

THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRUTH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO J. KRISHNAMURTI

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“Man has throughout the ages been seeking something beyond himself, beyond material welfare - something we call truth or God or reality, a timeless state - something that cannot be disturbed by circumstances, by thought or by human corruption”.

- J. Krishnamurti

This paper in three parts is an attempt at the exposition of Jiddu Krishnamurti's notion of truth. Part one deals with truth in its four perspectives-epistemological, logical, existential and metaphysical. Part two comprises the discussion of Krishnamurti's notion of 'metaphysical' truth ; in it is shown the distinction between thought and truth ; choiceless awareness has been explained as the only and direct 'way' of realising truth as the emptiness of the mind which transcends all conceptualisation. In the last part the implications of the truth for social change have been discussed. Truth is intelligence and intelligence is love. Love alone can put an end to all the crises of humanity. Love is the only creative factor which can bring about a fundamental revolution in man and the world ; sans love the life-world would be absurd - full of confusion and sorrow.

The problem of truth is of perennial philosophical concern. The term "truth" is as abstract as the term "freedom" or "good". In the history of philosophy truth has been understood differently by different thinkers. Broadly the discussion of truth may be brought under four headings - epistemological, logical, existential and metaphysical.

Epistemologically, a belief or a statement, according to the realists, is true

when it corresponds to the fact. The statement, for instance, 'Today is Sunday' is true only when it is stated on a Sunday and false otherwise.¹ To the idealists, a judgement is true only when its predicate coheres with its subject and false otherwise. The judgement, 'Milk is white' is true whereas the judgement 'Milk is black' is false. While the former judgement creates harmony, the latter generates discord in thought. In a wider sense, a judgement is true when it coheres with a system with which it is internally related ; a judgement is more true if it coheres in a larger system ; judgements thus, according to idealism, are true or false only relatively and by degree.² The pragmatists say that a true idea - opinion, belief, statement, etc. - is one which works or fulfils its function;³ serviceability or utility of effecting a concrete difference in one's life is the criterion of truth. Accordingly, even the idea that 'God exists' is true if it is expedient irrespective of God's actual existence.⁴ The logical positivists hold that only a statement with a factual content and verifiable in experience is true.⁵ The linguistic analysts regard a statement as true only when it pictures or mirrors reality and definitely asserts or denies facts. As Wittgenstein puts it, "The proposition 'shows' how things stand, if it is true".⁶ In Indian epistemology, the Jainas hold that judgement (*Naya*) is true only relatively; it is conditional and gives only a partial knowledge. And there could be seven relative judgements (*Saptabhanginaya* or *Syādvāda*) about a thing, viz., 1) Relatively, a thing is real, 2) Relatively, a thing is unreal, etc.⁷ The Naiyayikas regard a judgement as true when it apprehends or manifests the object as it is. True knowledge must not only correspond to the object but also lead to fruitful activity (*Paratahprāmānyavāda*). The statement, 'This is fire', in order to be true, must refer to the fire which not only burns but also cooks or sheds light.⁸ According to the Mīmāṃsaka's intrinsic notion of truth (*Svatahprāmānyavāda*), all knowledge is direct and immediate; it is normal and true by itself, *per se*; it is novel, self-consistent and does not arise from defective sense organs.⁹

Logically, a statement is true irrespective of psychological or epistemological certainty ; logically or an analytically true statement is necessarily true or true *a priori* ; the testimony of experience is unnecessary to establish it; it cannot be confirmed or refuted by any fact of experience. A proposition (or an awareness - episode) like 'Sound is impermanent' is true (or fact - corresponding) even when it lacks the required epistemological certainty which may be supplied by giving a

proper evidence or argument.¹⁰ More specifically, logical truths are the propositions expressing the ideas of identity (A is A), contradiction (A cannot be B and not - B) and tautology (Either p or not - p).¹¹ A logical truth may also be explained as the statement which is true and remains true under all its reinterpretations of its components other than the logical particles. Strawson characterises a logically true statement as that which "remains true under all reinterpretations, etc., provided that predicates extensionally equivalent to each other are always replaced by predicates extensionally equivalent to each other".¹²

