

On Krishnamurti's Teaching: An Ongoing Personal Response
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Great teachers are rare. This statement is a commonplace and, as a truism, it hardly draws notice. However, such usual inattention in no way alters the fact that the obvious conceals the most salient significances. Sages over millennia have stressed this to virtually no avail. The pre-Socratic thinker, Heraclitus, wrote that nature loves to hide and that unless one expects the unexpected he will not find it for it is difficult and hard to come by. In the same vein, the seminal Spanish thinker, Ortega y Gasset, contemplated this theme with his statement that masks surround us.

It is one of the characteristics of our human species that we can entertain these remarks cerebrally and even dilate upon them intellectually, yet without meeting them viscerally or being touched by them emotionally. Such a bloodless relation to the obvious has through technology given us great material power over our physical environment. Unhappily, it has done nothing to generate or to advance self-inquiry. Without self-inquiry human nature cannot reach its essential promise which is to become free of self-misunderstanding.

As a species we deform ourselves when we apply a sheerly abstract measure for our conduct whether from memory, dogma, ideology, self-image or a collapse into another's authority. Imagination itself, which since the Romantic era continues to enjoy the wildest praise, is no less an abstract guide. Unlike Nature, imagination is not its own rule. This want of inherent self-correction is imagination's Achilles' heel. The overweening confidence in imagination is depth psychology's chief liability and until it shifts its center of gravity it will go on failing the promise touted for it in the early days of Freud and Jung. Important as it is to recognize a thing's constant tendency or essence (whether represented mathematically

or literarily) this intellectual abstraction cannot stand in for the thing's existence which is fraught with incalculable changes in the give and take of its career.

A philosophical grasp of this distinction between essence and existence is still an abstraction unless with Socrates one regarded philosophy as concerned in wisdom. Unfortunately, academic philosophy in our time shows little if any interest in the wisdom tradition as such and on that account many gifted students shy away from it who otherwise might contribute with distinction to this discipline.

These matters held my attention for many years before I met Krishnamurti. I was privileged to be invited to share twenty dialogues with him, eighteen of which comprise the book, *A Wholly Different Way of Living*. These video-tapes and transcriptions pursue the theme of the transformation of man independent of knowledge and time. He made a profound impression upon me and was the single most decisive influence of any living teacher I had personally encountered. His approach to self-inquiry was lucid, unwavering and correcting. I owe him a debt impossible to repay.

From the moment we began our conversations I was struck by his quality of attention. There was nothing contrived about it nor was it based on a muscular effort of the will to attend. It might be likened, on a different level, to the dynamic of balance as when one rides a bicycle, drives a car or simply walks. Unless there is a disturbance in the inner ear or other impediment, normal walking is unselfconscious yet not unconscious. Beyond strength and skill, it entails knack, which is a gift. Since most of us walk there doesn't seem to be much, if anything, of a gift about it. Yet, without knack our walking would be unspontaneous, graceless, sheerly mechanical and wooden-puppet-like. Krishnamurti's listening was knackful. It had the simplicity and openness of a child with the alertness of a warrior. It combined the harmlessness of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent.