N E W S L E T T E R

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Dialogue on "What is Sacred?" Opened by Prof. Allan W. Anderson

With over one hundred and thirty registered participants, the last dialogue of 1993 hosted by the Krishnamurti Foundation of America was opened with a short talk by Prof. Alan W. Anderson on Friday, October 8th. The weekend was blessed by perfect weather and there was an atmosphere of serious inquiry into the many issues of a complex topic: "What is Sacred?: God, Religion, and Belief." Two videotapes from the eighteen part dialogues that Krishnamurti had with Prof. Anderson in 1974 were shown along with two Ojai public talks tapes. Copies of the book that contains the texts of those eighteen dialogues titled A WHOLLY DIFFERENT WAY OF LIVING were available for sale in the book room as were many other titles from the stock of books, video and audiocassettes sold by the Foundation.

Dr. Anderson, on this his first visit to Ojai, said in part: "I was looking over the valley and saying to myself what an extraordinary thing to find myself among friends, and also cradled and nestled in these hills. Driving up here from La Jolla, I thought about the statement in the tenth book of the Rig Veda which points out that the goddess of speech, Vac, never appears except among friends. And in the little packet we received that described for us the weekend to come there was a stress on friendship, and in the modern world friendship, compared with what it was in the ancient world, is something that has fallen to a diminished state. We talk about connections now, not very much about friends. I am very thankful to be among friends.

The responsibility of making the opening remarks that would be germane and cogent for what lies ahead of us in the days to come, I take very seriously. It has been some twenty years now since Krishnamurti and I undertook those conversations together that you are so familiar with; and during those conversatons Mary Zimbalist was present and I wish to thank her. I was a virtual total stranger and she made me feel welcome and at home. The culmination of my thanks is to Krishnamurti and his memory. Not a day passed after the conclusion of those tapes-though I never saw him in person again--without his spiritual presence remaining--as I am sure you must feel it yourself. Even now his spirit abides "nearer than hands and feet. "

Our topic, "What is sacred?" There is an inexhaustible pathos implied in the content of that enduring question. It is a question that properly belongs among those questions that we call enduring. The character of that pathos encourages us to be very serious about our approach to the question. I hope to develop in the few minutes allowed us what the character of that seriousness is and why the seriousness at such a level. We get very uneasy when seriousness is brought forward, particularly in such a matter as the question "What is sacred?" We protest and say, "Oh for heaven's sake what is all this fuss about seriousness? If we were living sacredly then where would the question arise? We should be ourselves the sacred. The question would not arise let alone endure." It is an amiable hypothesis but dangerously naive, deceptive and superficial because it overlooks a permanent feature of human nature. And it's precisely that feature

that requires on our part a further question which we should be asking every time a question arises for us no matter what it is, namely, what is the question's real province. Where does it belong? Further, am I quietly hearing the question before I am already galloping toward an answer? The difficulty with abiding a question has to do with what it is to be human. To abide means to stay, to stand, not to bolt, not to budge.

Our question, "What is sacred?" must find its place. Its place is not in the discipline of theology. Theology begins with the notion that it knows. It knows God, so discourse begins with that. It doesn't belong in the province of philosophy's theories of language. It doesn't belong in depth psychology's concerns and meandering among the eruptions from the unconscious. All those disciplines require focus on something that is outside the one who is doing the study.

This uneasiness, this fear within our question, attends self-inquiry. And self-inquiry is a meditative act. Mediation is little understood let alone practiced well. Our question, what is sacred, cannot realize an answer outside of its sphere, which is self-inquiry. But even when we say that, we have not yet located its home ground. Its home ground rests in a certain permanent feature of our nature. It is one we do not like to think about. It is our capacity for self-betrayal. We can betray someone else but also our own selves. Our capacity for violating our own nature is human. If wild creatures in the forest lived that way they would make too many mistakes and not survive. They don't get away with more than one or two, perhaps three, and live. We have buffered ourselves through technology against that raw relation to nature, but it has not in any way improved our relations to ourselves. Unlike the wild creature whose eye is clear our species has a confused eye. Have you ever wondered when you saw the eye of an eagle how you were going to look at yourself in the mirror the next time? I have many times, and I've had long, long thoughts about it.

