illusion, composed of what he called *images*." (Martin, 2003, p.22). The concept of 'images' must be deliberated upon in all its broadness with reference to how we build our own reality of ourselves. From early years onwards, the structure of the 'image' which is the 'me' is built through 'experiences' and is reinforced by the repeated affirmations of our everyday discourse. This 'me' includes ideas, memories, conclusions, experiences, intentions, along with "the conscious endeavor to be or not to be, the accumulated memory of the unconscious, the racial, the group, the individual, the clan, and the whole of it all, whether it is projected outwardly in action or projected spiritually as virtue; the striving after all this is the self." (Krishnamurti, 1997, p.126).

For some scholars, Krishnamurti's quest for freedom is akin to the existential perspective. However, it should be highlighted here that he is speaking of the freedom of an individual even from 'self' which is quite opposed to the modern idea of a whole self or even the post-modern idea of a fragmented self or existence of multiple selves within oneself. This is because for him all selves are limited and thus violent. Even though, the existentialists see the individual with immense freedom and with such unbearable responsibility that Sartre has even used the phrase in relation to individual as being 'condemned to be free' and in being free this way, the individual is free to choose and act accordingly; nevertheless, one wonders the extent to which this freedom comes closer to the freedom that Krishnamurti speaks of.

The existentialists see the individual responsible to oneself for giving the meaning to one's life and even being responsible for the society he creates, responding to the 'human condition'. The only authorities to whom the existentialists make individual submit is to 'oneself'. One may say that in his essay 'Existentialism is Humanism' Sartre comes much closer to Krishnamurti's emphasis on the relation of individual and society and responsibility for the other, however, the negation of the boundary between the self and the world by Krishnamurti insaying that "the individual is the world. One individual's action affects another, since 'to be is to be related'" (Krishnamurti, 1970, p. 22) is quite different from Sartre's being-in-the-world, which is more like being one in relation with many, for the oneness of man is essential for an existentialist.

Be that as it may, for Krishnamurti, there is no 'individual consciousness' but an aggregate human awareness, which implies that the world isn't separate from the person. Krishnamurti focuses to the congruous improvement of the internal and external realities of an individual: what one is deep down will in the end realize either a good society or the progressive weakening of human relationships. The nature of the inner world, the mind is regarded as being inherently free. It seems improbable that the existentialist's notion of authenticity, which in reference to the inner world is expressed as 'being true to one-self', can come closer to this freedom. Even though the existentialist believes in the baselessness of life-choices to give meaning to

oneself, this quest is as further from Krishnamurti's negation of the self as is to remind oneself to forget someone. In deciding what the 'self' is, the existentialist would emphasize creating meaning by oneself without submitting to the meanings already provided by external authorities or the grand narratives provided by them, yet he is not beyond thought as Krishnamurti emphasises. Krishnamurti is negating what Charles Taylor (1992) emphasizes as the importance of 'horizons of significance' in defining 'self', which is the dream of every 'modern' thinker- to arrive at a cohesive, consistent, universalistic, and justifiable position to live by.

So, at the heart of Krishnamurti's notion of freedom lies the notion of 'freedom from the self'. Krishnamurti talks of self-knowledge or self-discovery in the sense of there being no culmination of this process of self-discovery: "there is only the journey. There is no total knowing of oneself but rather an unending process of knowing oneself" (Jayakar, 1986, p. 82). But in Krishnamurti's thought there is an indication of detachment from 'self' itself. In the context of education to give a sense of detachment from 'self' in his thought Thapan (2001) quote:

As an alternative to competition in everyday life, Krishnamurti emphasizes confidence—not self-confidence, but 'an entirely different kind of confidence which is without the sense of self-importance [...] confidence without the self' (Thapan, 2001).

Articulating in the vocabulary of social sciences, Krishnamurti developed his idea of opportunity against the foundation of a firm commitment to individual responsibility and a sense of responsibility in working towards a just society and securing the human legacy and heritage. Krishnamurti believes that "The mind (can) come to a state in which there is no identification at all, and therefore no effort to be something; then there is the cessation of self, and that is the real" (23rd June 1978). Only in the state of creation the experience, the self is not there. "Creation is when the self is not there, because creation is not intellectual, is not of the mind, is not self-projected, is something beyond all experiencing." (Krishnamurti, 2013, p.148).

In the social sense, what comes closer to being non-violent is also that which is sometimes highlighted as the importance of love, care, and commitment as ideals of education in philosophy of education. This is contrary to the idea of engagement of human beings in any endeavour out of a feeling of obligation, which is considered extraneous, and it will never be adequate because the sense of obligation may unavoidably clash with one's own motivations.

Krishnamurti's negation of any boundary between the self and the other make these ideas look limited but significant, since Krishnamurti finds in them a non-violent mode of existence before one re-experience true freedom. To love or to be is to be related; "it is only in the midst of relationship that we can spontaneously discover ourselves as we are" (Krishnamurti, 1999b, p.220) without any condemnation or justification.