In existentialism, truth is subjective in nature. To Kierkegaard, truth is related to the inwardness of the existing individual. He says, "Subjectivity is the truth".¹³ In contrast to the objective truth which is speculative, rule-governed and only approximation, the subjective truth is existential, passionate and certain. Truth is not a corpus of knowledge which can be added to and passed on from one to the other; it is not the identity of thought and being. On the contrary, truth is the unity of the finite and the infinite in the moment of passion; it is the essential, complete and eternal knowledge which can be realized when the inwardness of the individual subject culminates in passion. In truth the individual transcends himself and becomes infinite. to be truthful is to be a Christian with infinite passion and not as a speculative philosopher. An objective knowledge and acceptance of the truth of Christianity is untruth and thoughtlessness. "To know a confession of faith by rote is paganism, because Christinity is inwardness",¹⁴ avers Kierkegaard. Truth *per se* is decisive but it becomes paradoxical in relation to the individual. In the existing individual it is both finite and infinite.

Existential - ontological truth, according to Heidegger, is not agreement between judgement and its object but the uncoveredness of the being by the judgement. Truth means Being - uncovering; it is letting the entity be seen in its uncoveredness. Being true means "taking entities out of their hiddenness and letting them be seen in their unhiddenness (their uncoveredness)".¹⁵ Truth as uncovering is a kind of Being which belongs to Dasein. Dasein is the foundation for the primordial phenomenon of truth. dasein is essential to the being of truth. In other words, truth is possible only on the basis of Dasein who exists in the basic mode of Being-in-the-world. "There is truth only in so far as Dasein is and so long

as Dasein is".¹⁶ That is, entities are uncovered only when Dasein is ; all truth is 'relative' to Dasein's Being ; truth is subjective in so far its uncovering arises out of Dasein's discretion.

Unlike the epistemological and logical truths, and in some sense like the existentialistic truth, the metaphysical truth, refers not to the truth or the falsity of beliefs, ideas or propositions but to the nature or the state of the mind. The Western idealists - rationalist metaphysicians - have variously called the metaphysical truth the Absolute Idea, the ultimate Reality, the Experience of the whole or the Infinite Consciousness. Some of them have equated it with God or Spirit.¹⁷ In the oriental philosophy, the Sāṃkhya, has regarded the Pure Subject, consciousness or Knowrer (*Puruṣa*) as the metaphysical truth.¹⁸ The Advaitins have treated the non-dual and immutable Self (*Ātman* or *Brahman*) as the metaphysical truth or Reality.¹⁹ To the Vijñānavādins the metaphysical truth is the Suchness (*Tathatā*). They have called it variously the Ultimate Existence (*Bhūtāma*), Pure Spirit (*Bodhi*), Universal Consciousness (*Prajñā* or *Ālaya vijñāna*), Harmonious whole (*Dharmakya*) or Bliss (*Tathāgathagarbha*)²⁰. To the Mādhyaṃikas the 'metaphysical' truth is the *Śūnyatā* or *Tattva* or *Prajñā* which stands neither for the unreality of the world nor for the Reality over and above the world but for the essencelessness (*Prapañca Śūnyatā*) of all the concepts like eternalism, annihilationism, etc.²¹ In Indian philosophy, metaphysical truth is soteriological in character for it signifies ultimate liberation of the human reality from pain and suffering. It is to be directly perceived (*darśana*) and not to be rationally intuited and conceptualised through the categories of the intellect as the Western metaphysicians hold it to be.

The positivists and the analytical philosophers have condemned the metaphysical truth as non-sensical and its discussion as vain. They have discarded it as an abstraction, a logical construction which cannot get past even the eye of a grammarian; they have held that the discussion of Truth as an abstract noun arises through the mistake of thinking that what holds of ordinary words like "red" or "grows" etc., must also hold for the extraordinary words like "truth", "reality", "existence", etc. Some of the analysts, J.L. Austin, for instance, has even gone to the extent of regarding the jesting Pilate, who asked what is truth and did not wait

for an answer, as being ahead of times.²² Metaphysical truth with capital T is so trivial that it is not worth inquiring into.

