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The philosophy of Krishnamurti

Introduction

This article is part two of my article **The fascism of Theosophy**.

The philosopher Krishnamurti became raised in the Theosophical society in India under the tutelage of Charles Webster Leadbeater and Annie Besant, leaders of the Theosophical Society at the time. When he was 13 years old Krishnamurti became chosen to be "channel" for Maitreya, who, in the ideas of The Great White Brotherhood, is identified as Jesus, a spiritual master. Annie Besant founded a Theosophic wing on this purpose, called "The order of the Star in the East", which Krishnamurti later dissolved. He did it on the background of the paradoxical circumstance, that he apparently himself entered into a process of enlightenment; that is: that he himself became a spiritual master, not a channel.

The aim with this article is in this way an investigation of the difference between a spiritual teaching, which is coming directly from an enlightened master, and the teaching, which non-enlightened people are claiming to channel from enlightened masters (see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling**). The aim is also to show his relevance for my own teaching, and for the new movement of philosophical counseling (see my article **Philosophical counseling as an alternative for psychotherapy**).

The philosophy of Krishnamurti

Born 12 May 1895 into a Telugu family in what was then colonial India, Krishnamurti lived next to the Theosophical Society headquarters at Adyar in Madras in his early adolescence. At Adyar, he encountered prominent occultist and Theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater. He was subsequently raised under the tutelage of Leadbeater and Annie Besant, leaders of the Theosophical Society at the time.

Leadbeater and Besant believed Krishnamurti to be the likely vehicle for a messianic unity, the so-called *World Teacher*. As a young man, he disavowed this idea and dissolved the worldwide organization (the Order of the Star) established to support it.

The background for his decision was as follows: During a stay at Ojai valley in California, in August-September 1922, Krishnamurti went through an intense, “life-changing” experience. It has been simultaneously and invariably characterized as a spiritual awakening, a psychological transformation, and a physical conditioning. The initial events happened in two distinct phases: first a three-day spiritual experience which was followed, two weeks later, by a long-lasting condition that Krishnamurti and those around him would refer to as the *process*; this condition would recur, at frequent intervals and with varying intensity, until his death.

According to witnesses it all started on 17 August 1922, with Krishnamurti complaining of extraordinary pain at the nape of his neck and a hard, ball-like swelling. Over the next couple of days the symptoms worsened, with increasing pain, extreme physical discomfort and sensitivity, total loss of appetite and occasional delirious ramblings. Then, he seemed to lapse into unconsciousness; instead he recounted that he was very much aware of his surroundings, and that while in that state he had an experience of mystical union. The following day the symptoms and the experience intensified, climaxing with a sense of “immense peace”.

Following – and apparently related to – these events, in early September, a strange condition, which came to be known as the *process*, started as an almost nightly, regular, occurrence. These new incidents continued with short intermissions until October; later, the *process* would resume intermittently. As in the separate three-day experience of August, the process involved varying degrees of pain, physical discomfort and sensitivity, occasionally a lapse into a childlike state, and sometimes an apparent fading out of consciousness explained – by Krishnamurti or those attending him – as either his body giving in to pain, or as him “going off”.

These experiences were accompanied, or followed, by what was interchangeable described as *presence*, *benediction*, *immensity* and *sacredness*, a state distinct from the *process*. This state – said to be felt by others present – would later, and increasingly, often reoccur independently of the *process*. Krishnamurti regularly substituted *the other* or *the otherness* as shorthand description for this particular experience; also a way of conveying the sense of impenetrability regarding this *otherness*, the strange sensibility it affected, and the unusual state of consciousness it precipitated, as described in his diaries and elsewhere.

The above events, and subsequent occurrences of the *process*, were not revealed publicly until 1975, while Krishnamurti’s descriptions of both the *process* and of the *other* were first published a year later, in 1976.

Since the initial occurrences of 1922, several explanations have been proposed for these events and for the process in general. Leadbeater and other Theosophists, who believe they are authorities on such matters, expected the “vehicle” to have certain paranormal experiences, but were nevertheless mystified by these developments, and unable to explain the whole thing.

In the meantime the rumors concerning the messianic status of Krishnamurti had reached fever pitch as the 1925 Theosophical Society Convention was planned, on the 50th anniversary of its founding, with high expectations – among Theosophists and OSE members – of significant happenings. Paralleling the increasing adulation was Krishnamurti’s growing discomfort with it. In related developments, prominent Theosophists and their fractions within the society were trying to favorably position themselves relative to the *Coming*, widely rumoured to be approaching; “extraordinary” pronouncements of spiritual advancement were made by various parties, disputed by others, and the internal Theosophical politics further alienated Krishnamurti.

On 13 November 1925, at age 27, Krishnamurti’s brother Nitya died in Ojai from complications of influenza and tuberculosis. Despite Nitya’s poor health, his death was completely unexpected by Krishnamurti, and fundamentally shook his belief in Theosophy and his faith in the leaders of the Theosophical Society. He had received their assurances regarding Nitya’s health, and had come to believe that “Nitya was essential for his life-mission and therefore he would not be allowed to die”, a belief shared by Annie Besant and Krishnamurti’s circle.

Pupul Jayakar, one of Krishnamurti’s friends, wrote that “his belief in the Masters and the hierarchy had undergone a total revolution.” Moreover, Nitya had been the “last surviving link to his family and childhood....The only person to whom he could talk openly, his best friend and companion”.

According to eyewitness accounts the news “broke him completely”. He struggled for days to overcome his sorrow: “Day after day we watched him heart-broken, disillusioned. Day after day he seemed to change, gripping himself together to face life...He was going through an inner revolution, finding new strength.”

Jayakar stated that in later years “Krishnamurti accepted that perhaps the intensity of sorrow had triggered a vast, wordless perception” while biographer Roland Vernon suggests that in the end, “Krishnamurti discovered, at the root of sorrow, an emptiness that could be not touched by hurt”. – also see my article **Suffering as an entrance to the Source**.

Twelve days after Nitya's death he was "immensely quiet, radiant and free of all sentiment and emotion"; "there was not a shadow..to show what he had went through." The experience of his brother's death seems to have shattered any remaining illusions, and a "new vision" was now "coming into being".

Over the next years Krishnamurti's new vision and consciousness continued to develop. New concepts appeared in his talks, discussions, and correspondence, together with an evolving vocabulary that was progressively free of Theosophical terminology.

Krishnamurti dissolved the Order during the annual *Star Camp* at Ommen, the Netherland, on 3 August 1929 in front of Annie Besant, three thousand members, and a radio audience. In the so-called Dissolution Speech, he stated that he had made his decision after "careful consideration" during the previous two years, and said among other things:

"I maintain that truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally. Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or coerce people along a particular path...This is no magnificent deed, because I do not want followers, and I mean this. The moment you follow someone you cease to follow truth. I am not concerned whether you pay attention to what I say or not. 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. I desire to free him from all cages. From all fears, and not to found religions, new sects, nor to establish new theories and new philosophies."

Following the dissolution prominent Theosophists turned against Krishnamurti - now a fully enlightened master - including Leadbeater who reputedly stated, "the Coming had gone wrong". A human being, who - within Theosophy, where the absolute authority is non-enlightened "channelers" - is reaching enlightenment, must be considered as a person whose path has gone wrong.

Krishnamurti spend the rest of his life holding dialogues and giving public talks around the world on the nature of belief, truth, sorrow, freedom, death, and the quest for a spiritually fulfilled life. He became an independent writer and speaker on philosophical and spiritual issues including psychological revolution, the nature of the mind, meditation, human relationships, and bringing about positive social change. Maintaining that society is ultimately the product of the interactions of individuals, he

held that fundamental change in society, can emerge only through freely undertaken radical change in the individual. Krishnamurti stressed that the need for a revolution in the psyche of every human being and posited that such revolution cannot be brought about by any external entity, be it religious, political, or social.

Krishnamurti denounced the concept of saviors, spiritual leaders, or any other intermediaries to reality, and urged people to directly discover the underlying causes of the problems facing individuals and society. Such discovery he considered the natural outcome of unconditional, absolute psychological freedom, which he proclaimed to be within reach of everyone, irrespective of background, ability, or disposition. He vowed to work towards this goal of universal psychological freedom, and stated that understanding the actual relationships individuals have with themselves, society and nature is of vital importance in attaining this objective.

He declared allegiance to no nationality, caste, religion, or philosophy, and spent the rest of his life traveling the world as an independent speaker. He authored several books, among them *The First and Last Freedom* (1954), *The Only Revolution* (1969), and *Krishnamurti's Notebook* (1976). A large collection of his talks and discussions have also been published.

Krishnamurti's last talk was in Madras, India, in January 1986, a month before his death in his home in Ojai, California (aged 90).

Krishnamurti's relevance for the new movement of philosophical practice

In connection with Krishnamurti the concept of philosophical counseling is important. Philosophical Practice is a new alternative form of counseling to people, who don't feel, that priests, doctors, coaches or psychotherapists, can offer them enough help concerning their spiritual/existential questions and problems. It is a possibility for asking a *philosopher* for advice.

