

EPISTEMOLOGY OF J. KRISHNAMURTI*

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Philosophy is different from life, but it is not indifferent to it.

-- Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

Jiddu Krishnamurti has presented his thoughts for the common man and not for the academicians. They are related to the daily life of every individual. Therefore, they are difficult to present in a philosophical form. The question then arises, "whether Krishnamurti was at all a philosopher or not?" We call him a seer, a thinker, a philosopher saint, a wandering guru; even though he refuted Gururdom and discipleship throughout his life. There is one school of thought that says that Krishnamurti was not a philosopher in the correct sense of the term. He did not lay any claim to system building or propounding a particular doctrine. To quote his own words from a radio talk in USA in 1921, he said, "I am not concerning myself with the founding of religious, or new sects, nor the establishment of new theories and new philosophies." In the foreword to "*The First and Last Freedom*," Aldous Huxley also comments that it is not a system of belief, a catalogue of dogmas, a set of ready-made notions and ideas. However, it is possible to develop a philosophy out of his speeches, talks, dialogues and writings that exhibit a way of thinking. Some scholars have totally opposite view about his thinking. They think Krishnamurti has developed a well rounded philosophy which encompasses a metaphysics, an epistemology, a pedagogy and an ethics. His philosophy provides guidance to human life, and his overall emphasis remains that it is only by means of negating our present concepts that we can learn about reality. In my opinion it is extremely difficult to label his philosophy and fit it in our usual thought-pattern or "isms," which

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one is familiar with in philosophical literature. He is eclectic and universal in his approach. Much of his teaching has relevance in the present age. I feel that his refusal to offer any casual solutions or to confine himself to a method, and his insistence for a radical transformation in human consciousness has given a jolt to the age old thoughts, beliefs and values.

The object of philosophy is to know Reality. Reasoning is its instrument and Experience is its data. There is a difference of opinion among philosophers as to the exact kind of experience, on which the notion of Reality must be based.

The Empiricists hold that sense experience is the only source of knowledge; the rationalists maintain that reason or thought or intellect alone gives Knowledge; the theory of Criticism believes that it is the synthesis of the two that supplies knowledge and the intuitionists hold that Knowledge is neither sensuous nor rational. Its source lies, deep within experience, which is total.

We shall see as to which of the above views is taken up by Krishnamurti. Epistemology is the study or theory of the nature, sources and limits of knowledge. In the field of Epistemology, J. Krishnamurti has taken an approach which is novel and fresh. Possessed of a very keen desire to search for Truth and Freedom, and having experimented with various traditional methods to know Truth, he rejects them all. He arrives at the true approach by critically examining and rejecting the false one. Why has he rejected the conventional methods, and on what grounds, has to be properly assessed.

Firstly, Krishnamurti criticizes methods, systems, and techniques of knowing, on the grounds that they depend upon 'How'. He points out that 'How' suggests a thought process, a mental habit, an imitation and repetition. It is only a way of movement, from the known to known. The unknown on the contrary, requires a different source of solution, which is free from all dualism. Hence, according to him, all systems are useless so far as Truth is concerned.

Krishnamurti defines knowledge as an undivided whole in flowing movement, an ongoing process, an inseparable part of our overall reality. Krishnamurti holds that no knowledge which is mental or intellectual can take us to Reality, as it is based on the dualism of knower and known. In the very conception of knowledge there implies a unique antithesis and relations between knowing or cognizing as an inner process of mind and the outer realm of fact to which the knowing or cognizing is usually said to refer. One is known as

"subjective", to the other the technical title is "objective". In all knowledge these two factors appear to be brought together into some sort of harmony. When the order of purely universal objective fact is accurately apprehended in and through the subjective process, we speak of being aware of the truth about such fact. There comes then, at once to light, the questions to put with respect to knowledge. On the other hand, knowing is a state or condition of an individual mental life. All human knowledge, that we receive from sense-experiences or reason or testimony (personal or impersonal) is at best partial and incapable of revealing the Truth or Reality, as it is based on scriptures, books, authority, Guru, which are according to him the traditional sources of knowledge.

"All our knowledge", according to Kantian dictum begins with experience and the first task of a science of knowledge is to determine the nature of and conditions involved in what is sometimes called "simple apprehensions". This type of knowledge is the phenomenal knowledge; which is required in day-to-day activities. In the epistemological sense knowledge contains much more than the concrete existent fact. One is the psychological inquiry whereas epistemological knowledge possibly shows what meaning we may attach to in its widest sense. Krishnamurti criticises this approach in that there is a divine sense, a divine leader or a Guru to guide people and deliver the message of Truth, e.g., that of Knowledge or Duration. Action and any path can be chosen according to one's own temperament and test. The grounds for his criticism are that, 'Truth' is an ever-changing 'Now' and cannot therefore, be approached through a static and fixed path.

Reality for Krishnamurti is life and not matter or mind. He puts it thus: "Reality can be understood only in living. Life is relationship, life is action in relationship". Thus, he identifies reality with living. Taking a deeper view he makes life, which is always changing, the central category of existence, "What is, is constantly moving, constantly undergoing a transformation". "What is", is not static. He asks us to live in an ever changing eternal now, in the moment of eternity which is neither the future nor the past. He says, since life is dynamic and in perpetual flux it is indeterminable by any rigid thought pattern.

Krishnamurti does not even regard speculation, philosophising and intellectual flight into the unknown. According to him it is utterly futile because it does not reveal Truth. They do not allow mind to think freely. They bind the mind to fixed concepts. So long as the mind is caught in a web of fixed concepts

it remains far away from the Truth. Conceptualised Truth is no Truth at all. The mind which is conditioned by the traditional moulds of thought, which finds itself comfortable in dualism of knower and known and which is not clear, free and limited, also can never by any means, obtain Truth. To find Truth, man must be absolutely free. Freedom is possible only when the experience ceases or the thought is blown up. The self, the knower, has to be removed, freed from the entire "conditioning" process which is a result of memories, habits, desires, goals, words, symbols, concepts and moulds of thought. Freedom is an immediate realisation, a sudden transformation, which comes from right thinking and understanding oneself as such. This is termed as 'Self Knowledge' or 'Choiceless Awareness'. He asks us to be aware, from moment to moment, of the ways of one's thoughts, feelings and actions without condemnation or justification which brings a freedom, a liberation in which alone lies, according to him, the Bliss of Truth. Choicelessness implies tranquility of mind which comes when the mind is emptied of its contents and denuded of intellect. According to him, Freedom is the state of fulfilment and perfection. But then freedom is not a goal or an ideal to be achieved or found because the very desire and effort to be free is a hindrance to liberation. When life is lived in the richness from moment to moment and not merely 'Known', there comes inner poise, serenity and calm.

Thus, he rejects all the authorities, all the known sources of knowledge, by saying that it is easy and comforting to hide oneself behind books, philosophies, creeds and dogmas, Gurus and Gods, but as long as one is held by something or somebody, he is bound in limits. The moment these things are left behind and one enters within, he discovers the Truth, he becomes a part of the Truth; where mind is always fresh, young, innocent, full of vigour and passion.

Having thus rejected all traditional ways of knowing the Real, Krishnamurti advocates a directional simple approach that of intuitive discernment and action of intelligence. He says that something of much greater value is needed which is an insight into the whole activity of knowledge.

True Knowledge, therefore, is according to him neither sensuous nor rational; nor the synthesis, which transcends all empirical experiences. This requires total denuding of the mind of its contents, (memories, perceptions, desires, feelings etc.), which condition the mind and create barriers between

oneself and Reality. This is intuitive knowledge which is non-dual and immediate. Sometimes he uses intuitive knowledge to signify the absence of inference, the absence of causes, the absence of ability to define a term, the absence of justification, the absence of symbols or the absence of thought. It is spontaneous apprehension of mystical knowledge. The inadequacy of language makes it dumb. It gives very intimate knowledge of a thing.

He describes it, "Our seeing is very limited. Our eyes are accustomed to near things. We must know how to look through and beyond fragmentary frontiers. But the eyes have to see beyond them, penetrating deeply and wisely without choosing, without shelter, wholly, in totality, eyes have to wander, beyond man made frontiers". As in Buddhism it is stated. "The body with its senses and the mind together is the seer, the process and its relationship to the outer world on whose support rests all Knowledge". Krishnamurti is not satisfied with the limitations of this "such-ness" although in the perspective of this background is the mind, is the knower and his consciousness. He goes much beyond but without leaving the humanly abode.

To him intuition is, however, not entirely cut off from intelligence. It is related with intelligence. Krishnamurti explains the relation between intuition and intelligence thus :

"One cannot divide intuition from intelligence in the higher sense. Intuition is the highest point of intelligence, Intuition is the apotheosis, the accumulation of intelligence's.¹

He defines intuition as, "pure cognition without recognition."