Jiddu Krishnamurti referring to mind in relation to freedom was speaking of freeing the mind from both the material and the not material to develop true insight, compassion, and a profound intelligence that cannot be a result of a social training of the mind. It is not in one's knowledge of mind but in the depth of the mind that one

finds true knowledge. A truly creative mind is infinite, is the nature of the universe which has its own order, has its own immense energy. It is everlastingly free. Only “when the whole consciousness is silent and tranquil, free from all becoming, which is spontaneity, then only does the immeasurable comes into being.” (Krishnamurti, 1956, p.42).

For that one must be able to see the whole process of the way thought works, its cunning, extraordinary inventions, the creation of the self, identifications, but when you are actually in that state, “then you will see that the mind, being utterly still, has no power of creating. When the mind is non-creating there is creation, which is not a recognizable process”. (Krishnamurti, 1956). However, if one is able to experience such freedom, then the process of thought plays tricks and makes this silence an aim, not realizing that even a desire to maintain such a silence gives continuity to the memory and therefore is a hindrance. “What has continuity can never be creative” (Krishnamurti, 1956, p.42)

This continuity is the self, the ‘me’, whether conceptualise as a whole or fragmented. For Krishnamurti, the real “source of violence is the ‘me’, the ego, the self, which expresses itself in so many ways - in division, in trying to become or be somebody - which divides itself as the ‘me’ and the ‘not me’, as the unconscious and the conscious; the ‘me’ that identifies with the family or not with the family, with the community or not with the community and so on” (Krishnamurti, 1973, p. 74). Thought creates time which is important for the illusion of continuity and to “discover what is beyond time, thought must come to an end” (16th July 1950) and the real is always beyond time and it is not possible for thought to go outside time or beyond itself on its own.

Current emphasis on training rather than education has overlooked to take care of the world's issues, unable to meet the aim of some meaningful change in the social orders, and inept to enable individuals for the difficulties of life. He denounces the way that most education is planned to get an occupation or utilize that information for complacency and for self-glorification. Simply to develop specialized skill without understanding what is genuine freedom prompts decimation, to more violence and wars; and that is really what is occurring in the world (Krishnamurti 1953a).

Thus, he sought freedom from the known and an education that teaches one to follow predefined paths is not true education. But “If we want to bring about a true revolution in education, there must obviously be freedom at the very beginning”(Krishnamurti, 1991c, p.165). Krishnamurti’s thought efficiently summarises the objections to compulsion, “freedom is at the beginning, it is not something to be gained at the end. There is no freedom at the end of compulsion; the outcome of compulsion is compulsion.”(Krishnamurti, 1991c, p.165).

This freedom is a result of complete self-knowledge which is not a result of thinking, reasoning, and contemplation or by the various philosophies, perspective, and ideologies impress upon our thoughts and actions. What we conceive of as knowledge along with our thoughts constitute the symbolic realm with the words, symbols and images. In the wake of rejection of these, one can say that “there is no method for self-knowledge. Seeking a method invariably implies the desire to attain some result-- and that is what we all want”(Krishnamurti, 2013, p.78).

Only by understanding all this symbolic realm and overcoming it by what Krishnamurti calls as the pure silence of mind can one be truly free. He views a completely silent mind as a perfect mirror that reflects the world accurately without any intervention or mediation. The mind “can keep itself awake only when all relationship is a mirror in which it sees itself as it is without condemnation or justification of that which it sees or any form of identification” (Krishnamurti, 1991d, p.234). Such a mind can only enable one to be truly open to the unknown. It is the cessation of the indulgence in the symbolic creations of mind i.e. words, images, symbols. “Thought end only when we understand the whole process of thinking and to understand the whole process of thinking and to understand thinking there must be self-knowledge.” (Krishnamurti, 1991b, p.220).

Krishnamurti further rejects the new-age emphasis on a higher self, and to attain it is what the various gurus now-a-days are highlighting. Krishnamurti asserts that there is no ‘Higher Self’, which is a superior entity; it is nothing but another image projected by the mind. The revelation that the mundane self is an illusion is done by the awareness along with other states of mind. It is yet another conditioning of the social-religious processes. If in any “state of awareness there is still an entity who says, ‘I must be aware, I must practice awareness’, that again is another image” (Krishnamurti, 2003, p.97-98). Here one finds a radical shift from the emphasis on the formation of self that the dominant western psychology places to a denial of all social and personal constructions. “Education then is freedom from conditioning, from its vast accumulated knowledge as tradition. This does not deny the academic disciplines which have their own proper place in life” (Krishnamurti 1985) (Letter dated 1st October 1982). This is probably what one can call as truly being oneself; truly moving away from the various layers of constructed personas that one learns to carry from a very early age. “So freedom lies...in understanding what you are from moment to moment. You see, you are not [normally] educated for this; your education encourages you to become something or other... (Krishnamurti 1964) (Chapter 3).

For such a radical freedom of mind, Krishnamurti felt that not exclusively was a man's temperament and most profound dimensions to be discovered, for which every individual's passion needs to be identified; but, what he/she truly cherishes to do must be found and sought after since to do anything else may be viewed as a hardship, particularly if such a hardship is with a specific end goal such as to seek after progress or other such social desires. The revelation of the normal work for an individual student and the student's understanding what he truly likes to do may not fit into the plans of the guardians or society and be an essential aspect of understanding oneself and of education. To discover what you truly love to do is amongst the most difficult things. Krishnamurti was of the opinion that “Modern education is making us into thoughtless entities; it does very little towards helping us to find our individual vocation.” (Krishnamurti 1964) (Chapter 3). Nevertheless, all these engagements are only to be seen as a way to realise one's complete freedom and true creativity.

Summary

In a nutshell, for Krishnamurti freedom is devoid of any fragmenting tendency be it on the individual level or at collective. His idea of freedom makes the conception of freedom in perspectives such as existentialism seem limited even though the idea of responsibility is equally strong in them. All other goals or aims of man or of his

education, such as national development, social change, and collective transformation cannot be brought about without a complete transformation of human mind.

Krishnamurti's discomfort with the present world order originated from his grasp of the human condition wherein people are not genuinely happy but trapped inside a mental universe of distress, desire, torment, outrage, envy and beset connections. Inward turmoil could not prompt harmonious connections or a good society. It could just create struggles and logical inconsistencies that brought about fissures and disorder. These conditions prompted misuse, persecution and war. This was the premise of Krishnamurti's probe for a distinctive sort of society that would bring about harmony and prosperity among people or communities. Vital point that Krishnamurti underlined was that none of this could come to fruition without an internal restoration or change.

The external orientation of man is because of a fundamental desire for greater sensation- "to have the sensation of pleasure extended, made high and permanent as opposed to the suffering, the dullness, the routine and loneliness of our daily lives." (Krishnamurti, 1997, p.124). We forget in the intensity of sensations that "the world is not separate from us; we are the world, and our problems are the world's problems." (Krishnamurti, 1954, p. 42). The violence, hatred, and negation is a result of our own actions and attitudes. Any transformation or a fundamental understanding of oneself does not come through any book, philosophy, ideology, knowledge, or through the accumulation of experiences, as all these are merely memories or partial use of human mind. An accumulation of various understandings of self would prevent a clearer understanding, because accumulated knowledge and experience becomes the center through which thought focuses and has its being. Ways of seeking do not take us beyond the thought or beyond the 'me', 'I', 'self'. On the contrary, a true "understanding of oneself is from moment to moment". (Krishnamurti, 2013, p.76).

The paper discussed that for Krishnamurti, thus, "the transformation of the world is brought about by the transformation of oneself, because the self is the product and a part of the total process of human existence" (Krishnamurti, 2013, p. 30). Only by knowing oneself and with a calm mind can one find some grounds for right thoughts and actions. "One must know oneself as one is, not as one wishes to be which is merely an ideal and therefore fictitious, unreal; it is only that which is that can be transformed, not that which you wish to be". (Krishnamurti, 2013, p. 72). Merging the dichotomy of the observer and the observed or the awareness that the observer is the observed is not identification per se, but a stage when there is no psychological space.

Thus, Krishnamurti negates any idea of a limited self or multiple self apart from the universal self. His ideas are contrary to any conception of self by either the modern or the post-modern thinkers and philosophies. His radical suggestion to still one's own mind for a personal and subsequent social transformation demands a lot of commitment, compassion, and honesty towards oneself and the quest. Freedom is a consistent leitmotif in Krishnamurti's presentations of the goals of education, which is understood in terms of a conflict between inward freedom and outward compulsions. It is not just the political freedom that concerns Krishnamurti, rather the more profound inner freedom and the inner transformation that informs the means and ends of education.

In India during the ancient times education was seen as liberating which is well described by the Sanskrit 'savidyayavimuktaye'. In a similar vein, in 1929 Krishnamurti stated what he felt was the central intention in his life, "I want to do a certain thing in the world and I am going to do it with unwavering concentration. I am concerning myself with only one essential thing; to set man free." (Krishnamurti 1929). This freedom has with it a radical sense of responsibility for oneself and the world.

However, Krishnamurti repeatedly warns against taking even his words literally without arriving at them on one's own. He is afraid of his ideas being turned into another symbol amongst various other symbols. Krishnamurti's understanding may seem similar to the Buddhist or any other philosophical or theological school, but in his talks Krishnamurti ensures that he de-constructs all frameworks equally, whether political, social, psychological, or philosophical.

His attempt is not to provide a basis, rather, to deconstruct all available bases to make one really free to know oneself and the other. His constant reminder to not to negate the other can serve as a beacon of light for all those who feel restricted in the man-made ideational chains and are courageous and adventurous enough to charter on the pathless land.

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