

FEAR

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“Fear’s a powerful thing ;
it can turn your heart black you can trust
it’ll take your God filled soul
and fill it with devils and dust”
(B. Springsteen)

Abstract

This article examines the subject of fear. It’s purpose is to get clearer about what it is, to find out what grounds it and to see if there is a way of living which is free of it. As a necessary preliminary to understanding, the paper points out the importance of staying with the feeling of fear as it arises. By direct and careful observation of one’s own case — which is different from introspection — it is possible to see fear arise in relation to a variety of objects, and from that to perceive the underlying root cause of fear itself. This involves, in part, seeing how thought creates undesirable images about the ‘present’ and the ‘future’ based on the memory of events experienced in the past. Coming to a realization of what fear is does not depend on employing deductive or inductive reasoning. Real understanding — if it comes at all — will be in the form of a direct perception.

In his talk at the University of Berkeley (1969) at the height of the Vietnam War, Jiddu Krishnamurti began in a typically iconoclastic way :

Considering the chaos and disorder in the world - both outwardly and inwardly - seeing all this misery, starvation, war, hatred, brutality - many of us must have asked what one can do. As a human being confronted with this confusion, what can I or you do? When we put that question, we feel we must be committed to some kind of political or sociological action, or some kind of religious search and discovery.

One feels one must be committed, and throughout the world this desire to be committed has become very important. Either one is an activist, or one withdraws from this social chaos and pursues a vision. I think it is far more important not to be committed at all, but to be totally involved in the whole structure and nature of life. When you commit yourself, you are committed to a part and therefore the part becomes important and that creates division. Whereas, when one is involved completely, totally, with the whole problem of living, action is entirely different. Then action is not only inward, but also outward; it is in relationship with the whole problem of life. To be involved implies total relationship with every problem, with every thought and feeling of the human mind. And when one is so completely involved in life and not committed to any particular part or fragment of it, then one has to see what one can actually do as a human being.....

...if you are concerned, not with what you can do confronted with this enormity of misery, but with how you can live a totally different life, then you will find that your relationship with man, with the whole community, with the world, undergoes a change. Because after all, you and I as human beings, we are the entire world - I'm not saying this rhetorically, but actually: I and you are the entire world. What one thinks, what one feels, the agony, the suffering, the ambition, the envy, the extraordinary confusion one is in, that is the world. (2nd Public Talk, Berkeley, 1969, #1)

In rejecting the idea of being committed to a cause, Krishnamurti says something at once controversial and challenging - controversial in the sense that many people will disagree with it, some vehemently so, and challenging because it demands our attention and gets us thinking. Some may well take issue with what he says because it threatens a way of life that they hold to be important. This will be especially true for those who feel that without commitment of some kind, life can have no meaning. However, taking issue with it will not be the purpose of this paper, which will focus instead on questions related to the intriguing statement that “to be involved implies total relationship with every problem, with every thought and feeling of the human mind”, because it is precisely the

understanding of our thoughts and feelings that, not only our education to date, but also each one of us individually, has, most singly, failed to address — and this notwithstanding the fact that it is an aspect of life that we have unrestricted access to.

Unquestionably, the area of self-understanding is a complex one, not one we can hope to come to terms with easily. What we can do is take it seriously, however, and direct attention to aspects that hinder our everyday relationships with people around us. There are, of course, a variety of these: anger, pride, and selfishness, to name but three. One, however, that stands out for special attention and one which has a very restrictive effect on our action in the world and relations with others is the debilitating factor of fear. We cannot hope to come to some understanding of ourselves without coming to a fundamental understanding of this feature of our lives.

As we said, this understanding of oneself is only possible by becoming aware of our relationships. In relationship alone can one observe oneself; there all the reactions, all the conditionings are exposed. So in relationship one becomes aware of the actual state of oneself. And as one observes, one becomes aware of this immense problem of fear. (Ibid)

Fear

Fear admits of degrees; it is like an electric shock through the body. For its duration, it paralyses and movement of any kind becomes almost impossible. It is a jolt to the system, a memory driven 'warning' in the form of a burst of negative energy. Except, in most cases — being so sudden and so close to the event - it hardly serves as a warning at all, leaving it unclear whether it is a spur to action or a movement into confusion.

