KRISHNAMURTHI ON EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATED PERSON

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In this paper I propose to elucidate some aspects of Krishnamurti's notion of 'education' and the 'educated person'. Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895 - 1986), as is well known, is an eminent spiritual and humanist philosopher. His key concepts in education are presented in his writings with the informality of spontaneous talks and dialogues - of which his books are mostly, in fact, transcripts. For almost fifty years he travelled widely delivering talks to, and engaging in discussions with, mixed audiences of different cultural orientations, and varying intellectual capacities, without any distinction of race, class or creed. Krishnamurti does not expound a definite philosophy, nor does he preach any doctrine. He speaks of a variety of topics concerning the human condition. His talks are directed at establishing a communion with his listeners. Thus it would be correct to assert that what he would say in a particular talk is somewhat a joint product of the speaker and the audience. Consequently, it is difficult to find a systematic exposition of a specific theme in his talks. Undoubtedly, this presents a formidable task to anyone engaged in the understanding and the intellectual clarification of his ideas. What we may therefore best do to understand what he stood for is to examine, even if briefly some of his most salient ideas on the matter of Education.

1. Education as Freedom from Conditioning

Krishnamurti considers freedom from conditioning as fundamental to education. In my view the following statement summarizes Krishnamurti's notion of education and the related notion of the educated person.

> The function of education is to give the student abundant knowledge in the various fields of human endeavour, and at the same time to free his mind from all tradition so that he is able to investigate, to find out, to discover. Otherwise the mind becomes burdened with the machinery of knowledge.[1]

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[1] J.Krishnamurti, *This Matter of Culture*, ed., D. Rajagopal, London: Victor Gollancz, (1964), p.143.

Thus, Krishnamurti thinks that the function of education is two-fold. Education should concern itself with imparting subject-matter knowledge in the different disciplines. But, the function of education is more fundamentally to free the child's mind of all conditioning influences of tradition.

Established Knowledge as Secondary but Necessary

Krishnamurti refers to the knowledge within the disciplines as historical, biological, linguistic, mathematical, scientific, geographical and physical.[2] In this respect he includes both "knowing that," with respect to established formulated knowledge, and "knowing how" in relation to standardised techniques. The curriculum arrangements of Krishnamurti schools[3] reflect the curriculum arrangements of other schools. If this is the case the young are initiated into the language and concepts of a society. Learning a language and conceptualised knowledge is being introduced into a public inheritance. Learning science the child will be learning the concepts of gravity, relativity, and photosynthesis. In mathematics the child will learn the concepts of number. Concepts become intelligible only by the use of language. Krishnamurti thinks that both conceptual and practical knowledge is educationally important.

Krishnamurti accepts the fact that the acquisition of a knowledge of the various disciplines is essential, since through them the child comes to know, for their benefit in specific tasks, the concepts and language enshrined in the fund of accumulated knowledge. However, his emphasis is on the instrumental value of such knowledge, as well as on its intrinsic interest for each individual student.

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[2] J.Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti on Education*, New York: Harper and Row (1973), p.28.

[3] The schools in India managed by the Krishnamurti Foundation of India are the Rishi Valley School, Rajghat Besant School, K.F.I.School in Madras, The Valley School in Bangalore, and the Bal Anand School. The Oak Grove School in Ojai, California, and the Brockwood Educational Centre is managed by the Krishnamurti Foundation of America, and the Krishnamurti Foundation of England respectively. In Victoria, Canada the former Wolf Lake School has been closed down.

Freedom From Conditioning

As I noted earlier Krishnamurti considers the "freeing of the mind from tradition" as more fundamental to education. "Freeing the mind from tradition" does not refer to the idea virtually axiomatic in our thinking - that knowledge liberates. For Krishnamurti, to free the mind from conditioned thinking is necessarily to "free the mind from tradition." This is precisely why he claims that "knowledge is a hindrance, when it becomes a tradition, a belief which guides the mind, the psyche, the inward being."[4]

At this point one must be clear what Krishnamurti means by conditioning. From a psychological point of view the word 'conditioning' has come to refer mainly to the process of shaping behaviour. However, conditioning is not confined to bringing about specified behaviour patterns. As a belief forming creature a human being tends to become conditioned, especially in youth, to a set of beliefs, a mode of thinking, a predominant value system, and an overall outlook on self and others. Krishnamurti's emphasis here is on a deep psychological attachment to such a system of values which implies at least but more than just being close-minded. The idea of conditioning in this sense, is only latent in Krishnamurti's texts and is pivotal to the interpretation of his texts.

It is important to note that when Krishnamurti uses the word 'tradition' he is not referring primarily to traditions in certain areas of conceptual knowledge and traditions in relation to useful techniques. He reiterates that the function of education is to free the mind from tradition and to cultivate knowledge and technique, for he claims that knowledge is undoubtedly useful at one level while at another level positively harmful. The knowledge he considers as harmful is that of traditions and beliefs which constitute the individual's inflexible conviction as belonging to a specific racial, religious or cultural group which shapes and conditions the mind to its particular governing pattern. He emphasizes that what divides people and creates enmity and strife are not the investigations of science, developments in engineering and agriculture, but traditions and beliefs which condition the mind to conform to particular patterns.[5]

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4 J.Krishnamurti, *This Matter of Culture*, p. 43.

5 *Ibid.*

"Knowing What Is"

With reference to freedom from conditioning of the mind Krishnamurti emphasizes a direct or non-interpretative and non-judgemental mode of knowing - "knowing what is."[6] To "know what is" is a manifestation of the most significant awakening of intelligence, different from "knowing that" and "knowing how" in the meanings common to mainstream philosophy of education. Truth relevant to the transformation of one's life as a whole can only be known by this "choiceless awareness of what is" - that is, there is no conscious decision regarding the details of what to look for, what details to pay attention to, such as we find in intellectual forms of enquiry.[7] Krishnamurti's implicit epistemology thus involves the postulation of a non-dualistic mode of knowing in which awareness is not governed by conceptual schemes. It is his view that only by means of this that we can know reality of what really is, as it is. To know and apprehend the truth of any immediate situation as a whole is to be choicelessly aware of it. Fully awakened intelligence is the "choiceless awareness of what is" at any given moment, involving the intuitive discernment of truth.

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[6] A point of interest is that almost unwittingly, Krishnamurti seems to have created a terminology of his own. First he alters the connotation of some words such that simple words convey a deeper significance. Second, to address his ideas more fully he employs terms which he himself has coined, such as "knowing what is." "Knowing what is" is neither a merely practical activity, nor a merely mental activity. It is a subjective lived experience in which one's whole being is in the knowing of the truth, and one acts from that. It cannot be referred to as mere intuition. The commonest and clearest example of intuition in a wider sense is ordinary perception. For instance I walk into a sparsely furnished room and in a single instance I take in all items of furniture in it. This could be referred to as a visual perception. Now, "knowing what is" is a type of mental perception. It requires total attention and direct awareness where reason and feelings are harmonized. In this state of complete engagement one cannot remain unchanged by the knowing. See. L.A.Reid, *Ways of Knowledge and Experience*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (1961), pp. 14-15.

[7] According to Krishnamurti, the awareness of "what is" is choiceless. Choice would involve conflict. If an individual knows what to do, it would not entail choice, and therefore no conflict. In "choiceless awareness of what is" there is a unity of awareness and action which is instantaneous.

Intelligence here should not be interpreted in the generally accepted sense. For Krishnamurti, intelligence is the capacity to understand truly and act as one event, with the whole being involved. In intelligence there is the activity of feeling as well as reason, and these are equally and harmoniously felt aspects of one unitary process. Intellect is often understood as thought functioning independently of emotion, where awareness is channelled according to conceptual schema, explicit or otherwise. He argues that unless we approach the understanding of life with intelligence, instead of either disconnected intellect or with emotion alone, no educational or political system would have individuals radically transformed in outlook, so as to begin to reverse the destructive tendencies which throughout history have repeatedly arisen from conflicting belief systems, uncritically transmitted from generation to generation.[8]

At this juncture it seems necessary to question whether it is possible to transcend one's conditioning. Many would admit that it is not conceivable to transcend one's cultural conditioning totally. Mary Midgley argues that we tend to think of ourselves as prisoners of our culture, as being limited by it, "indoctrinated," or "brainwashed" into accepting its values - or again, conditioned. She thinks that aspiring to be free from any culture is in one way trying to be skinless. A culture is a way of awakening our faculties. There is no prison; what one cannot do is namely, be nobody, and nowhere."[9]

However, it seems a laudable position to transcend the crucial *conditioned beliefs* of one's culture. A critic may say that it cannot be done *totally*. I agree that the notion of overcoming one's conditioning totally is a difficult one. But there is an important lesson to be learnt here. One needs to be critical of one's upbringing in order to be free. In principle, if some conditioning can be "let go," it may be possible that all conditioning can. In fact, the massive evidence that we cannot with certainty point to anyone as totally free of conditioning does not prove it is impossible, or not worthwhile attempting or that some degree of achievement is not worth attaining.

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8 J.Krishnamurti, *Education and Significance of Life,* New York: Harper and Row Ltd. (1953), p. 65.

9 Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man,* Brighton: Harvester, (1979), pp. 290-291.

2. Education and Self-knowledge

According to Krishnamurti, the fundamental defect of modern attempts at education is the lack of emphasis given to self-knowledge as the central or as any aim of education. For Krishnamurti, the educated person is the self-knowing person. The specific kind of self-knowledge that Krishnamurti refers to here comes only through the choiceless awareness of what is as it is. The presence of the conditioned mind inhibits "knowing what is," and this in turn obstructs self-knowledge - the knowledge of what an individual's self really is, directly recognized by that individual.

In *Education and the Significance of Life*, Krishnamurti summarizes his view point with a challenging statement in which he explains the importance of self-knowledge as the central aim of the educator.

> The ignorant is not the unlearned, but he who does not know himself, and the learned man is stupid when he relies on books, on knowledge and authority to give him understanding. Understanding comes only through self-knowledge, which is the awareness of one's total psychological process. Thus education in the true sense is the understanding of oneself, for within each one of us that the whole of existence is gathered.[10]

In *This Matter of Culture*, he distinctly emphasizes the link between education and self-knowledge when he says that "to know oneself is the very purpose of all education."[11] In this position, where the "right kind of education" is the understanding of oneself, the ignorant person, concerning what it is most crucial to know, is not ignorant by virtue of a lack of subject-matter learning, but a lack of understanding of himself. Thus the learned person who lacks what Krishnamurti refers to as self-knowledge is considered ignorant in the learning that matters most. His statement that "within each one of us the whole of existence is gathered," is given as the reason for the pre-eminence of self-knowledge in "right education," but it is difficult indeed to explain satisfactorily. It certainly refers to the very nature of human "consciousness" as essentially related with all in the cosmos. Krishnamurti considers the crisis of fragmentation and conflict in the human consciousness as common to all individuals and the source of human planetary disorder, confusion and tragedy. Thus, his emphasis is not on external ameliorating plans and movements, but on each individual's transformation to wholeness through self-knowledge.

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[10] J.Krishnamurti, *Education and Significance of Life*, p. 17.

[11] J.Krishnamurti, *This Matter of Culture*, p. 112.

Self-knowledge for Krishnamurti is knowledge *of* oneself rather than simply knowledge *about* oneself. A person could have knowledge about himself, say, for instance, how he looks - whether he is tall or short, dark or fair. Similarly, he could be aware of personality traits as to whether he is reliable, honourable or kind. The recognition that, e.g., he can be honourable or kind is not sufficient for a serious claim that "he knows himself," unless this knowledge somehow becomes effective in the character of his daily life as a totality. Such an immediate totality could not itself be grasped in terms of any number of statements of "knowledge about." Hamlyn makes this same point when he says that to have self-knowledge it is not enough to have knowledge about oneself of any kind whatever. Some kinds of knowledge that one may have about oneself seem irrelevant to the question of whether one has self-knowledge proper.[12] In this sense of 'relevant,' the relevant or proper self-knowledge could be seen as a special subset of knowledge about self.

The self-knowledge of importance to Krishnamurti is the self-transformatory understanding of oneself as individual. Now this position could pose a problem. Too much attention to oneself would necessarily lead to bolstering of one's ego. It may lead to self-consciousness in the colloquial sense as Laing describes, implying both an awareness of oneself by oneself and an awareness of oneself as an object of someone else's observation.[13] But, the self-knowledge advocated by Krishnamurti comes through the "choiceless awareness of what is," as it is, regarding the self, without any attempt at characterization by thought or any other division of consciousness. Self-knowledge comes about only with the transcendence of the perspective of the ego - the self-constructed tacit theory of the self as the centrally directive entity of the individual. The importance, individually and socially, of this self-knowledge rests on the implied transcendence of the domination of egocentric perspectives. Spontaneous self-attention, therefore, does not refer to the indulgent limitation of one's attention to private mental states, or the ego as defining the individual identity. When I am referring to the ego here as the constructed and largely subconscious *conception of* one's selfhood, my usage is in accordance with Krishnamurti's works, and must not be confused with Freud's term 'ego'. As to this there are important differences as well as similarities.

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[12] D.W.Hamlyn, *Perception, Learning and Self,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, (1983), p. 244.

[13] R.D.Laing, *The Divided Self - An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness,* Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd. (1960), p. 160.

Again, one must consider whether the achievement of self-knowledge is a self-isolating process. As Hamlyn argues, if one attempts to seek self-knowledge in isolation, he deprives himself of certain possibilities of self-knowledge or knowledge about himself. He cannot get those kinds of information about himself that are usually obtainable only through *relationship with* others in a variety of social contexts and roles.[14] Similarly, Krishnamurti uses the analogy of relationship as a mirror in which one can find oneself reflected.