Since Mind and Consciousness, in its essential nature, is always in a flux, changing and flowing moment to moment, it follows that "deeper perception" or "observation", "awareness", "understanding" or "insight" into the process of consciousness and being one with it, is necessary to reveal Reality. According to Krishnamurti, true knowledge needs clear mind, a mind that is capable of direct perception. To him "Understanding" is not something mysterious. It requires a mind that is capable of looking at things directly, without prejudice, without personal inclinations, without opinions.²

Insight is "supreme intelligence", says Krishnamurti. Insight is primarily an "inward perception" which takes place though the mind. It is inward not only in the sense of looking into the very essence of the content that is to be

known and understood, but in the sense of looking into the mind that is engaged in the act of knowing. The two processes must happen together. To know, is not to know and understanding of this fact that dual knowledge can never grasp Reality, is the dawn of wisdom. He points out, "We are using the mind to imply the senses, the capacity to think, and brain that stores all the memories as experience, as Knowledge knowledge corrupts the mind. Knowledge is the movement of the past, and when the past overshadows the actual, corruption takes place". Krishnamurti uses the word corruption to mean that which is broken up, that which is not taken up as a whole.³

Krishnamurti holds that wisdom lies in totality, "total awareness", which is the process of not only observing the essential manifestations of our actions, but their origins as well. It is not morbid introspection. It is understanding the rightful place of thought. It is to see the movement and matrix of thought as inward time, to observe the thrust of self-centered activity and the way to which time, causation and historicity operate in our mind. True knowledge is penetration into the layers of consciousness, an expansion of its border. Krishnamurti holds that experiencing is an act or process and is to be observed as such, and uses the words "Choiceless Awareness" for the same. According to him, it is the only means of awakening of intelligence.

In ordinary awakening there is effort, attention, selection, choice etc., which implies that there is exclusion of other items. In "Choiceless Awareness", the awareness is without effort, attention, selection or choice. It is spontaneous, total and inclusive. Krishnamurti further clarifies that awareness is not an intellectual process of understanding, for awareness implies self knowledge in action.

In awareness it is generally understood that one is aware of "this" or "that", or something, depending on what he wants to be aware of. This obviously requires choice and when the choice is made, the view becomes partial and selective. There comes a purpose behind that selection and therefore a comparison becomes inevitable. It is directed against the whole or the totality. In "Choiceless Awareness" which is just awareness without any qualification, one comes face-to-face with Reality without any barrier of dualism. Krishnamurti puts it thus :

Truth comes into being only when there is self-knowledge. Self-knowledge brings understanding and when there is understanding, there is no

problem. When there are no problems, then the mind is quiet, it is no longer caught up in its own creations. Therefore, Choiceless Awareness is the only means of awakening intelligence, and it is possible only in the silence of the mind which spontaneously comes into being with understanding. He adds, "Let understanding be the law". Understanding, intelligence, and the stillness of the mind are by themselves the end as well as the means.

Self knowledge is a process of not only observing the external manifestations of our actions, but their origins as well. In his earlier writings, Krishnamurti has advocated steps to knowledge of "what is". He describes them in the following order :

It starts with sensory perception, then there is psychological response to time, then comes the awareness of "me" and "not me", in the next stage comes freedom from conditioning, and lastly there is emptying the mind of "me". This mind has a different type of awareness. This awareness is the highest form of virtue, therefore it is Love, the knowledge.⁴

This awareness of our insight into Reality, according to Krishnamurti, is free, spontaneous, natural, instant, total, non-spatial, non-temporal, pure, inexpressible and indeterminable. Since Reality is unconditional Choiceless Awareness, that Reality or Truth is discovered or revealed. Krishnamurti says, "To ask for proof of reality is to ask the impossible, because only then is there no accumulation, no centre around which the mind can dwell".⁵

The Mahāyāna Sūtra says that the truth is never preached by Buddha, seeing that you have to realise it within yourself⁶. True Knowledge, therefore, is self-revelation, self-evident, and self-valid. It does not require some other means of verification. Such view is nothing but an echo of the Advaita Vedānta, which advocates that knowledge is Truth. Knowledge, thus, is a revelation, not a creation; it is a discovery not an achievement. It is just this, that Krishnamurti emphasises again and again.

The epistemological position of Krishnamurti rests upon his denial of intellect and thought as the means of knowledge of the Real. He throws a challenge to rationalistic and intellectualistic view which upholds that reason or thought alone, is capable of knowing the "Real". He believes that knowledge, based on intellect and thought, is relative, limited, dual and partial. He advocates that intuition is the only means to know Reality, though he seldom uses the

word intuition. In place of it he uses the terms "Understanding", "Intense perception", "Choiceless Awareness", "Observation" or "Insight" for realising the Truth. In his thought, all these words have been used to convey the same meaning. True-knowledge is "Realisation" of "what is". It is discovery of Truth one is already in perception of. Insight is defined by Krishnamurti as that "Observation", based neither on sense-experience nor reasoning nor testimony. He holds that to have an "Insight" into "That", means that there is an "action" which is not merely the reception of thought. It is not mental or sensuous but immediate in nature, where the distinctions between the subject and the object vanish.