One thing, however is clear, fear, anxiety and worry are by no means rare visitors to each one of us and it would be an unusual person, to say the least, who could honestly say that they had spent a day in which fear, in some form or other, did not make its presence felt. Instead, for most of us, this fiery little unwelcome tormentor, is quite a familiar and regular intruder into our lives and hence quite a negative influence on our piece of mind. Which is not to say that we necessarily find it completely incapacitating or even focus our attention on it for great lengths of time. It is intrusive but we put up with it for the most part because it seems somehow inevitable and we have grown accustomed to it. It never occurs to us that we can do much about it and so it becomes engrained in the fabric of life, something that appears from time to time, but something, like a sudden burst of rain from the skies — which may on occasion drench us - that we can live with.

The purpose of this essay is to try to get clearer about what fear is, to find out what grounds it and to see if there is a way of living in which it ceases to have the hold on us that it appears to have today. This may seem quite an unusual enterprise, not something commonly engaged in, and may, as such, give rise to scepticism and suspicion. Why examine something like fear, for example, when there are countless other seemingly more concrete and easily recognizable problems to be getting on with?

In one sense, there is no answer to this question. If there is not already some recognition that fear is a major cause of conflict and unhappiness in our lives and in the world and in consequence deserves to be fully investigated - or, if there is no sense that its very frequency of occurrence necessitates that we come to a better understanding of it - there will be little here to persuade otherwise. But it would be rather surprising if many people, who go through extended periods of education without too much complaint, spending years on the study of a variety of subjects, were unwilling to spend a little time on something so important as fear.

This will not be a pursuit where the one explains while the other accepts and follows, but will be a joint exercise as part of a shared journey. From the outset, we are taking part in an investigation that is in essence a self-investigation, one that requires us at every stage to refrain from supposition and hypothesis, and engage instead in practical observation of the thoughts and sensations that pass through the brain. This is an unusual request that will be new to many and it is not without a degree of difficulty. However, it is certainly not impossible and if attempted in a positive spirit could prove extremely interesting.

The following example might highlight our task and make the position clearer. Each one of us from time to time has begun the gradual immersion into a very hot bath. I do not mean the regular evening bath, but something hotter. Not scalding, exactly, but hot enough to ensure that we exercise caution as we ease ourselves in. At first a foot tests out the temperature and the heat is felt with numbing clarity as the body is lowered slowly and carefully into the enveloping liquid. The sensation is close to pain but sufficiently on the side of pleasure and comfort to make it bearable. Once in, we begin to settle and adjust to the intensity of our new surroundings, making sure to restrict movement to prevent unnecessary waves. It is a cautious process, but one which leads to an exhilarating and invigorating experience.

If I ask you now to imagine doing the same, of course you are able to do so. Indeed, to understand the earlier words, in part, depended on your ability to process the ideas involved. Many of you will undoubtedly have had experiences very similar in kind to the one just outlined. However, if you are subsequently asked to stop imagining this bathing scenario, you are quite capable of doing so, but in doing so, you do not reach for a towel — even an abstract one — to dry off your body. However much we move into the realm of the imagination, we have a pretty clear idea that that is where we are. The distinction between the reality and the idea remains for most of us, most of the time, a vital and

meaningful separation. And this point is crucial because all of the points introduced here, involve the reader remaining very firmly rooted in the real rather than in some imagined circumstance. Which is not to say that ideas will not be used to convey information — of course, they will and must be — but that understanding will depend on the observation of the actual, which is to say on the observation of what is actually taking place rather than imagining or conceiving things taking place.

Only by observing ourselves at first hand will we come to a genuine understanding of what is being said. In the present case, this means actually putting a foot in water, not imagining doing so as we have been doing. The difference is very important because we spend a lot of our lives — as we are now, reading this — in the realm of the imagination. There is work to do to find out if what is written here makes sense, and the kind of engagement necessary is not engagement in any ordinary sense. For what actually is required is observation, a complete awareness of what is going on both inside and outside of us. And this will involve paying great attention to a space we normally do not examine. For example, one hears one's name called and the head turns in almost automatic response. What could be more 'natural', we might think. However, observing this space in the sense we are talking about involves recognizing the sound of the name, seeing that recognition trigger something in the mind and watching the sudden movement in response. It happens so quickly we usually do not follow the process involved. To take another example : one sees a cake in a bakery and decides to buy it. Observation here means being aware of the perception of the cake, seeing the reaction to it — "That's nice!" - then the thought that one wants it, followed by another thought, the decision to buy it. Both of these are trivial examples, perhaps, but they point to the fact that we can be extremely aware of the process of our perceptions, and that we can observe in a way that is not merely introspection. We are normally so focused on ends, on results, that we do

not take time to examine the process, the linear nature of the movement towards our goals.