Human Predicament : Consequences of Essentially Relational Being

It is important to note also that Krishnamurti does not subscribe to an atomistic notion of the isolated self. That is he characterizes the self as existing *on account* of multiple relationships, not only to human beings, but also to nature, ideas and things. "One can only know oneself in one's relationship to others."[15] C. Suares argues that Krishnamurti's 'know thyself' is a total process in the sense that it concerns the total human being, and not a part, like the theorizing intellect.[16] Shringy claims that Krishnamurti's advocacy for self-knowledge as the means of solving human problems lies in his concept of life and existence, for he thinks that life is action, and existence is a form of relationship.[17]

It must be mentioned that Krishnamurti refers to the human predicament. He perceives the problem of human existence as primarily one of conflict. For Krishnamurti, the situation for the individual and society remains one of crisis. The crisis exists primarily within the individual. The individual conflict, by way of internal relatedness, produces a conflict between the individual and society, and one society and another. Thus, "the inward problem is the world problem."[18]

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14 D.W.Hamlyn, *Perception, Learning and Self*, pp. 257-258.

15 J.Krishnamurti, *The Wholeness of Life*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers (1981), p. 215.

16 C.Suares, *Krishnamurti and the Unity of Man*, Bombay: Chetana (Pvt.) Ltd., (1957), p.8.

17 R.K.Shringy, *Philosophy of Krishnamurti*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Private Ltd. (1977), p. 221.

18 Quoted in Andre Neil, *Krishnamurti - The Man in Revolt*, Bombay: Chetana Private Ltd., (1957), p. 67.

Inwardly, the individual is a composite of contradictions, conflicts, introjected psychological pressures, racial and religious prejudices. Outwardly, the adaptation to a competitive society creates further conflicts. Therefore, Krishnamurti apprehends the problems of existence as psychological as well as social. Krishnamurti's emphasis on "knowing what is" and self-knowledge as being central to education is not only a reflection of his view of *humanness* as such, but very much based on his observation of the individual in modern times.

The Task of the Educator : An Alleged Impossibility

Now, assuming one grants the validity of Krishnamurti's thesis that the " primary and fundamental role of the eductor, as such, is to bring about the seriousness and beauty of self-knowledge,"[19] we still need to ask how the educator could achieve this? In the foregoing discussion it was stated that Krishnamurti's concept of self-knowledge necessarily involves the idea of transcendence of the ego. Now, is not the successful guiding of this a very tall order? How does a child contribute to this? Can a child of twelve or fifteen years transcend the ego? How, to what extent, and over what period of time could the educator be reasonably expected to complete his part in this task which looks to be perhaps the greatest challenge of learning one could possibly face? Is it unrealistic, as some have suggested? It seems to me that when Krishnamurti refers to self-knowledge as being central to education he is neither expecting or not expecting children to transcend their egos. To be exact he is referring to the practice of self-observation which would lead to transformatory self-knowledge. When asked by a student at Rishi Valley school as to how one could know oneself he says that to know oneself is to watch oneself. To watch oneself is to watch one's gestures, the way one talks, the way one behaves, whether one is hard, cruel, rough or patient. To know oneself is to watch oneself in the mirror of what one is doing, what one is thinking, and what one is feeling.[20] This does not indicate that self-observation is co-terminus with self-knowledge as people reflect upon themselves without transcending their egos. It merely suggests that the practice of self-observation is necessary to the process of attaining self-knowledge.

Now, this does not seem to be such a tall order, and clarifies where the confusion of unrealistic aim crept in. The child could be encouraged to be self-observant, and to experience this with the ease of learning and seeing. When one is observant of

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[19] Brockwood Park Educational Centre - *A Whole Approach to Education*, Alresford, Alresford Ltd. (1983), p.6.

[20] J.Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti on Education*, pp. 76-77.

one's actions, feelings, and thoughts in the midst of personal life, one comes to know them, just as one comes to know the natural world in sense perception of it. It is attention charged in an unusual direction under encouragement to do so; there seems to be nothing impossible or near impossible about this as a goal.

3. Education of the Whole Man

Krishnamurti thinks that education should be of the whole person. "When educationalists claim that education is of the whole man they are enunciating a conceptual truth..."[21] He regards modern schooling as inadequate in not providing sufficient opportunities for wholistic development. Too much emphasis is placed on the intellectual aspect of development particularly in the exclusive attention paid to the teaching of established formulated subject-matter knowledge.

> The heart of the matter is education, it is the total understanding of man, and not the emphasis on a fragment of his life.[22]

> We are concerned with the total development of each human being, helping him to realize his own highest and fullest capacity, not some fictitious capacity which the educator has in view as a concept or idea,.[23]

His challenge is to be clear whether one wants the total human being and not just the "technological human being."[24] The implication is that what is important is not the development of one type of skilled ability, as in being a scientist, mathematician, or musician, but the significant development of the individual in all its aspects. The "technological human being" is a person proficient in a limited field of technical and professional skills. A schooling which merely helps individuals to be

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21 R.S.Peters, "The Aims of Education - A Conceptual Inquiry," in *The Philosophy of Education*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1973), p. 19.

22 J.Krishnamurti, *Beginnings of Learning*, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd. (1978), p. 213.

23 J.Krishnamurti, *Life Ahead*, ed., D.Rajagopal, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers (1963) p.9.

24 J.Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti on Education*, p. 92.

proficient in technical and professional skills is fostering a partial development only. Clearly, Krishnamurti will not consider such a development by itself as education, and urges that if we *are* concerned with the development of the whole person rather than one-sided development, then our approach to the understanding of, and appropriate activities of education must be different.

Wholeness of the Individual, Fragmentation and Integration

Krishnamurti gives a clear indication that the normal individual is to some extent fragmented. The reasons for this are partly schooling and partly the larger personal environment. In his terminology the integrated person is the whole person. In *Life Ahead*, Krishnamurti defines 'integration' as related to the whole person:

> To integrate is to bring together, to make complete. If you are integrated, your thoughts, feelings and actions are entirely new moving in the same direction; they are not in contradiction with each other, you are the whole human being without conflict, that is what is implied by integration.[25]

To be integrated, then, is to have unity in thought, feeling and action, in the sense that these aspects of the individual are not active so as to oppose each other. Where, for a particular individual there is no inward conflict, conflict arising in relationship is no longer caused by him as a projection of an inward conflict. Then a major source of human conflict is thus removed.

If there is lack of integration, then there is "fragmentation" of the self, in the sense that one's thoughts, feelings and actions will be in oppositional activity. This will unavoidably engender and be projected as outward conflict.

When Krishnamurti says that to be integrated there must be unity in one's thoughts, feelings and actions he provokes many questions. For example, is it possible to have one's thoughts, feelings and actions move in the same direction, and be, say, envious, selfish and acquisitive? I cannot be unified as envious, because envy is painful, and I want pleasure at least as powerfully as I *am* envious. That is, one's innate desire for pleasure is in tense opposition to one's enviousness. As long as this is so the state of envy *must* be a fragmented conflictual state. Therefore, it would seem that integration can only come into being if one's thoughts, feelings and desires are active

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[25] J.Krishnamurti, *Life Ahead*, p. 106.

together in some way that is not egotistic. A critic may say that a selfish person who has everything he wants, and who wallows in complacency and smug satisfaction, envies no one, and consequently would not experience inner conflicts. Krishnamurti would say that the very fact that he is egotistic would make him a disintegrated person. Thus, the connection between integration and the attitudes we refer to as loving, sensitive, empathetic, compassionate seem to be a necessary one.

Conditioning and Fragmentation

It is Krishnamurti's view that conditioning influences affecting one's view of oneself and of one's world, whether racial or religious prejudices, traditions and social mores, hinder the way one thinks, feels and acts in respect to being a whole person. Moreover, current schooling in no way encourages the understanding of the inherent tendencies which allow conditioning of the mind to normality and consequently does not bring about the integrated individual or the "whole person".

It is important to note that with respect to the transforming quality of education Krishnamurti refers to a radical transformation of the individual person. He refers to this as the "psychological revolution", which means a fundamental change in the human mind. Krishnamurti regards the whole person as one in whom a total inward transformation has taken place through self-knowledge. Furthermore, Krishnamurti's view of transformation is not restricted to the intellectual dimension. An individual does not necessarily become a "whole" person merely by learning a number of disciplines. Undoubtedly, this plays some necessary part, but is hardly sufficient. For Krishnamurti, the conceptual perspective is only one element involved in the notion of the whole person and inward transformation, and not one capable of changing all other aspects. A person with an intellectually unified view will still be fragmented person. The whole person is one who is inwardly transformed, the cognitive and the affective aspects of life are integrated by self awareness, with its 'seeing,' and these in turn inevitably influence the practical aspects.

Theodore Roszak, historian and philosopher, makes a similar observation. He argues that there is another sense in which a permanent revolution is exactly what we need, not a revolution that merely moves geographically over the planet, but one that moves along the depth dimension of human nature.[26]

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[26] T.Roszak, *Unfinished Animal,* New York: Harper & Row (1975), p. 229.

It is important to note that there are no agreed criteria which govern the "education of the whole person" or the radical transformation of an individual's outlook. Different philosophers would suggest different criteria as being necessary. These concepts are too universal in scope to be confined to the educational process. For instance, with the termination of one's formal education we cannot with certainty say, "he is a whole person" or, "his outlook has been transformed." In fact these could perhaps be better expressed as indicating continuous processes. I am not suggesting that educators, as such, should not give serious consideration to such claims, for educators do not wish individuals to be fragmented. What is being suggested is that education can only provide avenues, though powerful ones, for satisfying the necessary requirements for such claims.

4. The Moulding and Growth Models of Educating

In relation to the content and procedures of education there are different ways of attempting to initiate others into what is considered worthwhile. There is the more traditional "moulding" model of education and the "growth" model of education. Krishnamurti seems critical of both models as they both share a common defect - that of regarding education as an activity where the teacher is a detached agent trying to achieve some kind of result in the learner. He considers the teaching - learning process as a shared experience where both the teacher and the pupil are partners.

The more pervasive traditional model of education is the moulding model. To mould is to shape something to a pattern out of pliable material. The moulding view assumes that the child's mind is formless and pliable by external pressure. This involves the traditional assumption that the child's mind is similar to a "tabula-rasa" or a clean slate on which any content matter could be implanted. Therefore the teacher attempts to shape it into a particular pre-determined pattern of thought and action. Not only are formal lessons conducted in an authoritarian manner, but formal instruction is also supported by a variety of coercive techniques, such as the use of rigid disciplinary measures.

The child-centred movement which conceived of education as a process of growth was a revolt against the moulding view of education. According to the growth model, what is necessary for the process of growth and hence of education is to encourage the child in the developing of inherent potentialities. The inner potentialities will unfold only if they are sufficiently stimulated in the required manner. The teacher watches for signs of readiness and provides the appropriate environmental stimulation for the child's spontaneously developing interests and activities. Learning through active self-directed experience has been considered important to safeguard the child's growth according to natural inclination.

The Moulding Model of Education

In his educational writings, Krishnamurti rejects the moulding model of education. Consider for example the following quotations:

> The right kind of education is not concerned with an ideology .. it is not based on any system, however, carefully thought out; nor is it a means of conditioning the individual in some special manner. Education in the true sense is helping the individual to be mature and free, to flower greatly in love and goodness. that is what we should be interested in, and not in shaping the child to some idealistic pattern.[27]
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> Who are we to decide what man should be? By what right do we seek to mould him according to a particular pattern, learnt from some book or determined by our own ambitions, hopes and fears?[28]

When Krishnamurti refers to a "right kind of education" he presupposes that modern schooling in some respects is significantly and fundamentally defective. He thinks that any type of educational activity which moulds, shapes or conditions the child according to some idealistic pattern is harmful. It is opposed to his view that the "right kind of education" should bring about the free, integrated individual. In the first quotation he specifically mentions that the child must be helped " to flower greatly in love and goodness." If education is *seen* as moulding and shaping the individual according to a pattern delimited by an ideal, then the individual *is* made to conform to this imposed pattern. Therefore, as he says, "there can be no integration as long as one is pursuing an ideal pattern of action," since the imposed ideal conflicts with the individual's actual interests and tendencies.

An ideal here is an ultimate objective. It is not just a general aim. Such ideals involve specific, complex objectives which are difficult or impossible to realize. Aims on the other hand, can be *more or less* achieved in practice. This is why we normally speak of utopian ideals but not utopian aims.

The ideals in Krishnamurti's critical discussion of them are a series of values, either national, religious, collective or personal. Education could be, and has been, so construed as to reflect such governing ideals, whether political, religious,

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[27] J.Krishnamurti: *Education and the Significance of Life*, p. 23.

[28] *Ibid.*

cultural, or personal.[29] When the process of education is fundamentally linked to an ideal it neglects the fact or actual happening. Ideals are imposed upon "what is happening" to attempt to conform it to 'what should be,' and constitutes a disintegrative violence. He would say that this is not the way that an educative transformation is effected. Therefore, such ideals corrupt the mind. They are, in addition to being born of questionable ideas, judgements and hopes, themselves conceived out of the drastic limitations of what is already known or thought to be known.

Krishnamurti is thus critical of the moulding model of education for two reasons. To mould is to make an individual conform to a conditioned pattern of thinking, feeling and action. The pattern becomes most important, and the individual is accorded importance only to the extent that he fits the pattern. Secondly, as long as the individual is shaped and moulded according to an ideal there is no encouragement for self-transformatory understanding. Or, in short,he *is not* in any significant sense, a human *individual.*

It cannot be denied that when an educational system is guided by a particular political or religious ideal or ideology it moulds the individual according to a pattern of thinking circumscribed by the principles of that particular ideal or ideology. For instance, the overall aim of Soviet education is to make a communist citizen. The curriculum of the Soviet schools at all levels is based on communist principles designed in a way to achieve this primary educational ideal. In this sense, it cannot be denied that the mind of the individual is moulded and hence conditioned according to a particular view point. Similarly, in a religious-oriented educational system, a child may be made to accept certain religious principles with unquestioning obedience. In both instances the child's mind is moulded and conditioned to think in a particular way. Does this mean that the individual has no opportunity to go beyond this conditioned way of thinking? The opportunity may exist, but what is significant is that the child is not *encouraged* to think in a more critical manner which would be likely to by-pass such principles.

Krishnamurti also emphasizes that moulding or conditioning does not give importance to the actual state of the individual, which, after all, is the only ground for any intelligent transformation. It does not encourage the child to understand and *thereby* overcome his limitations. Furthermore, the child's desires may conflict with external ideals. In terms of personal ideals, as long as the desire is not at variance with the ideal, there would be no conflict with the educating process. If one's inclinations and desires conflict with an imposed and/or personally accepted ideal, pain, disillusionment,

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[29] J.Krishnamurti, *Letters to the Schools*, Madras: Krishnamurti Foundation India, (1981), pp. 81-82.

frustration, and eventually revolt are bound to occur. For instance, if parents compel a child to study medicine, when the child's inclination is to become a painter for which he has the natural aptitude then the child's desire will conflict with the parent's ideal. Then pain and disillusionment are bound to occur. Again, a teacher who has an ideal for what a pupil should be will tend to try to force the pupil to conform, and in the effort will also tend to ignore what the pupil *actually is* as that individual. A similar pain and confusion of fragmentation will occur for the pupil. Therefore, Krishnamurti would say that "the right kind of education" (which integrates, rather than fragments) consists in understanding the child as he is, and encouraging him to do so also, without imposing on him an ideal of what we think he should be.[30] Therefore, according to him, the right kind of educator is one who helps the individual child to observe and understand his own conditioning and self-projected values.[31]

Moulding and Lasting Values

In relation to the question of education as a process of moulding and conditioning it seems necessary to discuss Krishnamurti's notion of "lasting values." In the previous statement he specifically says that education in the true sense should help the child to be mature and free, to be able to flower greatly in love and goodness. This is what the educator should be interested in, as opposed to shaping the child according to some idealistic pattern. To be more specific, for Krishnamurti these "lasting values" are goodness, truth, love, compassion, sensitivity and other related values.[32] Values are considered to be lasting if, and only if, they are essential to the enrichment of total integration in a human life and will *always* be so if expressed as the dominant guiding principles *of* a life (that is, they are not imposed *upon* that life). In any type of human society these lasting values as expressed by individuals make life literally more wholesome for the individual as well as for the society in which they flourish.

At this point it would be helpful to consider two possible objections. Firstly, does Krishnamurti contradict himself by having ideals in the form of lasting values? Secondly, do lasting values in any way mould and condition the individual?

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30 J.Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life*, pp. 25-26.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

32 The 'lasting values' mentioned here appear in various places in Krishnamurti's writings.

When Krishnamurti speaks of lasting values he is undoubtedly referring to certain ideals in the sense of ideal general values. A lasting value is also an ideal in the sense of a personal guiding principle if we do want the child to "flower greatly in love and goodness." Krishnamurti's poetic licence in not providing formal definitions of his terms, but rather relying on the total context of discussion to bring out their distinctive meaning places a great deal of responsibility on the listener or reader -- which is avowedly his intention. In fact, a careful reading, alert to the total context, indicates that the contradiction is only apparent. A lasting value, while being in one sense an ideal, does not fall into the category of ideals criticized by Krishnamurti -- those which are willed as decisions fitting a plan rather than *spontaneously* discovered as truth, in sensitive personal insight. An ideal that one rationally strives to conform to is not a lasting value. An ideal of his lasting category is not regarded as a created concept of a supposed perfection, but a truth regarding discovery by direct insight, which carries its own power of transformation. No effort to conform is either appropriate or necessary.

As for the second possible objection, lasting values do not and cannot in any way mould or condition the learner. Krishnamurti categorically asserts that "education should help us to discover lasting values."[33] Inculcation involves a deliberate activity of imposition by an authority figure, whether parent, teacher or an elder. In this sense, though lasting values are representative of the perfection of a life they are not ideas or concepts to be imparted, but real potentialities discovered spontaneously -- even in the context of *guided* enquiry.

Education and the Growth Model

It may appear at first that Krishnamurti favours the growth model of education. In his educational writings he uses terms more commonly used by growth theorists such as 'developing capacities,' 'unfolding,' 'right environment,' and 'observation.' At this point we need to consider the following statements:

> Right education should help the student, not only to develop his capacities, but to understand his own highest interest.[34]

> To help you to unfold is the function of the school; and if it does not

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[33] J.Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life*, p. 14.

[34] *Ibid.*

> help you to unfold, it is no school at all.[35]
>
> The educator ... must give all his thought, all his care and affection to the creation of right environment and to the development of understanding, so that when the child grows into maturity he will be capable of dealing intelligently with the human problems that confront him.[36]
>
> The right kind of education is not possible enmasse. To study each child requires patience, alertness, and intelligence. To observe the child's tendencies, his aptitudes, temperament, to understand his difficulties, to take into account his heredity ... all this calls for a swift and a pliable mind, untrammelled by any system or prejudice.[37]

In the first instance, Krishnamurti refers to the development of individual abilities and this can hardly be questioned for *education*. Similarly, the creation of right environment expressed in the third statement and taking into consideration the significance of individual differences as stated in the fourth statement are educationally crucial. However, the notion of unfolding as expressed in the second statement is questionable. For instance, the unfolding of inherent aggressive potentialities is bound to make the individual an aggressive person. No one would seriously suggest that as an educational environment this is the function of the school. In actual fact, taking all aspects of his discussion into consideration, what Krishnamurti is suggesting is that education must make provision for the development of the potential of the child as an *intelligent individual*, where potential refers specifically to all that makes for intelligence and an integrated life. In particular to the self-guidance of potential by discovery of lasting values. Unfolding without qualification is thus rejected by Krishnamurti.

In spite of the fact that he employs terms more commonly used by growth theorists, it seems to be the case that by implication he rejects the growth model of education for the following reasons.

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35 J.Krishnamurti, *This Matter of Culture*, ed. D.Rajagopal, p. 94.

36 J.Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life*, p. 25.

37 *Ibid.*

Firstly, it must be admitted that the crucial aspect of Krishnamurti's notion of "right education" is taking account of personhood in educating. Now, this would involve the development of the child's abilities, taking into account of individual differences, observation and creating the 'right environment.' But, he goes further than the growth theorist when he refers with his own special meanings and emphasis, to certain other aspects as being equally necessary for one's educative growth and development. The more significant of these are the ability "to know oneself", "to grow as integrated men and women," and "to flower greatly in love and goodness."

Secondly, Krishnamurti does not consider the teacher as a mere observer or for that matter a detached agent. My claim here draws on Krishnamurti's notion of the teacher-pupil relationship. He is critical of the traditional hierarchical and basically mechanistic notion of the teacher who knows, and the student who does not know, and therefore, must be taught. His view that the psychological division between the teacher and the student must end, so that they are learning at the same time together, refers to as shared experience. He would say that the "educator and the student are both learning through their special relationship with each other."[38]

To Krishnamurti the teacher and student communicate through questioning and counter-questioning -- not only subject-matter but also problems related to the direct knowing of "what is" in relation to one's experience of life. He emphasizes dialogue as an essential approach to understanding and as a mode of teaching. Through discussions, a quality of attention and a freshness of inquiry can replace conformity as the essential prerequisite of learning. It is noteworthy that in the international schools founded by Krishnamurti, this emphasis on enquiry is incorporated into the daily educational atmosphere of the school.

Thirdly, unlike the growth model, the child is *encouraged* and *directed* to critically inquire into what is learnt, and thus redirects his own development on the basis of personal insight. As such Krishnamurti sees the need for the development of critical awareness. Not only should the individual be critical about subject-matter knowledge, he must be critical about all the extraneous influences which could condition his mind. He would say that education is a process which encourages inquiry as a *way of life* resting on direct awareness of one's character of relationship to human beings, nature, ideas and things. Consider, says Krishnamurti,

> 'educate' in the real sense of that word; not to transmit from the teachers to the students some information about mathematics, history or geography, but in the very instruction of these subjects to bring about

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[38] J.Krishnamurti, *Life Ahead*, ed., D.Rajagopal, p.9.

> a change in your mind. Which means that you have to be extraordinarily critical. You have to learn never to accept anything which you yourself do not see clearly.[39]

To develop this critical awareness as he sees it, is to develop the capacity to "know what is."

In sum, for Krishnamurti, the "right kind of education" should bring about the whole person. While imparting of subject matter knowledge is important for specific kinds of activities, the function of education is more fundamentally to free the child's mind of actual conditioning. The predominance of the conditioned mind inhibits self-knowledge-which he does regard as central to education. Thus, the educated person is the whole person in whom a total inward transformation has taken place through self-knowledge.

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[39] J.Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti on Education*, p. 18.