Why does he rely exclusively on intuition or understanding? The answer obviously is that since he conceives Reality as dynamic and sensuous, and rational knowledge as static, and since he defines intuition as being one with Reality, it is only logical that he considers intuition alone as the source of true and valid knowledge. He thinks that one cannot divorce intuition from intelligence in the higher sense; and intuition is the higher point of intelligence. He means to say that intuition is the pure form of cognition without recognition. For the knowledge of Reality this highest intelligence is the only way. There is a mystic trend in his view. Intuition has been universally accepted in the west and in the east; as it is self evident. It gives very intimate knowledge of the object and it is knowing by becoming.

Krishnamurti's view echoes the mysticism of the Upanishads and Buddhism. He himself is a mystic. The Upanishads firmly uphold that, Reality cannot be known in terms of mental categories. How can Reality be known by which all things are known - so ask the Upanishads. The Upanishads find logic also as futile. It has also been said that Reality can never be known by "Vidyā" nor by "Avidyā". Buddhism, particularly Nagarjuna's Shūnyavāda, maintains that the Real transcends all distinctions of experience and knowledge. Nagarjuna pulls to the pieces all experiences, so that the Absolute is revealed. That is a mystical scepticism. This seems to be the position held by Krishnamurti when he repeatedly says that "Truth" is a pathless land, implying thereby that all means of knowing the Real are futile.

For Krishnamurti, intuition is a state of experience in which there is neither the experiencer, nor the experienced. Here the thought is absent, but there is Being. He says, "the end of duality is the knowing of the Real".⁷

Though refuting intellectualism, Krishnamurti, however, agrees that intellect or thought or reason is not entirely useless; so far as knowledge of phenomena is concerned, it does serve the practical purposes of life but its scope is limited to the realm it operates in. Krishnamurti holds that intellectual knowledge is to be supplemented by intuition and that intuition or understanding is the expansion or deepening of intellect or thought. He further adds that intuition is suprarational, it is not anti-rational. Reason, when transcended, becomes intuition. For Krishnamurti, intuition is the highest point of intelligence. Intuition is the apotheosis, the accumulation of experience; or as Henri Bergson puts it, "It does not require any push from intelligence".

In Krishnamurti's view, intuition is "Supreme Intelligence", which is spontaneous, effortless and "Sui-generis". To him intelligence itself is the higher knowledge, therefore, supreme intelligence itself is the stage higher than that. It has nothing to do with speculation, for the speculation implies duality. According to Krishnamurti intuition is total "Understanding"; beyond the intellect, it does not require any test or proof. It is self-evident. There is no process involved in it, as it is instantaneous. For Krishnamurti intuition is the principal method, knowledge and the Truth itself. The method is used figuratively and hence, intuition is the Reality itself. There is absolutely no difference between intuitively knowing the Reality and being the Reality itself. Further, he also says that there is no method of knowing the truth or Reality. In Krishnamurti's philosophy "Summum Bonum" is the oneness of observer, observer and observed : the ontology, the epistemology and the metaphysics. There is not only the merger of subject-object but the method also does not have any independent existence. Intuition is "Sui-generis" and not a product of evolution. Krishnamurti is an upholder of intuition through and through, which is a beauty of his thought. He simply is a path-finder who shows the way because he has himself found it out. He is, as a matter of fact, a beacon light to those who care to listen or know his thoughts, which are as sound as deep. He is therefore, a "free" thinker, who thinks without relying upon or adhering to, any scripture or organisation or mentor or sect or a method or a technique. His thoughts originate from his "personal insights and experiences". His only aim or mission is to make man free, to urge him towards freedom and to help him to break away from all limitations. He is well abreast of and alive to the advancement of science and technology, realising also at the same time, their limitation. He is deeply concerned with the problem of human existence as it

is at present, with its conflicts, limitations, and tribulations; its sorrow and despair, which in his opinion lie deep within the individual mind or psyche, which is torn asunder by dualism and age old traditions. In other words, the predicament of human existence, which is a global one, impels him to seek its solutions or way out. Here, he is one with the great saviours of humanity. But the way or a solution he suggests is entirely novel, unique and exquisite. He suggests in a manner of his own that to understand a problem is to solve it, and that to perceive the true purpose of individual existence is to take the first step. To him, the real problem is not the existence as such, but the conditioning of mind which turns existence into a problem. Therefore, the real problem is conditioning. This shows the whole problem is essentially psychological and can be dealt with only at the individual level. For him, the perception of truth is voluntary which can bring about the mutation of mind, liberating it from the limitations of fragmented consciousness. Thus voluntary perception has been termed by him as "Choiceless Awareness".

His coined terminologies are sometimes so abstract and abstruse that it baffles the common logic and intelligence because firstly, one is not familiar with his linguistic expressions, secondly the meaning of the words differ from phenomenal context to non-phenomenal contexts, and finally, that makes one feel that there are contradictions in his statements. Krishnamurti demands of man too much. He wants to take away everything. His view of freedom snatches away "me" from man completely. But the difficulty with man is, he is not only conscious but also self-conscious. His living is not effortless. When Krishnamurti says, "Truth is a pathless land", he is right but the path he shows is too steep, hardly discernible, extremely difficult to follow. He only talks about the climax and never about the process. The process if there is any, is utter silence. His psychological approach it appears, does not touch the emotional and volitional aspect of human existence. Lady Emily Lutyens wrote to him in 1932, saying;

"You seem surprised that people do not understand you but I should be far more surprised if they did? After all, you are upsetting everything in which they have ever believed- knocking out their foundations and putting in its place a nebulous abstraction. You speak of what you yourself say is indescribable - and not to be understood till discovered for oneself. How then do you expect them to understand?" She aptly criticises him further from a common platform.

If the conditioned mind is incapable of right perception and right action, then how does Krishnamurti propose to help the vast majority of people who live a conditioned existence? The burden of self knowledge, according to Krishnamurti, is on the individual but he is said to be in ignorance. Krishnamurti, instead of answering these questions, simply points out that it is to be realised. It is not an idea to be achieved in time or by effort.

The difficulties in understanding the content of his teachings arise chiefly from the fact that he speaks as a mystic, a realised soul, from within, and from a high dimension of realisation. Then, he employs a vocabulary and technique which is novel and baffling and which leaves the listener bewildered and confused. Krishnamurti's entire thinking and approach is mainly negative. He has negated the conditioned human existence without making any allowance for the fact that conditioned existence has a reality and value, although limited. He has only emphasised the mystic self-realisation of Truth which though not impossible, is both real and difficult. He does not recognise that truth, though eternal, can and is grasped by different people in different ways, in different forms and is expressed in various ways which may not be totally true but is not untrue either.

Whatever be said for or against Krishnamurti, it can undoubtedly be said that he is a "rare phenomenon". He seems to be quite a "new-event". He goes beyond Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism and reforms and corrects what he considers to be their shortcomings. He does not agree with Śaṅkarāchārya that the conditioned existence is real even though limited. He does not agree with the "fourth noble truth" of the Buddha. Further, he does not agree with Śaṅkarāchārya that reality is unchanging and therefore, illusory. For him, changing from moment to moment is real. He does not agree with Buddha that there can be a path or way to liberation and that time and discipline are needed for it. From Śaṅkara, he takes the concept of non-dual Reality, from Buddhism, he borrows the idea of "no-soul" theory and theory of momentariness. But he transcends both Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism. He is a Neo-Buddha and Neo-Śaṅkara.

Krishnamurti is the philosopher of meanings; Philosophical, Scientific and Psychological essences. His way of denial of soul as permanent reality is psychological and scientific. His diagnosis of human misery and its solutions - psychological freedom - both are most significant insights. His view about

religion and God is unsecularly secular. His hundreds of insights revealed in the language available, are thought-provoking and bewildering, such as, "The observer is the observed," "go beyond the limitations", "Thought is garbage" etc.

His is an altogether original and provocative spirituality. He is a cleanser of spiritual and religious corruption. It embodies an unfailing vision of the Eternal Truth not only to the theist but even to the most scientific minded people. If his "Direct Vision of Truth" is taken to be the criterion of the modern scientific contemporary thinking, then Krishnamurti is at the top of all heights.

NOTES

1. Krishnamurti : *Early Writings*, Vol. II, p. 76.
2. Lutyens, Mary : *The Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, p. 123.
3. Lutyens, Mary : *The Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, p. 123.
4. Krishnamurti : *Early Writings*, Vol.I & II.
5. Krishnamurti : *Talks Seattle*, 1950, p. 60
6. Krishnamurti : *The First and Last Freedom*, p. 11.
7. Krishnamurti : *The Only Revolution*, p.61.