No one has been able to make this clearer than Jiddu Krishnamurti whose writings on the subject of fear will form the basis of our discussion in this paper. In coming to an understanding of the topic we must, each one of us, find out what is true from our own case, from observation of what actually takes place, not from a consideration of ideas and concepts. It follows from this, as Krishnamurti is at pains to point out, that there can be no authority to which we can appeal. There can be no second hand knowledge, no following of the word of another. Nor can there be any understanding simply through reading. Only by seeing things at first hand can we come to an understanding of them. Only after we have actually got our feet wet do we reach out for a towel.

Krishnamurti on Fear

Krishnamurti gave talks all over the world to people of all ages and was no stranger to talking to students at the elementary school level. He began one talk on the subject of fear to some young students in the following way :

You know most of us have some kind of fear, have we not? Do you know your particular fear? You might be afraid of your teacher, of your guardian, of your parents, of the older people, or of a snake, or a buffalo, or of what somebody says, or of death and so on. Each one has fear ; but, for young people, the fears are fairly superficial. As we grow older, the fears become more complex, more difficult, more subtle.fears of being left alone, not having a friend, being lonely, losing property, having no position, and other various types of fear. (Talks to students, 1954.)

This, of course, does not need a great deal of commentary. Krishnamurti is simply introducing the different objects of fear and showing how varied and

differing in intensity they may be, and how, too, they are prone to become more complex as we grow older. When we are young, fears are of the moment and very close to hand. Fear of a teacher, of failing to satisfy in some way. Fear of a parent, again for not coming up to expectations - sometimes through neglect on the part of one person, sometimes due to the unreal or unfair demands on the part of the figure of authority. Fears of the moment come and go, and what was troubling a young mind one moment can be forgotten or resolved quite quickly the next. The more complex fears of the older ones amongst us have been longer in the making. Projections of a mind used to failures in the past, all the more ready to imagine or entertain them in the future. A complex mix, indeed, and certainly one we need to examine. Krishnamurti is not attempting to persuade or influence in any way. He is merely pointing the students back towards themselves, leaving them free to understand the content of what he says. He continues :

Is it not very important that education should eradicate fear, should help the students to get rid of fear, because fear corrupts the mind? I think it is very important in a school of this kind that every form of fear should be understood and dispelled, got rid of. Otherwise, if you have any kind of fear, it twists your mind, and you can never be intelligent. Fear is like a dark cloud and, when you have fear, it is like walking in sunshine with a dark cloud in your mind, always frightened.

So, is it not the function of education to be truly educated - that is, to understand fear and to be free of it? (Ibid.)

Get rid of fear? What a wonderful idea! Except it is not meant as an idea but as an actuality. The dark cloud of fear is a continual but unwanted visitor. However, rather than try to understand it, it is something we strive to avoid. We try to cover it up and rush on to other thoughts. The intelligent response would be to examine it, to find out what it is and then see where that inquiry leads. That we don't do this, that we ignore it, and that the ignorance can be generalized,

was one of the reasons Krishnamurti spoke so relentlessly on the subject. So, yes, it is the function of education to make sure we are truly educated which, if we are to be spared tautology, involves unpacking what this means. As well as pursuing the typical academic subjects, it is important that we learn about the wholeness of life including, of course, being aware of the myriad of thoughts and feelings that pass through us. The focus here is on understanding fear. And yes, it is crucial that we talk about it and find out what it is. Krishnamurti pursues this point :

