

An Examination of Psychological Time

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Abstract

This paper considers the question of time as it is employed by the human mind in two basic ways. The first is as a chronological notion, time by the watch, which is perhaps how it is understood most fundamentally. Here we see time as the measurement of movement between two points or places: 'It will take an hour to fly from London to Paris.' The movement is real and measurable. The second concerns its use in a psychological sense, a use many of us will be unfamiliar with. This relates to a view of self that seeks to move toward some imagined goal, usually seen for the better. 'I'll be Prime Minister, someday,' 'I'll become a millionaire,' 'I'll become a better person,' but it concerns anything the human mind entertains in the form of an image, from anxiety and regret on the one hand to desire and hope on the other. Such movement by the human mind in pursuit of an imagined goal, is psychological time in operation and it appears in a variety of forms. The paper seeks to outline just what those forms are and tries to show that a mind free from psychological time is a mind free from conflict and travail in everyday life.

Introduction

The song on the radio goes :

“Did I ever tell you, you’re my hero?
You’re everything, everything I wish I could be.
Oh, and I, I could fly higher than an eagle,
For you are the wind beneath my wings,
‘cause you are the wind beneath my wings..¹”

¹ “Wind Beneath My Wings,” Lyrics by Bette Midler.

I listen with interest and not a little wonder and muse about what it all means. “Did I ever tell you you’re my hero? You’re everything I wish I could be.” - the lyrics seem straightforward enough ; in fact the meaning leaps right out at us : the singer, or the person whose words she is mouthing, wishes she could be someone else and in particular the someone she so clearly seems to have in mind. We as listeners may not know who that might be, we may not know who the writer envisaged on writing it, but we will certainly be familiar with the thought it expresses : the desire to be someone else. And we will be familiar with it not necessarily because we have had that very thought—even though many of us may indeed have had similar ones—but because modern media bombards us all the time with images of how we could be, how we should be and how to improve on ourselves.

But for the moment let’s take the song at face value and accept that it is an expression of a genuine wish on the part of a certain person to be someone else. Although we, ourselves, may not have had the thought, it may not strike us as odd or strange. Indeed, we might sing along with the song, if not with identification, then with understanding, with something approaching sympathy. And part of this may be because most of us in our everyday lives are doing something similar. This is not to say, we are all wishing to be someone else, but most of us, a lot of the time, engage in thought that does not relate to how things are, but how we would like them to be. We have hopes and desires about the future and regrets and recriminations about the past. Our hopes and desires about the future are often about things ‘we’ would like to achieve or become. ‘I hope to be a great writer one day,’ ‘I want to become a doctor,’ ‘I’m going to be the best player on the team,’ ‘I want that job,’ etc. At other times they may seem to be about other people, ‘I hope he does well,’ ‘She’s going to make something of her life,’ ‘He’ll go far.’ About the past we might remark, ‘I wish I hadn’t said that,’ or ‘I’m glad that I told him what I thought,’ ‘They should have listened to me,’ ‘He seemed

pleased with what I said.'

As well as this kind of speculation about the past, and what we entertain about the future, there is all manner of speculation about other things. We imagine what we might say or do in certain situations, we worry about what others might think of us or about their reactions to certain events, and some of us spend time day-dreaming about worlds or scenarios that we would like to see transpire. A lot of energy gets invested in this kind of activity. It occupies us. It takes over. It is what we are, who we are — the very essence of self - and it may seem so very natural that we take it all for granted, never stopping to examine what is going on, never pausing to examine if it is necessary or perhaps even a waste of time. For many it may just seem to be a basic fact about us that we engage in such activities, something that there is no reason whatsoever to do anything about. This activity of thought directed at past events - at things which seem to have some relation with the present - as well as others which seem to bear on things yet to happen, for all its seeming diversity, has one important thread running through it: the concern for the non-real or non-actual. We have called it speculation and that is what it is. It is essentially concern for something other than what is the case, and in most cases for what could not possibly be the case. And the interesting question is why it should predominate or play such an important role in people's lives. One person who looked in detail at the mind's propensity for such kind of activity was Jiddu Krishnamurti, and he really did feel that there was a tremendous amount we could learn about it. He referred to it as 'time' and far from taking it for granted - an unremarkable fact about us - he spent a great deal of his life coming to a deeper understanding of the mind's constant involvement in it, and he came to see it as one of the chief causes of conflict in our lives. Let us turn now to a fuller consideration of what he had to say on this topic.

TIME

Perhaps, of all the things Krishnamurti talks about, what he has to say about 'time', psychological time, is the most difficult to understand or take to heart. This is not because he uses difficult concepts or terminology, but might in part be due to the very word — time — that he chooses. Most of us are familiar with *time* used in a chronological sense : “In one hour it will be dark,” “I ate dinner two hours ago,” “Rain is forecast for tomorrow,” “I’ll be there in two hours time,” etc.

When Krishnamurti talks about time — psychological time — he is talking about inner movement - all the inner dialogue that human beings engage in, including the ubiquitous reactions and responses that catapult out in surprising fashion. But more than this it includes all the hopes, aspirations, desires, targets and imaginings that rush in, occupy, and take over the mind.

What is time? There is time by the watch, chronological time, the time it takes to go from here to a house ; time involves the covering of that space between here and your house. The house is a fixed object - please listen to this carefully - the house is a fixed object and the time that it takes to cover that distance is measurable. So there is time according to the watch. That is clear. There was time as yesterday, today and tomorrow, which again, is part of chronological time ; yesterday I was in London, today I am here, tomorrow I am in New York. Again, this covers distance through time by the watch. That is clear. I am not a philosopher therefore please forgive me. Is there any other time?.....