However, it may be contended that it would be short sighted to dispense with the metaphysical truth altogether. A proper understanding of the metaphysical truth would reveal that it is not a misnomer but an actuality with profound implications for the individual and social well-being. The linguistic philosophers' view that the problem of the metaphysical truth can be solved by dissolving it or by showing that there is no such problem at all leads to, as T.R.V. Murti puts it, "an unmitigated relativism and indifference towards the great issues of life."²³ The whole of the Asian philosophical tradition is a clear testimony to the eternal importance of the metaphysical truth. There is a galaxy of thinkers in the Asian tradition who have emphasised the significance of the discovery of the metaphysical truth for the harmonious and peaceful co-existence of humanity. J. Krishnamurti is one such thinker who has shown incisive insights into the eternal truth the "nameless thing of a thousand names"²⁴ which transcends intellectual understanding.

To Krishnamurti, Philosophy means the love of truth. Love means the instantaneous perception or insight which is beyond the intellect. Truth means the mind or life which is undetermined by thought. Philosophy is the insight into the 'emptiness' of the mind and living from moment to moment without any division and conflict. In other words philosophy is the actual realisation of the truth through the direct understanding of the limitations the reality of thought. "Philosophy means the love of truth, not love of words, not love of ideas, not love of speculations, but the love of truth. And that means you have to find out for yourself where reality is and that reality cannot become truth. You cannot go through reality to come to truth. You must understand the limitations of reality which is the whole process of thought".²⁵

Krishnamurti distinguishes between thought and truth. According to him thought is the movement of the past, memory or knowledge. Thought is a material process in the brain ; it is conditioned, determined or limited by the past. Thought is never independent ; independent thought is a contradiction in terms. The content of thought, namely, the past, is of two kinds - factual and psychological. The

factual content comprises the knowledge which is well - reasoned, experimented and useful for our biological well - being; it includes the academic-the scientific, the techonological, the linguistic, the mathematical and the historical knowledge. Whereas the psychological content is a messy conglomeration of ideas, images, hopes, likes, dislikes, beliefs and things. The psychological content is irrational and fictitious ; it constitutes the conditioned "self", the mind or the consciousness of the humanity; it is the root cause of our misery; it is responsible for all the cries - division, conflict, poverty, violence, war and sorrow. Truth is entirely different from thought ; truth is where thought is not. Thought is the known ; the truth is the Unknown ; thought is a 'thing' whereas the truth is 'nothing'.²⁶ Thought can know only what is already known ; it cannot comprehend the truth, the unknown as it is ; thought can only speculate about the truth. It is only in the ending of truth that the truth happens to be.

Krishnamurti maintains that the understanding of truth is beyond all paths or methods. Truth is not a static thing or a fixed goal. Truth is not dead part but the living-present which cannot be comprehended through a path or a method, for a method implies the functioning of thought which is old. Method involves time which is the continuity of thought; it approaches the 'what is', the actuality of thought with ideas, conclusions, motives and ends which are again the products of the same thought. Krishnamurti says, "To know the end is to know continuity, and to have a means to the end is to sustain the known".²⁷ Truth is a pathless land. It happens to be only in the direct perception of the whole structure and the limitations of thought. It is not a method but an unconditional inquiry into the network of thought which reveals the truth. "We do not have to seek truth. Truth is not something far away. It is the truth about the mind, truth about its activities from moment to moment."²⁸