Our capacity for self-betrayal is something that we must note. I want to note it in relation to our question, "What is sacred?" What does it mean to betray oneself? If we can determine that in just a couple of minutes then we can begin to look out on the vista of our question and we shall be asking our question of ourselves, of one's own self, yes, one's own self. Upon every instant by reason of our nature we are faced with a problem of attitude, but almost always we think we are faced with only a problem of choice, preference, decision. We fail to note that they follow as night the day from our attitude. That fact is rarely brought forward.

We have for centuries given ourselves airs that we somehow are privileged to have free will. We are free for attitude, but given our attitude freedom stops there. Our preferences, our choices, our decisions follow upon attitude as night the day. That has the most far reaching meaning for our understanding of ourselves, and we face that upon every instant. Upon this instant, my attitude will determine everything else that follows from my will, intellect and feeling. More radically, more crucially (though this is another topic) my access to the primal root of intuition will be furthered or hindered by my attitude.

The role of intelligence in this is critical. Please consider, for a second, the etymology of the word. Intelligence is made etymologically upon *inter*, which means 'between', and *legere* which means 'to gather'. Something is being gathered, in between. Between what? Between the timeless and time. Which is to say, it is not the timeless that is crucial and it's not time that is crucial, but rather what is <u>timely</u>. And by timely I do not mean what that word has become in its vulgar sense in western civilization--a time when we have opportunistically something to grab. I do not mean that at all. What is timely upon every instant is what attends and follows precisely from a correct attitude: A meditational attitude. And when Krishnamurti pleaded over and over again that our behavior is so enmeshed, imprisoned in one thing after another so that there is no quietude, no standing still, no abiding, he was pointing to the phenonomen that we are always jumping ahead of ourselves. That is an attitudinal issue. We want something that we imagine is out there. We are unwilling to have what we need specified for us within the in-between. What is sacred then? Could it be that it is that gathering in-between, within the timely, so that our lives are lived between the timeless and time--and what I am about to say now may sound frightening--<u>so that our lives are lived inevitably</u>. If our lives are inevitable what occasion is there for anxious worry?

Suddenly that Biblical phrase comes alive, " The peace that passeth understanding." Krishnamurti's concern for what is whole is apropos of what we are talking about here. Is it possible, he asked, to live so that the part is included in the whole? So it isn't a question of something being pathologically wrong with thought, since in meditation thought necessarily operates. But how are we supposed to include it in the whole, in meditation?

In his *Notebook* there is this remarkable statement on page 101, "There is a 'thinking' born out of the total emptiness of the mind." He calls it thinking, but of course it is in quotation marks lest we confuse it with what we usually call thought. "There is a thinking born out of the total emptiness of the mind; that emptiness has no center and so is capable of infinite movement. Creation is born out of this emptiness but it is not the creation of man putting things together. That creation of emptiness is love and death." Every instant is an instant of creation and also of destruction. Yet we will not abide the destruction. And when we sense that the creation is also the destruction we won't abide that either.

We talk about process. The creation that is pointed to here is not a process. It is instantaneous and opens us to the deep question: Is it possible to live so that the part is included in the whole?

Now I am going to bring up something that is a problem for us all. Krishnamurti is now no longer here in the flesh, so we can't listen to his words. We have now the legacy of his words in writing. How are we going to read that writing? You must have asked yourself that question since his written words are of the past. Is it possible to read them so that the part, the past, is included in the whole? Because if we are not going to read his works meditatively, which is to say with the part included in the whole, then we should be violating not only his work, but also violating our own nature. I wrote out a question that relates precisely to this issue, and I'll read it to you, "Is it possible to read so attentively that the word, which is of the past, is included in the unprecedented present instant, the eternal now?" If it is not possible to read that way we are lost. And the question, "What is sacred?" cannot be asked. Likewise if we were collapsed into the eternal we should have no occasion for asking the question either. So is it possible to read so attentively that the word which is of the past is included in the unprecedented present instant, the eternal now?