.....There is a time which is called psychological. So there are two times, the time of yesterday, today and tomorrow, the distance, the time

you take between here and your house ; that is one kind of time. It takes time to learn a language, collecting a lot of words, memorizing them ; that will take time. Learning a technique, learning a craft, learning a skill - all that implies time - chronological time. Then there is psychological time, the time that mind has invented. The mind that says, I will be the President, tomorrow I will be good, I will achieve, I will become successful, I will be more prosperous, I will attain perfection, I will become the Commissar, I will be this, I will be that. There, time is between the goal and the present state. That goal which I have set myself to achieve, will take time - I must struggle, I must drive, I must be ambitious, I must be brutal, I must push everybody aside. These are all projections of the mind and what it wants to achieve ; they create psychological time. So we have these two kinds of time, chronological time and psychological time. (1970, p 61)

So, Krishnamurti introduces us to two types of time, the chronological and the psychological. Chronological time may seem straightforward. It is time by the watch. 'It will take an hour to get home by car from here,' 'I will meet you at the station tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock,' 'If we leave now, we'll arrive at 6p.m'. We use this measure of time every day ; it is the means by which we break up not only the day but also the week, the month and the year. It is our most fundamental form of measure and we use it to manage our lives and dealings with other people living in the same towns and cities and increasingly, as technology makes this possible, with other people around the world. Different set *standard times* around the world make it easy for people in different countries to determine what time it is in those other countries. We compare times and work out when it is most appropriate to make a telephone call and establish a direct form of contact. In these days of email it is no longer necessary to calculate such

times. We simply send the mail and it gets read or not at a time which suits the recipient.

This form of time, the chronological, is what most of us understand by time. It constitutes the way we dissect the days into manageable blocks ; it's how we mark out, not only our working lives but also our leisure activities : 'It will take 2 hours to write the computer program' and '3 hours to paint the kitchen.' We can calculate this time and make fairly good estimates about how long it will take to achieve certain targets. The aims are usually concrete and achievable and we can see what is involved in the movement from the current moment when our goal is only defined to a future moment when the goal is achieved. We engage in this type of calculating activity all the time taking five minutes to make a cup of coffee, twenty minutes for a trip to a post office, two hours to watch a movie and six hours to read a novel. In the meantime, we take an hour to make dinner, another hour to wash our clothes and maybe the same amount of time to take a bath. Sleep on the other hand may take anything up to eight hours, which is also the average amount of time that we engage in our professional activities, most commonly called, work.

This sense of time is, for most of us, very real. There is a space, a distance that has to be covered to reach a certain goal. It is finite and determinate ; the chronological follows the clock and constitutes the physical means of mapping out our lives. Not many of us would deny what Krishnamurti says about chronological time ; indeed many of us would consider it an unremarkable fact about us and might be puzzled as to why he had brought it to our attention.

That he does so, it to contrast it with another form of time, psychological time, which has a much more pernicious effect on our passage through life :

Then there is psychological time, the time that mind has invented. The mind that says, I will be the President, tomorrow I will be good, I will

achieve, I will become successful, I will be more prosperous, I will attain perfection, I will become the Commissar, I will be this, I will be that. There, time is between the goal and the present state. That goal which I have set myself to achieve, will take time - I must struggle, I must drive, I must be ambitious, I must be brutal, I must push everybody aside. These are all projections of the mind and what it wants to achieve ; they create psychological time. So we have these two kinds of time, chronological time and psychological time.

(*ibid*, p 61)

Psychological time is time the mind has invented : 'I will be President,' 'I will be good,' 'I will achieve,' 'I will be prosperous,' etc. are all 'projections of the mind and what it wants to achieve'.

The suggestion is that psychological time, unlike chronological time, has been invented by the mind, that it does not really exist, that it is ill-founded. Chronological time, the time involved in covering a distance between here and the station, making a cup of tea, going to the post office, watching a movie or TV program, reading a novel, writing a computer program, painting the kitchen ; these things are simple everyday activities which take time but they do not entail any change in the agent — in the person engaged in them. They are activities that any one might carry out. Becoming President, becoming good, becoming prosperous, achieving, all involve image making and demand a change in the self, or the person in question. I am not President now. I am not good now. I am not prosperous now. These are all targets I have set myself ; maybe they are achievable, maybe not — most certainly, there are no recognized timeframes for us to work in here. How long does it take to become President, how long to become good, etc.? Unlike in the case of going to the post office, where the distance is measurable, finite and known, in the case of the desires of the mind we

are dealing with states we would like to achieve, things we would like to happen, constructs of our own making, all of which are things we have no way of measuring at all.

But is psychological time true or is it an illusion?