It is in choiceless awareness that thought ends and truth comes into being. Choiceless awareness is an unconditional and an instantaneous understanding of the 'what is', the actuality of thought. The awareness is devoid of the centre, the thinker which is thought itself. It is without justification, condemnation, comparison, recognition, reaction or verbalization which is the product of thought. The awareness is the pure observation in which there is no division as the observer

and the observed but in which the observer 'is' the observed. "Truth is when there is the realization that the observer is the observed. Then in that realization, which is truth, the conditioning disappears".²⁹ In the awareness, thought totally observes itself and becomes silent or still. The silence is a "state of intelligence"³⁰ or Insight which releases immense energy 'the energy deconditions and regenerates the whole mind. The regeneration is the mutation in the brain - cells; the mutation is irrevocable; it renders the mind 'empty' or 'nothing'. The nothingness is wisdom devoid of the accretions of thought. Krishnamurti says; "Without these accretions you are nothing - which is the truth. And why not be that? Why all these pretensions and conceits? We have clothed this nothingness with fancies, with various comforting ideas; but beneath these coverings we are nothing, not as some philosophical abstraction, but actually nothing. The experiencing of that nothingness is the beginning of wisdom".³¹

The realisation of truth is the beginning of freedom. Freedom is the mind which is "free from all dependence and limitation".³² It is acausal, timeless and immeasurable; it is a wholistic and an integrated mind; it is beyond all conditioning - natural, psychological, social, etc. It is not determined by anything, nor does it determine itself. The true or the free mind is the mind *per se*; it is the movement of energy which is without the beginning and the ending or in which the beginning is the ending. The free mind is without a centre, without division, duality, contradiction and conflict. It is secure within itself; its security is not in anything but in being 'nothing'. Nothingness means absolute security whereas security through something or thought is the greatest insecurity. The true mind is an orderly mind; its order is not the contrived order of thought but of the infinite order of the Cosmos. The true mind is a 'stable' mind; its stability is not but "the movement of stillness"³³ which cannot be disturbed by circumstances, by thought or by human corruption.

The free mind is an intelligent mind; intelligence is not thought but it uses the factual thought only for biological purposes. Intelligence strictly confines thought to the factual realm; it does not allow thought into the psychological realm where thought certainly goes berserk and brings about the crisis of division and sorrow. To Krishnamurti, intelligence is love; love is neither attachment nor

detachment but "transformation from moment to moment".³⁴ Love is absolute; it is not relative to hatred; to love is to be alone; aloneness means being one with all. Love is not abstraction but action in the flowery of goodness. The goodness is not relative to evil but virtue which knows no evil. "Where there is love you can do what you will. Then there is no sin, there is no conflict,"³⁵ says Krishnamurti. Love is not in isolation but in relationship with infinite care; it is responsibility without the sense of dread of duty. Love is the only panacea for the humanity and the world in crisis. The crisis is due to thought at the psychological level which is the source of all human problems - division, conflict, poverty, pollution, violence, war etc. The crisis is resolved only when the individual realises the truth which embodies love. Krishnamurti says, "If there is love there are no social problems".³⁶ When there is love in the individual then the world would be a paradise on earth. Thought can only perpetuate but can never solve the human problems; it can only solve the technological problems which are never ending. Love alone can resolve the human predicament forever and without residue. Love is the only source of a fundamental revolution in man and the world; "it is the only creative factor in bringing about transformation in ourselves and so in society".³⁷ Understanding the truth and living with love is the only way of living a meaningful life. Bereft of truth and love life would be absurd - full of confusion and sorrow.

In conclusion, it may be said that Krishnamurti categorically holds that the radical transformation of the individual is inevitable for the total change in the society. The individual and the society are not different. The individual is the centre of the society. The society is the psychological extension of the individual. Social structure is basically psychological in character. That is, thought at the psychological level is at the root of all social problems. The crisis in the world is due to the crisis in consciousness. "You are the world and the world is you", says Krishnamurti. As is the individual so is the world. Realisation of the truth by the individual alone transforms the world truly. All other kinds of outward changes - political, economic, etc., are superficial. Change according to a pattern or an ideology is partial and peripheral which perpetuates the predicament. Change from 'within', or the explosion from the centre, the inward being of the individual, alone can bring about a real and lasting social changes. Thus Krishnamurti's

notion of truth is neither a figment of imagination nor a self-centred activity. On the contrary, the truth is an actuality with profound implications for the bright future of the humanity.

NOTES

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- 8 *Ibid.*, pp.192-93.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p.213.
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- 32 Krishnamurti, J, *The Ending of Time*, KFI, Madras, 1992, p.243 & Bohom, David
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