It is a rebirth of something very old, perhaps close to the authentic origin of philosophy, for example Socrates' philosophical dialogues at the town square in Athens, or the philosophers in ancient India and China, who ordinary people could come and consult regarding their daily problems.

The idea about Philosophical Practice, in its current form, originally came from the German philosopher Gerd B. Achenbach. The first of May 1981 he opened, as the first, a Philosophical Counseling-practice. In 1982 he founded the German Society of Philosophical Practice, and ever since the phenomenon has spread all over the world.

In 2002 the Danish Society of Philosophical Practice was founded and established by a circle of philosophers, psychologists, idea-historians and people of education, with the purpose to create a professional forum in Denmark for development, research and information about the Philosophical Practice. This happens through lectures, courses, network, and others activities, which can promote the understanding and interest in Philosophical Practice, as well as the society has plans about continuing education and certification of philosophical practitioners in Denmark.

However there doesn't exist an *actual* education to philosophical practitioner. But in order to ensure the professional competence, and not to become mixed with the fount of educations, which is found in the alternative therapy market, most philosophical practitioners agree, that a minimum requirement to a philosophical practitioner is a MA in philosophy or history of ideas.

In addition to this it is possible to take an education as *Master in counseling*, where Philosophical Counseling is included as one of the modules. This education is offered by Denmark's Pedagogical University. One of the pioneers of this education is associate professor at DPU, Finn Thorbjørn Hansen, who also is the first in Denmark who has involved Philosophical Counseling in an academical treatise: *Det filosofiske Liv – et dannelsesideal for eksistenspædagogikken* (Gyldendal 2002)

The relationship between science and alternative health care/consultation is a subject, which is very popular for the time being. In this connection Philosophical Practice is an extremely interesting phenomenon, partially because it features many of the elements which the educations in the alternative therapy market also seek to implicate, partially because there at the universities (especially at DPU) are being worked with developing Philosophical Practice as a serious and scientifically well-founded way of counseling. However this still happens in a rather academical way, and in Denmark there are still very few practising philosophical practitioners.

All this has inspired me in my own work, where the central issues is the paranormal area, but where I precisely use the philosophical practice as method.

Philosophical Practice is a unifying term of two different basic methods: Philosophical Counseling and The Philosophical Café. Where Philosophical Counseling mainly is connected to dialogues face to face, then The Philosophical Café of course is used in groups. Both methods are however common in that way, that they, through dialogue, involve the participants in a self-inquiring practice, where it is about asking philosophical questions.

In the following I will concentrate about Philosophical Counseling, and show differences and similarities in relation to psychotherapy and religious counseling.

In Philosophical Counseling philosophy is understood as a way of life, where you strive after wisdom and happiness; that is to say: where you practise a certain realized and clarified way of life. In this it differs from the academical philosophy, where the work with philosophy is a purely theoretical activity, included the so-called practical philosophy.

Traditions where the concept of philosophy slides in one with a certain existential form of training and therapy, is found, both in the East and in the West. From the East can be mentioned Indian and Buddhist philosophy, Taoism and Zen Buddhism. From the West can be mentioned Greek and Roman philosophy, and the whole tradition of mysticism within Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

A good introduction to this is Aldous Huxley's book *The Perennial Philosophy*. A more academical introduction to the understanding of philosophy as a way of life, is found in Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life - Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*.

Even though the modern concept of Philosophical Counseling primarily goes back to the Stoics and Socrates, then the great philosophers within all the different wisdomtraditions always have seeked to pass on an art of life of a more or less philosophical kind. They namely asked philosophical questions - that is: *not* in an intellectual way as in the academical philosophy, and *not* as that to repeat a mantra - no, they asked philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way, as the wordless silence within a strong, existential wonder. As Aristotle said, then philosophy begins with wonder. We all know the wonder we can feel when we look at the stars, or when we are confronted with all the suffering in the world. This wonder fills us with a silence, in which all thoughts, explanations and interpretations withers away. It is in this silence we ask ourselves the great, philosophical questions, open inwards and outwards, without words, without evaluations.

The wordless silence within the existential wonder is the same as asking philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way. And it is this philosophical questioning which can be the beginning of a deep examination of Man and reality – a lifelong, philosophical voyage of discovery towards the Source of life: the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

However most people loose this silence, and get satisfied with explanations and interpretations. That is the difference between the great philosophers and ordinary

people. The great philosophers had a strong longing after something inexpressible, after something which couldn't be satisfied by explanations and interpretations – perhaps a longing after awakening – or after realization. With the whole of the body, with life and blood, with soul and spirit, with brain and with heart, they asked into, and were investigating themselves and life. They asked questions to everything, and were investigating it in a meditative way, as if it was something completely new. Simply because this philosophical questioning and inquiry itself constitutes an absolute central meditation-technique, which opens the consciousness in towards the Source. In other words they used philosophical questions as universal koans. All other spiritual exercises were in fact only used to support this.

It is the philosophical questioning and inquiry that in the end will open the consciousness in towards the Source. In all wisdomtraditions you can find descriptions that show that the moment of enlightenment happens in this way, either alone, or in a dialogue with a master.

The clearest modern example on how this happens in practice, is in my opinion Krishnamurti.

The essence of Krishnamurti's teaching is contained in the declaration he was putting forward in 1929, where he said: "Truth is a pathless land!" By doing so he comes to be a spiritual alternative to the false spirituality of our time, which central declaration says: "Truth is a land with many paths!" - see my article **The Matrix Conspiracy**.

The unusual and radical about Krishnamurti is precisely, that he uses philosophical questions as his central meditation-technique, and that all other spiritual exercises only shall be used to support this. By doing so Krishnamurti also has become the central source of inspiration to my development of the concept of **Meditation as an Art of Life**.

Krishnamurti uses philosophical questions as a type of universal koans with the intent of opening the consciousness in towards the Source: The Good, the True and The Beautiful – what Krishnamurti himself uses many various names for: the Otherness, Being, the Blessing, Love.

Krishnamurti was putting many various types of philosophical questions. The way he was investigating them in was by letting each and every question become followed by the question *Who am I?* - which means that each and every time someone was putting forward a question/problem, he went into an investigation of the one who was asking the question – like *Who asks? Who is it who is trying to find out the truth?*, etc.

Krishnamurti is as mentioned a so-called enlightened master, which means that his consciousness is at one with the Source. In his book *Krishnamurti's Notebook* he describes experiences connected with the condition of enlightenment.

Time after time Krishnamurti makes people aware, that supporting exercises cannot lead to the Source. The purpose with the supporting exercises is only to give the practitioner the calmness, which is a necessity in order to acquire the philosophical question's ideas and concepts in an every-day, self-inquiring practice. For example he recommended yoga to keep the body flexible, and to sit quiet in passive awareness (like Zazen in Zen Buddhism), and finally meditative writing.

Krishnamurti said many times, that he didn't want any followers. His teaching is about spiritual practice as becoming a light for oneself - about developing spiritual by developing your own teaching.

He said, that you should use his talks and writings as a mirror; which means: for meditative listening or reading.

This means, that you shall not listen to him, or read his words, in order to get new information, but in order to go into another state of consciousness when you listen – that is, that you, as a listener to his talks, or reader of his words, rather than evaluating, are trying to relate neutral to his teaching. You take, so to speak, a mentally step backwards, and observe yourself and what is happening. You use Krishnamurti's teaching as a mirror, in which you discover yourself. In this way Krishnamurti transforms his own oneness-consciousness to the individual. You move from the outside teacher to the inner teacher. The Source in yourself is becoming activated. You become your own teacher.

By doing so Krishnamurti's teaching fits into our postmodernistic time, but rather than becoming a postmodernistic pilgrim, who jumps from one path (theory) to another – and therefore remains on the pure *theoretical plane* - you become a real pilgrim who, through Krishnamurti's teaching, develops your own teaching, and hereby follows a continuous and ongoing *practice* in the postmodernistic labyrinth of paths.

In the former time's spiritual pedagogics the teacher took the central place in the teacher-student mandalas, whereby the hierarchical structure was able to be unfold (Christ and Buddha in the centre). In the newer time's spiritual pedagogics (maybe because of the Egoextreme of our time, and the many people who end up in Ego-inflation) the development aims towards holding free the center of the circles, whereby an ideally equal spirituality can begin to unfold. This development is

especially represented by Krishnamurti, who in this way seeks to make the Source common. In such a mandala-structure is that, which before symbolical was gathered in the centre, now unfolded and made common in the periphery. The aim is completely to avoid the guru-centric. Anybody, who has worked with Krishnamurti's teaching, can recognize this.

Philosophical counseling is in the same way not guru-centric and can't succeed without the guest's own active participation. The insights are the guest's own, as well as the relief from false conceptions and restrictive assumptions.

Philosophical Counseling is in other words a rebirth of that kind of dialogue, which is not based on religious/political doctrines, ideologies, myths or conceptions (or as today: **management theory and the self-help industry**), but on realization and inner transformation, and which has been used by great masters such as Socrates, Epicurus, Confucius, Ramana Maharshi, Krishnamurti, Dalai Lama and Eckhart Tolle.