I hope in our dialogues ahead this weekend we might explore that. Since the seventeenth century this line of questioning and thinking has virtually departed from western civilization. It was present in the middle ages and in the ancient world. But centuries have passed since the seventeenth and we were brought up with no knowledge of this. In academic practice, with rare exceptions, it's never discussed. What does that say? It says that one could live out the term of his natural life and never hear essentially about what is sacred.

Some of you perhaps will remember the poet Keats' lines from Endymion which are quite unintelligible unless one is capable of thinking meditatively. Since he points to what it is that is sacred in these lines he says, " A thing of beauty is a joy forever." How are you going to make that intelligible? Things come to be and pass away. But here's a thing that's a joy forever! Am I here forever? Don't I also come to be and pass away? You see the difficulties.

And as though that is not enough he goes on to say, "Its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness; but still will keep a bower quiet for us, and a sleep full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing. Therefore on every morrow, are we wreathing, a flowery band to bind us to the earth."

Not to yank us up to heaven, to bind us to the earth, "Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth of noble natures, of the gloomy days, of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways made for our searching: Yes, in spite of all, some shape of beauty moves away the pall from our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon, trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon for simple sheep; and such too is the grandeur of the dooms we have imagined for the mighty dead. All lovely tales that we have heard or read: An endless fountain of immortal drink, pouring unto us from the heaven's brink."

When Mark Lee invited me to make these opening remarks I was hard pressed because I said to myself: If I bring something forward that is a disclosure from my own self-inquiry over many decades, will it be intelligible? And I said to myself, you can hardly do anything else because Krishnamurti has already prohibited anybody interpreting what he said or wrote. And I thoroughly agree and wholeheartedly endorse that prohibition so I was left, wasn't I, with gratitude to Mark Lee, but standing before the task with fear and trembling. Not fear as catatonic fright but an extreme respect for what it is to make unprecedented self-disclosure even among friends.

In the Upanishads there is a most marvelous statement. It reads, and I'll translate it: "This that is here is full. That which is yonder is full. The full outflows from fullness. Even on taking away the full from fullness, fullness itself remains." To stand within the full instant and not bolt. To stand where timeliness is gathered, not isolated by oneself but in the beauty of what is sacred, is, then, an end to anxious worry. And it's the beginning, instant by instant, of a new creation and the total destruction of the face of the proceeding instant.

So, I decided that I would hazard saying these things, and I hope in our dialogues in the days ahead we can explore this question of this permanent feature of human nature which specifies our nature as human. We have the possibility of self-betrayal, yet we also have the possibility of timeliness which is the practical of equivalent of a thinking "born out of the total emptiness of the mind" and infinitely more cogent and apropos of our present situation than any idealization that we could imagine.

And it is that practical element that I wish to end my remarks on. Is it possible to live so that the part is included in the whole? Is it possible to read so attentively that the word which is of the past is read upon this present instant in all its richness and glory within the eternal now? I can't ask that question for anyone else but myself. I cannot answer it for anyone else but myself. But we are friends and we can speak to one another. Those who think they are speaking but who are not friends are, when the goddess of speech is absent, babbling. No matter how erudite and brilliant the babble, it is still babble. But we are privileged to come together as friends. And in our discussions with each other in the hours to come, each one of us, in what Krishnamurti calls aloneness, can within that present instant discover timeliness and inevitability--and on that account what it is that is sacred."

You are invited to the
Annual Gathering
Krishnamurti Foundation of America
Saturday, April 30th and Sunday, May 1st, 1994
Oak Grove School, Ojai, California

Each year in the spring, the Foundation hosts a two day free public gathering on the grounds of the Oak Grove School. The two dialogues on each day of the Gathering will be proceeded by audio tapes played in the Oak Grove of Krishnamurti talks given in that stand of California live oaks. Videotapes will be played continuously in the Pavilion both days.

Schedule:
9:00am - Krishnamurti tape played in the Oak Grove
10:30am - Announcements and Orientation for Dialogues
11:00am - Dialogues
12:30 pm - Lunch served out of doors
2:00 pm - Tours of the Oak Grove School