.....Here are two facts, one, I am this, the other that I want to be that, whether it is a big thing or a little thing. And that also implies space and time. And the other is getting from here to the house, distance to cover, involving time say to myself, both seem to be true, true in the sense that I have a goal, I want to be powerful, I want to be rich, I want to be famous, and I drive towards that. To become famous takes time, because the image which I have created of fame is there in the distance and I must cover it, through time, because I am not that image now, but I will be in the future. I am not at the house now. I am here. It will take time. And now I want to be famous. Psychologically, that is my projection, the image which I have created of fame. You see that, there it is. I have projected it, it is my image because I have compared other famous people and I want to be like them. And that implies struggle, competitiveness and ruthlessness. It is an actual thing I want, do I not? I want that and I struggle to get it. I do not question why I have created that image. I do not question what is involved in arriving at that image. I just say, 'I must be that image'. So in this there is a great deal of conflict, pain, suffering, and brutality. And that is my conditioning, because people have told me from childhood that I must be this, I must pass my exams, I must be a great man, I must be a business man, a lawyer, a professor, whatever it is.

So I have created that image and I have not found out why I have done so. If I see the absurdity of that image, if I see the futility, the pain, the

agony, the anxiety, everything that is involved in it, I do not create the image, therefore I abolish it. (*Ibid*, p 62)

Psychological time may look similar to chronological time and may be one reason why we do not see it for what it is. I am not President now. I'm just an ordinary man with a dream, with an image. I want to become that image and I tell myself it will take time in the same way that it will take time to drive to the station. So, I struggle and strive to become that image. Similarly, if I want to become rich or prosperous ; now, I have no money but I see plenty of people who are rich and prosperous on TV or in the newspapers. I form an image of what that is like and imagine that it will take time to achieve that, to become that. And, again, I struggle and push to achieve it. But Krishnamurti exhorts us to examine what is going on here. We have a model of chronological time that makes good sense and our psychological desires, our image making follow that model - which is not to say we will never achieve or succeed in what we aim for here. At least one person will become President and it may indeed be a projected desire for that person. Krishnamurti is not concerned to point out that we are always doomed to failure in this exercise. His concern is that we see very clearly what is going on, and the suggestion is that most of us do not see clearly because we have never taken the time to examine this issue. That we do examine the issue is something he considers of vital importance. Do we see that we are creating these images based on comparison — between what we are and what we would like to be - something we started to learn in childhood, something which is now deeply ingrained? Do we see that this is what is going on? Do we see that psychological time is quite different to chronological time and is based on creating images? Because if we do, we will surely question this whole image-making process.

That many of us do not see psychological time as an illusion can be put

down to, at least, two reasons. 1) While we may be familiar with what Krishnamurti calls 'chronological time', many of us are not even aware that 'psychological time' exists, which is to say that we don't realize we are engaged in it, are trapped in it. 2) Even if it is pointed out to us that we spend so much of our lives engaged in psychological time and we see and accept that we do - while this may be a wonderful first step — it is no guarantee that we can be free of it, for the simple reason that unless we see it as a mistake, it is unlikely that we will attempt to fully understand it.

So, let's try to examine this notion of psychological time in more detail because unless we actually see psychological time for what it is, and, moreover, unless we see it directly for ourselves, it will continue to dominate. In the next passage, Krishnamurti approaches the question of time from a slightly different perspective.

And, there is the whole nature of time, as thought has built in the psyche, in ourselves; that is, 'what is' and 'what should be', a movement from here to there. Is there psychological time at all, or, is it actually an invention of thought? That is, what is jealousy, anger cruelty, violence - that is 'what is'. And to overcome that we need time. That is the traditional, educated, conditioned thinking that to change 'what is' to 'what should be' - from here to there - you need to cover the distance, time, which is effort. Right? We're meeting each other? Effort, to go from here psychologically towards an end - that end projected by thought, a purpose, a goal, an achievement, enlightenment and all the rest of it. That is, to move from here, 'what is', to 'what should be', the ideal. That's what we have accepted, that is our normal thinking, or rather, educated thinking. It may perhaps be neurotic thinking. Because we don't know how to deal with 'what is'

immediately, so we think we need time to achieve that which should be. Because we don't know, or we are not capable, we don't understand how to deal with 'what is' - anger, jealousy, hatred, sorrow, and all the immense confusion which thought, man has created in himself, and so outwardly.

So, we need time ; at least we think so. That is, if all hope is removed - hope is time. Please follow all this. One is desperate, anxious, frightened, all the things that human beings go through, to transform all that into something which is perhaps totally different, we think we need a process of time. Right? Please understand this clearly. That is, the psychological time - the chronological time and the psychological time. We are talking about the psychological time. Time, we said, is a movement as thought is a movement in time. So, is there an ideal, the 'what should be', something different from 'what is'? You understand my question? I am envious, one is envious. We know all the implications of that envy, with the results of it in society, in our relationship with each other, and to overcome or go beyond that envy I need some days, weeks, months, years. Is that so, or is it total illusion? Can 'what is' be changed immediately, instantly? If it can, then the ideal, that which should be, is non-existent. (3rd Public Talk, Brockwood Park, 1976)

It may look as if Krishnamurti is expanding the scope of psychological time to include not only aspirations, things people would like to become — like captain of the team - but also to include desires to overcome or remove already held traits like envy, jealousy, anger, etc. In both cases, however, this involves a movement from 'what is' to 'what should be', but there is a slight difference in emphasis : (1) in one case from a lack of something to an attempt to achieve it — I am not

President, I will become President and : (2) in another case from possession of a negative quality to an attempt to remove it — I am greedy and violent — I will become non-greedy and non-violent. The main point is that we recognize this strong tendency in us : the desire to move away from ‘what is’ to ‘what should be’. When we have feelings like anger, jealousy, cruelty and violence, etc, we generally tend to feel that we shouldn’t be having such feelings, that it is actually wrong to have them : I shouldn’t be angry, jealous, cruel, etc. We do not need to make such judgments, but we do need to understand the feelings. Instead of this, however, we aim at achieving ideal states such as being non-angry, non-jealous or non-violent. And, traditionally, the response has been that it takes time to overcome such feelings and reach the ideals but that with appropriate effort, determination and time, we can succeed. This is the ‘educated’ response but Krishnamurti ventures that it may be a neurotic response because we don’t know how, or never look, to deal with what is actually at hand : the anger, the jealousy, etc. We are too quick to move away and see time as the solution. Seeing this as a mistake, he comes up with a crucial question, one which goes right to the heart of our problem. If it is a mistake to assume we need time to change ‘what is’, can ‘what is’ be changed immediately?

Please, perhaps some of you are here for the first time and have not listened to all the other talks and therefore this may all sound rather strange, extravagant and quite loony. But actually when you go into it very deeply, into oneself, which is important, because as we said, you are the world and the world is you, and wherever you go every human being, whatever colour, whatever nationality, whatever religion he may be, he has these human problems of great sorrow, tears, laughter, anxiety, pain, that’s the common factor of human beings. And so the world wherever you are, where human beings are, they go through the same

psychological phenomena as yourself, so you are actually the world and the world is you. If you can realize that, feel that profoundly then it becomes extraordinarily important that one should transform oneself completely, psychologically, because then you affect the total consciousness of the world. That gives you enormous vitality, energy, strength when you see that you are like the rest of humanity, and therefore there is no separate, individualistic struggle to overcome one's own particular sorrow.

So we are saying - it's very important to understand time. Time is part of our consciousness, time is the division between 'what is' and 'what should be', and the effort made to change 'what is' according to 'what should be', that needs great time, from here to there. I think one has to question that whole process, though it has become traditional we must question it, doubt it. And doubt is a very important thing in life. To doubt. Perhaps one or two religions - like Buddhism - starts by questioning everything. As we said the other day, if you start with certainty, as most people do, then you end up with nothing. But if you start with doubting, questioning, being sceptical, trying to investigate, then you end up with clarity. So we are questioning this idea that we need time to change 'what is' into 'what should be', which is a psychological process. Why is it not possible to change 'what is' immediately - not have the ideal? The ideal is a projection of 'what is' away from 'what is'. The ideal is non-existent. It's a fiction, the ideal. What is actual, what exists is, 'what is'. So we are dealing with 'what is', which is actual, and trying to change 'what is' into 'what should be' which is illusory. So, we are always caught between the fact and what is illusion. So, if one is able to think very clearly, objectively, non-personally then is it possible to change 'what is' without transforming it

into 'what should be'? (3rd Public Talk, Brockwood Park, 1976)

'You are the world and the world is you.' Krishnamurti articulates something so simple and so fundamental about the make up of human beings that it must rattle the very foundations of the home of individualism. All over the world, people of every nation have the same psychological make up and face the same problems as one another. There is anxiety, delight, pain and pleasure, fear as well as joy, hope and desire, regret and remorse and, of course, the fundamental sorrow. The object of these feelings may vary: I desire a new car while you long for a simple bicycle. I worry about losing my job but you worry about losing a book. I worry about losing my savings while you worry about losing a few coins. The objects vary according to our means and circumstances, our position and our wealth. One person longs for some shoes for his feet, another for an extra pair for his wardrobe. The longing is the same. The common factor is that these feelings are felt by everyone. And when we realize this, the feelings are no longer quite so personal. Sorrow is what we all feel; it is not mine or yours, even though the temptation to feel such remains strong for most of us.

However, on seeing the truth of this, one is freed from oneself and is filled with a sense of humility and responsibility. If all these feelings are the lot of each one of us, then understanding them fundamentally, becomes the challenge to us all. The sense of separation from another human being dissipates and we each become our brother's keeper. The need to understand 'time' becomes ever more pressing.

Do we see the man made gap between the actual and the desired, the 'what is' and the 'what should be' and the time we think is required to cross it? It manifests itself most strongly as we exhort ourselves to change: to become more, achieve more, strive more, not to be satisfied with what we have so far achieved.

In our desire to break away from what we are : to rid ourselves of anger and greed we have to aim for ideals, for images and this will require time and effort.

Krishnamurti questions this model, which is indeed to question received wisdom, a part of our training, and the strength of the tradition behind it. He invites us all to start from a position of scepticism, a position of doubt. He questions that we need time to transform 'what is' into 'what should be'. Time will get us nowhere because in the first place the ideal is a complete creation of the mind, a fiction that cannot be reached, the whole idea of a movement between 'what is' and 'what should be' a mistake — in actual fact an illusion — based on analogy with the chronological notion of time, of movement from here to there. Any change it is claimed must be immediate — which brings us back to the question we looked at earlier : Why is it not possible to change 'what is' immediately?

This is a compelling question even though it may mystify some of us for the simple reason that it is the very antithesis of what we have come to expect. We assume we need time to come to terms with certain issues, to understand, for example, our own greed or anger, or to make ourselves stronger. Ambition, rather than being seen as a mistake is promoted as the driving force for all of us. Such a mindset can make no sense of what Krishnamurti says and presumably will not even want to. But it is the ambitious — the 'I want', the 'I will succeed', the 'I will become that', who cause much of the conflict in the world. The blind charge to achieve ones goals is deeply unsettling and at bottom fundamentally aggressive. But many of us have never considered this point.

We understand that time is basically movement : we measure the chronological time in a day in terms of movement of the earth in relation to the sun. This is a physical movement, an actual movement in a very real sense, one we can relate to. In psychological terms any movement away from the actual, away from the current state, which involves a movement of the mind, of wanting

to be something else, and which is a form of *becoming*, is also a form of time. This, as we have been saying, takes place in the psychological sphere where the emphasis is on ways in which the self may come to change. Ambition has its home in this space.

And most of us do spend a lot of our waking existence, if not to say our dreams too, in this space of imagining, in this psychological realm. It tends to occupy us ; we are never quite satisfied with the way things are ; we are always looking for ways to improve ourselves, ways to prevent the repetition of mistakes in the past as well as ways to become better in ourselves, in the future. And let us be clear about this, it is an imagined future, a way we would like things to be, a way we hope things might turn out.

To most of us, this state of being may seem so very natural, so very ordinary, hardly worth bringing to anyone's attention. Why don't we simply consider it a brute fact about us? The 'me', the 'I', the self, the ego, call it by any name you wish - this is what dominates, what governs, what brings about all forms of human endeavour and there is nothing to be done about it. Accepting this, many of us respond in common and predictable ways. So alive and questioning in other areas of discourse, we see no need to understand the workings of the mind.

Something seen as a success brings with it a warm glow, a warm feeling, a sense of something valued — in short a form of pleasure. Failure to achieve a certain goal or target brings with it, instead, a feeling of frustration, a sense of annoyance, something to be avoided — in short a feeling of pain or sorrow. But this is not the end of the matter as we all know. Something seen initially as a success, something which brought with it a burst of pleasure, might on reflection be considered shallow, something unbecoming. In just such ways, pleasure may give way to regret and personal recrimination.

But neither is there anything fixed and unmovable about the source of all these judgments. Moods vary from day to day and even within the same day as

the last example, showing a movement from pleasure to regret, portrays.

As soon as certain temporary goals are 'realized' we go in pursuit of others. There is no end to this relentless pursuit. Satisfaction is always elusive, 'success' a momentary and meaningless judgment before the next target hovers into view. So life becomes a constant battle and at every moment there is the threat of failure — one that need not deter, it is true, but one whose presence means we always live in a state of sorrow.

While the highs outnumber the lows, this may not matter to some of us. To others, however, this relentless pursuit may be seen as a mistake, and this very perception may free those who have it to go some way to understanding what Krishnamurti has to say about psychological time — the ultimate home of our imaginings and hopes about the future.

Willingness to understand, alone, is never going to be enough. We have to be aware — continually - of our penchant for self-delusion: we assure ourselves we see, but in reality we do not. Krishnamurti asks us if we are avoiding 'what is' and most of us who are trying very hard to understand might accept that we are, might say that there is a rush away. But talk comes so very easily to us and if we are not careful our response is too automatic, as if we are only paying lip-service to what is said. Do we really see that we are avoiding 'what is'? To answer 'Yes' to this question means we have a clear idea of just what it is that we are avoiding — and this is something that has to be seriously questioned.

Part of the problem is that even when we think we see 'what is' — even if it is something we claim to be avoiding - what we are actually seeing comes through a personal filter of psychological time. As we see the now and as we see the future — or what we would like to become — both are views through time. This is our dilemma. To break through the illusion of time, the mind has to see the ego for what it is. To see 'what is' one has to be free of psychological time or, at least — and this is problematic — a decoupling has to take place, and for many

of us the separation is not complete, but, at best, partial.

So the first question is : do we see the now for what it is? Do we see what is actually taking place in our minds, or do we respond with such speed and regularity that we are unaware, from moment to moment, of exactly what it is that we are feeling? Without such awareness, can we really be said to understand ourselves?

Now, to understand the self, which alone can bring about a radical revolution, regeneration, there must be the intention to understand its whole process. The process of the individual is not opposed to the world, to the mass, whatever that may mean ; because, there is no mass apart from you — you are the mass. So to understand that process, there must be the intention to know ‘what is’, to follow every thought, feeling and action ; and to understand ‘what is’, is extremely difficult, because ‘what is’, is never still, never static, it is always in movement. The ‘what is’, is what you are, not what you would like to be ; it is not the ideal, because the ideal is fictitious, but it is actually what you are doing, thinking and feeling from moment to moment. What is, is the actual, and to understand the actual requires awareness, a very alert swift mind... (6th Public talk, Bangalore, 8th August 1948)

To see ‘what is’, is to see each feeling very clearly as it arises ; it is to see the anger, the jealousy, the pleasure — whatever feeling or thought one has - to see each of these things at the very moment they come into being. To be aware — as of a very small bird on the palm of a hand ; to be aware — as of the drip, drip, drip of ice-cold water onto a toe ; to be aware — silently and without response.

However, generally, in the moment of any sensation, we react immediately,

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we respond in some compulsive and automatic way. We bleat, 'Oh, no!', perhaps, in the case of anger — and we rush quickly away forcing down the feeling as it disgusts us or, conversely, we give it life and sustenance when we feel vindicated. This happens so fast and so regularly and with such seeming autonomy that it is not easy to notice — unless, that is, we have urgency as our lookout. Then perhaps we can see the rush away, the rush on, and notice, too, how common it is, which in turn may lead to other acts of seeing ; but we must see this directly, we must see that there is a rapid movement away which prevents us from staying with 'what is'. And, of course, not to see directly is not to see at all.

So, many of us do not see that we are avoiding 'what is' for the simple reason that we are never aware of 'what is' at all. We are too eager to get on. But as we have noted, to be aware of 'what is', to see what is actually taking place, we have to operate almost in slow motion. It is to be alert, aware of every moment. As the centipede runs up ones arm, each footstep is felt - and counted! - as it gently propels itself along. All the senses are alive - this is what it is to be fully present. Observation is taking place without intrusion. And, of course, at any moment all of this may go, may disappear, as we drop off to sleep and slip back into our conditioning, into the familiar grind of the everyday.

Most of us are continually in the grip of this conditioning. There's an inexorable urge to move on which springs from a desire or a 'need' for new experience. So, even as we listen to Krishnamurti's words and try to make sense of them, possibly even long to make sense of them, we are trapped in the realm of psychological time ; and we are trapped in it because even here our desire to understand is part of a craving or need to move on - to improve, and experience more. At bottom, we still feel that pursuing more and more knowledge and undertaking ever-new challenges is a healthy, natural and edifying way to be.

So yes, some of us are avoiding 'what is' by trying so desperately hard to confront it. Of course, this is not a deliberate decision. We do not see that we

are avoiding it ; but the fact is that for many of us even as we watch, we are doing so from a place inside time — from a desire to understand. To those of us who thought we were coming closer to an understanding of time this may come as a shock, to others, it may serve as a more pointed clarification. It is only meaningful, however, if it gets us to examine the feelings that flow through us at the moment they take place. And while this is undoubtedly a difficult thing, it is by no means impossible. But it is something that most of us have never attempted or perhaps even thought about, and it remains, surely, something that many may question the necessity of pursuing. And to those there is no answer ; there is no desire to persuade ; there are no musts or categorical imperatives. No attempts to cajole or convince. For the fact is that words can be of no help here at all. Once the issue has been brought to our attention and the questions raised, those who are interested will automatically stay quiet and watch what happens. Such enquiry is a solitary one, undertaken purely to find out about the incessant flow of thoughts and feelings through our brains.

A good first approach to this is to identify or rather notice these thoughts and feelings as they first arise and to watch them without judgment. This involves being rather like a scientist — admittedly with oneself as subject - and means that nothing is taken for granted and nothing is grounded in belief or conjecture. There is simply observation. Feelings arise, the sudden involvement of the self, the rush away and the clamor for new sensations and experience. If we watch so very carefully, then perhaps we will be as one with Krishnamurti as he pursues this subject. And in pursuing it, he points out the tremendous toll living in the realm of psychological time puts on the brain and the mind of man.

We are asking : why has the mind been crippled by yesterday's memories, regrets, attachments, and strangely attachments are always in the past? - I won't go into it now. By yesterday, a thousand yesterdays,

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today, modified itself and the future, which is time movement. This movement is time psychologically - right? We are asking : why is the mind caught in that, which is time? (4th Public Talk, Brockwood Park, 7th September, 1980)

Not mincing his words, Krishnamurti tells us we are 'Crippled by yesterday's memories, regrets and attachments.' He is not so much pointing out the fact that people age as the manner in which the aging process affects us all. Things perceived as failures, the inability to hold on to the things of the past, worry about the future, anxiety of any kind, have a terribly debilitating effect on the brain. They wear it out and render it almost useless. If people are able to smile and dance and sing when they are young, why should it be that advancing years often bring with them a more chilling demeanor. Look around. Why is it that the older people get, the more tired they look, the more dissatisfied many appear, the more rigid and inflexible in their approach to life? Is it the result of unfulfilled dreams, of chances missed, spurned or wasted, of wished-for opportunities that did not come their way? The young are hopeful, certain their expectations will come to be ; they have visions of what they want and are confident their dreams will be fulfilled. There is great energy — but already at this early stage it is getting misdirected into channels of the minds creation, into desire, hope and comparison. Is this where it all goes wrong? The initial movement into non-fact, and the living in that — the desire for certain outcomes - then the realization that these things may never come to pass, which brings with it a sense of overwhelming regret - and a sense, perhaps, too, of unfairness, of some kind of conspiracy, of things not working out in their favor. All of this a movement of thought, of wanting and looking forward, of continued desire and then regret coming in with the failure to achieve. Is this the lot of humankind, to be preoccupied in such a simple and trivial manner?

So we are saying : why does the mind live in time? It has evolved in time - right? The present mind that we have has evolved through millennia, thousands of years. And that is normal, healthy, and obvious.

But we are asking : why psychologically, inwardly, time has become so important? Is it because we are always avoiding 'what is' in order to become something else? Do you understand what I am saying? Moving from this to that. Psychologically I am this, but I should not be this but that. Psychologically I am unhappy but I must be happy - right? The 'must', or 'will', or 'shall be' is the movement of time. I wonder if you are following. Please it's your life. So the mind is caught in time because it is always moving away from this, from 'what is' - right? It will change in time - 'I will be good, give me time', which is like developing a muscle - right? Your muscle may not be sufficiently strong but if you keep on doing something to strengthen it, it will become strong. With the same mentality we say, "I am this, I will be that, so give me time." And will 'what is' be changed through time? You understand my question? I am anxious, I have great anxiety. Can that anxiety be changed through time? You understand my question? That is, will I become, or be in a state where I have no anxiety? See what I have done? I have anxiety, I have projected a state of not being anxious, and to arrive at that state I must have time. But I never say can this anxiety I have be changed immediately. You understand my question? And not allow time. Are you following this? See what happens. I am anxious. I hope to be not anxious. There is a time interval, a lag. In that lag of time all other activities are going on, other pressures, negligence. You understand? So anxiety is never solved. I don't know if you are following all this.

I think I will come to a state when I have no anxiety, so I am struggling,

struggling. It is like a man who is violent, he has invented non-violence, in that time interval he is violent, so he never reaches non-violence. I wonder if you understand all this?

So the question is then: can what is be transformed immediately?

Which means, never allowing time to interfere. (Ibid)

The failure to examine the feelings and thoughts that run through us directly is, in part, due to a propensity we all have to move away, to search for something better, to improve on the current state. We do not remain with any particular emotion; it simply does not occur to us. Instead, in a state of perpetual motion we react with judgments of a seemingly therapeutic nature. 'That was good, I should continue with that,' 'I shouldn't have got angry then, I'll be more careful next time,' 'I think I'd be happier if...'. A mind that is growing, a mind that is developing, a mind that is evolving, is an active and suggestive mind. Or so we think. Responding to, and commentating on, the vast array of thoughts and sensations that pass through us, in as fast and furious a way as possible, is viewed as a sign of a powerful intellect and gives many of us a mistaken sense of control over those very thoughts and feelings. Such has been our education. Just as in a tennis match where no one stops to examine the ball as it comes towards them, we do not pause to examine the form and make-up of a feeling as it rushes into the brain. Instead, we hit it away at speed in an attempt to be completely on top of things. In tennis this is a natural response, perhaps, but in trying to come to a better understanding of ourselves in real life, it completely avoids the issue. So, while we might think we have dealt with the emotion that troubled us by reacting to it in some way, we find that sooner or later, just like the ball in the game of tennis, it comes back again to challenge us.

In a similar way, to pick up on Krishnamurti's example, we ignore the anxiety that arises in us and tell ourselves we will deal with it in time. And, of

course, moods change. An hour later, the next day perhaps, it has gone and we feel better. We will learn how to deal with it sometime, but for the moment the emotion has gone away and is not a bother. In the interim other feelings pop up, not all of which we view negatively: pleasure, a feeling of pride, a sense of achievement, as well as occasional feelings of regret, remorse and disappointment. We try to sustain the feelings we like, the ones which are pleasurable, while doing our best to shorten the duration of those we dislike or find uncomfortable. And so it is that 'anxiety' comes round again and takes us once more by surprise. We are no closer to 'dealing' with it than we were before, and, in any case, have had so much to do in reacting to other thoughts and feelings that have appeared in the meantime. So we respond as before and push it away or imagine a state which is anxiety-free that we will try to pursue - all of which avoids the issue by moving away and fabricating a distant space to aim for. But it is that very movement away, that very fabrication, the very entertainment of a possible 'solution' or way forward, that constitutes psychological time. This is its essence. The attempt to deal with or react to the different thoughts and feelings that we have creates this psychological 'never land' where most of us feel at home and is, ironically, where all of our problems reside. Instead of dealing with feelings at the very moment they arise we retreat into an intellectual bubble of our own making, a world we feel is real. But this is a world which starved of the imaginings of the mind, ceases to exist:

So if you do not allow time, or never think in terms of time, then the fact is not - right? I wonder if you see this. Because we allow time the fact becomes important. If there is no time it is resolved. Suppose I died this second, there is no problem. You understand what I am saying? When I allow time I am afraid of death. I wonder if you understand all this. But if I live without time, which is an extraordinary

thing if you go into it, psychologically, never - time means accumulation - right? Time means remembrance; time means accumulating knowledge about oneself, all that involves time. But when there is no time at all, psychologically, there is nothing - you follow? (Ibid.)

If we can function without psychological time there is no problem. Here, for example, entertaining ideas about death simply *is* time. 'How terrible, I am going to die,' 'I hate the idea of dying.' These thoughts *are* the fear and they *are* time. Without such thoughts, without such imaginings, there is less conflict, fewer problems — life is easier. But here lies the rub. 'It's all very well for you to say that,' comes the response, 'but I can't stop these thoughts, they keep appearing.' And you, as speaker, would be right, but not for the reason you might suppose. *You* cannot stop them, for *you* are those very thoughts. The point is not to stop them — although maybe at some point they will stop — but for the mind to watch such thoughts without reaction. They touch down, like birds onto a branch, and almost immediately are off on their way again. No response. No reaction. No sediment of any kind.

So unless you understand the nature of living, and therefore the nature of dying, which can be found in the living - you understand? Are you meeting me? No. That is sirs: death is the ending, isn't it? The ending. The ending of my possessions, my wife, my children, my house, my bank account, special bank account. (Laughter). The ending of something: in that ending there is no argument - right? I don't say to death, "Please hold on a minute" (Laughter). So where there is ending, there is a beginning. You follow? I will go into it.

When the speaker ends attachment, completely - you understand? - to persons, ideas, the whole process of attachment, with all the

consequences of that, when there is an ending to it, there is a totally different state of mind - right? Isn't there? I have been attached to my furniture - and that attachment has been a burden and with the ending of that burden there is freedom - right? So ending is more important than beginning - right? So can I living, end? End my anxiety, end my fears - you follow? End, not the bank account, that is too risky! (Laughter) No, no, I mean that. We are not going to end the bank account. I am not talking of that. Ending psychologically. (Ibid.)

I buy some furniture and become the owner. If another takes it from me, I have recourse to legal action in order to retrieve it. Such is the law. So long as I view this furniture functionally, there is no real problem: I sit on a chair, relax on a sofa and eat my meals at the table. But psychologically when I think of the furniture as mine, then we are talking of a different kind of relationship. We are talking of attachment. The furniture means something to me; it's something rather special. I think of it fondly and am proud to own it. When someone says they like it, I am flattered and when children brush against it I am dismayed. I feel a whole host of emotions with regard to it: pleasure, pride, delight, etc., when people praise or desire it, and: anger, dismay and chagrin when it gets harmed, damaged or criticized in any way. It is a part of my life — part of me — and I want to protect it. This is what is meant by attachment; the thing in question becomes other than what it is and becomes, instead, a part of how one sees oneself.

Is it possible to end such connections, to die to such attachments? Krishnamurti is certain that it is. For him living and dying go together. If I end my attachment to my furniture, if I die to the connection, I still have the chair to sit on, I still have the table to eat at, I am still the owner. But now, if my furniture were to go up in flames for some reason, I would not feel a great

personal loss, I would simply go out and buy some more! There might, perhaps be some annoyance at the cost involved, but nothing too prolonged and disruptive. And, of course, here we are talking about a particular attachment to some articles of furniture, artifacts, however well made they might be. Most likely, I am attached to other things, perhaps to more than I might care to admit, and the same is true of many of us. Such attachments are not confined to furniture and other man-made objects but include anything we start to think of personally : my wife, my children, my family, my books, my clothes, my music collection, my money — the list of possible items goes on and on. We see these things as possessions, as belongings, as part of the owner's identity and this is where attachment cuts the deepest : such possessions, such attachment forms part of our very view of self. Ending such attachments, giving them up does not mean throwing such things away, it does not mean ceasing to care. It means dying to them, no longer seeing them as possessions, no longer identifying with them. It means ending the hold they have on you :

Now death is ending - right? — the ending of everything... ..Death is an ending and I am living - right? We are living, active, all the rest of it. Can we psychologically end everything? You understand what I am saying? Can you end your attachment instantly, immediately, your anger, your violence, your greed, your this and that, end while living? Therefore then living is dying. You understand? Not living and ultimately dying. I wonder if you follow this. Living means the dying otherwise you are not alive. And most of us are frightened of dying because we have never been able to live properly, we have never lived. You understand? But we have lived in conflict, in struggle, in pain, in anxiety - you know all the rest of it. So we call that living. Living is not all that - right? So if all that can be ended then there is living. So

you are then living and dying - you follow? They go together, like a flower with perfume, the perfume is not away from the flower, it is there.
(Ibid.)

Living and dying go together at every instant. To live fully we need to die to things. As well as not attaching to possessions, this means not clinging on to thoughts and feelings; it means not trying to breathe more life into them, not trying to sustain them. Praise is heard, perhaps with a wry smile, and then one lets it go. The same is true of blame, censure and criticism. Where a mistake has been made, there is no attempt to hide and one tries to correct such things wherever possible. To let these things go is to die to them.

As well as such comments regarding praise and blame by third parties, there is the ongoing internal reactions to the constant stream of sensations, events and experiences that form part of a passage through life. Judgments pour out: 'That's good,' 'I like that,' 'I don't think much to that,' 'Oh, how I hate it when people do that.' We seem to have to relate to so many things, commenting on them, coming down either for or against them. Constituting part of a never-ending classification of sensations and experience into 'likes' and 'dislikes', this represents the way most of us live our lives. The ubiquitous response, 'Yes,' 'Yes,' 'No!' is part of a process we have not attempted to understand. Believing that we are making our mark on the world, that we are expressing our true selves, we fail to see that we are the victims of conditioning - our reactions and responses, the result of something we have not examined.

Which is not to say that we must forget the events involved in the praise or blame, or even the praise and blame itself. We may well remember the praise, the censure and the judgments. That after all is the purpose of memory, something vital to our functioning in the world. We cannot stop it working, but only when we have no reaction to the event that produced it can we say we have

truly died, psychologically, to that event.

“I am a human being,” I hear you scream, “Of course I like it if someone praises my work or says something nice about me, and I definitely don’t feel good if I’m criticized. I don’t decide these things — I just feel them. I cannot turn into a robot, something with no feelings.”

Of course we cannot stop feelings and no one is suggesting that we try. Nor is there any point in trying to persuade or convince, for anything that does not come from within has very little value. Follow person A’s advice today and someone else’s tomorrow and we are on a very slippery slope, a road with no end to it. But if we just respond in ways we don’t understand to all the sensations and experiences we have, if we make no attempt to understand these things, who is to say we are not robots already, programmed by our own conditioning? Recognizing this may, of course, be frightening, may even be terrifying, because not only does it involve a different way of viewing the world and all we are a part of, it involves a complete re-assessment of what constitutes our identity, of what, indeed, we are. The suggestion is that there is a different way of living, a fuller and more meaningful way : to live each moment completely and then to die to it. This means living without time, uninfluenced by the intrusion of unnecessary thought, aware of ones conditioning.

When the speaker ends attachment, completely - you understand? - to persons, ideas, the whole process of attachment, with all the consequences of that, when there is an ending to it, there is a totally different state of mind - Isn’t there? (Ibid)

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