Even though these masters give answers to questions, then these answers therefore are not conclusions to anything, as you for example see it in politics or religion. The answers are only tools for the questioner's own self-inquiry. That will say, that they are a help discovering the questions'/problems' implicit *philosophical* questions, and investigating them in a meditative-existential way. And this is the central about Philosophical Counseling. This also means, that Philosophical Counseling is not a philosophy-class (teaching history of philosophy). And if there are involved answers, which other philosophers or theories have given, then it is only with the purpose of the self-inquiring practice.

You may say, that Philosophical Counseling follows the teaching that *Truth is a pathless land*. In that way Philosophical Counseling helps the guest to develop spiritual by developing his own teaching - to become a light for himself, to become his own teacher where he happens to stand – and at the same time has the philosophical aspects of the spiritual practice with him, as it is the core in all wisdom traditions.

Here is the main reason why today's self-help industry has lost the true spirituality out of sight: the Ego-worship, which shuts itself away from this wholeness. Today the wholeness, or the Otherness, has been eliminated, and only the development of the self, or the Ego, is left. And the Self/the Ego is your personality; therefore personal development. The problem with this personal development is that it has developed into a never-ending development, an egoistic philosophy (see my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

What is, after all, life? Is it not all the time something new? It is something, which constantly is changed and is creating a new feeling. Today is never the same as yesterday, and that is the beauty of life. This "new" is the unique in life, a unique presence, which the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber called The Eternal Thou.

Another Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, worked, with inspiration from Buber, also with such a communicative thinking (very close to Krishnamurti - feel the irony and remember the leading Theosopher Alice Bailey's words about Jews – see part one of this article **The fascism of theosophy**).

Levinas namely calls the unique presence in life *The Otherness* (God). The Otherness manifests itself as The Other, or as The Thou. Man can't be understood isolated, but always in a relation with, or in a meeting with "The Other". In the other's face, in thy neighbour's appearance, you meet an unfounded (metaphysical understood) demand about responsibility, which you can't ignore, but of course very well try to drive out.

In Levinas' philosophy it is impossible to remain a spectator to the world. Man, and also language, is constituted by the indispensable connection with the Otherness - (as we remember, then also Niels Bohr said, that it is not us, who are putting reality in order, it is reality which is putting us in order – see my article **Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr**). - The Otherness manifests itself in the other's face. The face calls for you. Your reaction to the face is an answer, and it shows who you are. So it requires the responsibility, that you listen to this call.

Levinas criticizes the traditional effort of philosophy in building up philosophical systems, because precisely the Otherness (the new) opposes the system (the old). That, which is really something else, or different, is in accordance with Levinas *The Other*, whom you are standing face-to-face with, the other person. This relationship is the foundation of ethics, and not a system (besides Theosophy itself, see my article **A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method** as an example of an attempt of building an all-embracing philosophical system). So just like in Buber there also in Levinas is a disposition to a philosophical life-practice very similar to the philosophy of Krishnamurti.

Krishnamurti often told about how important it is to be alone. But to be alone is according to Krishnamurti not about isolating yourself in your relationships, on the contrary. But to be alone is to reject the moral of society, of ideologies of all kinds, not to adapt yourself to such (see my article **The difference between philosophical education and ideological education**). It is - in your opinion formation, and in your identity formation - to reject striving towards being something else than what you are, to reject imitating others, and being a slave of their ideas, where your actions are

characterized by irresoluteness and doubt (authenticity is also a central concept in the self-help industry, but they are ending in the direct opposite – see my article **The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing** – about this peculiar paradox).

Only in this rejection, in this alonebeing, you can be in a true relationship. It is the alonebeing in the I-Thou relationship; the I-Thou relationship between you and the Otherness, which is something carrying, something granted, something, which is greater than yourself; something, which you can characterize as an absolute Otherness in relation to the created world. It is this instance, which leads you out to the things in an opening, self-forgetful and involving way, like in a painting by the Jewish painter Marc Chagall. This power exists in the Now's relationship with everything. It is life itself.

So the self-forgetful alonebeing is spiritual because the life itself, which life itself contains, is so absolute, so complete, that there herein is something eternal and endless.

So if you are present in the Now, actively and involved from the awareness, the innermost in yourself, and from the heartfulness - that is to say: totally, with the whole of yourself, and therefore in self-forgetful freedom and world absorption - then you will experience eternity and infinity. You will experience the true essence of nature, which is the Otherness.

Only in this relationship you can be yourself in your opinion formation and identity formation, live in compliance with your own essence, and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action.

Part one of this article: **The fascism of Theosophy**

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