Now is it possible, living in this world, in a society which is corrupt, which is based on acquisitiveness, is it possible for a human being to be free totally from fear? Because when one is not free from fear, one lives in darkness. One may have marvellous theories - may invent gods by the hundreds, one saviour or ten saviours, but as long as there is fear in any form there must be confusion ; which means a state of mind is necessary which realizes that when it is free from fear it is no longer seeking security in any form psychologically. Obviously outwardly there must be security, to have food, clothes and shelter ; but psychologically, inwardly, 'inside the skin', to be free from fear means clarity, and when there is clarity, there is no problem. For that which is light, there is no darkness. And there is darkness when there is fear : hence the problem. So is it possible to be free from fear? Not in some future day, but actually to be free from fear every day? This is a question that demands, like every other human problem which is of great complexity, that we approach it very simply. Our human problems are very complex, and anything that is complex we have to learn about ; and to learn about it we must be very simple. We must come to it very simply, not with complex ideas that we must be free, that this is wrong - you have just to look.

We are talking about fear. What do we mean by that word? Please, as we said just now, don't merely listen to words, because that will have no meaning, but through the word, examine yourself. Look at yourself and see what you are afraid of, actually what you are afraid of - darkness, you wife, your husband, your neighbour, or your debts, or not having success, not being loved. Whatever it is : fear of authority, fear

of brutality, fear of being dominated. We are afraid and do you know what that means? Have you ever been in contact with fear? (1st Public Talk Amsterdam, 1967)

It is not our response to the presence of a dangerous animal that is of great concern to Krishnamurti. Nor our sense of caution when in high places. Or the care we take to avoid being run over. The focus is not on concern for the physical well being of the body, which is an intelligent concern, but on psychological fears that relate to our sense of self — fears about our relations with others, fear of debt, of old age, of being dominated, of failing to achieve in some way. And there is also, the all-pervasive fear of authority, a fear so deeply rooted in many of us, it may be one reason we do not closely examine the thoughts and feelings that flow through us. We are so used to being told what to do, of having some external criteria about what is right being presented to us, that so many of us simply follow. We want to be told what to do, told what we are feeling, by experts, which is not to suggest that there is never a need for them — of course there is. But to find out about these feelings that flow through each one of us, we have to take a long hard look at ourselves, for there are no external experts here. There is no easy way, but surely the intelligent response is to try to find an answer. We, who have put so much energy into scientific and technological concerns, who have produced computers, cars, rockets and airplanes as well as weapons capable of destroying the world many times over, surely we can spend a little time to examine something so important as fear and ask if it is possible to eradicate it. Not only will we need to examine fear very carefully, we must also be prepared to go wherever the inquiry may lead, but by being willing to look, we will have taken the first and most important step.

So one asks, why human beings, who have lived on this earth for millions of years, who are technologically intelligent, why they have not

applied their intelligence to be free from this very complex problem of fear. That may be one of the reasons for war, for killing each other. And religions throughout the world have not solved the problem ; nor the gurus, nor the saviours ; nor ideals. So if this is very clear : no outside agency, however elevated, however made popular by propaganda ; no outside agency can ever possibly solve this problem of human fear. (3rd Public talk, Ojai, 1982)

The suggestion that fear is a possible cause of killing and war is a chilling and challenging one. If fear is at the root of war, this all the more behooves us to come to a deep understanding of it. The contention, too, that no outside agency can solve the problem of fear underlines the fact that each one of us — alone — must struggle with it. Not taking him at his word, but in the true spirit of inquiry, let us continue our examination.

Fear as something actual

Before we can consider eliminating fear we have to be very clear what we are talking about. In the introduction, we stressed the importance of staying with actual events rather than getting carried off, as so often happens, into the realm of supposition or the imagination. Krishnamurti exhorts us to be ever aware of the distinction between the actuality of fear and the abstraction by which he means not only the idea but also the very word 'fear'. Most of us are educated to deal with ideas, not with facts. We spend our time involved with questions of what should be, what must be and what will be, which are all indirect reactions to states and events. This is not to say that there is never a time for such considerations but that by being ever preoccupied with them we miss something fundamental, something crucially important about the states and events themselves. Trying to get clear about the state of fear, Mary Zimbalist asks :

MZ : What is the fact of fear, sir?

K : I am coming to that. First we must establish the distinction between the idea of fear, the abstraction as the word fear, and the actual fear. The actual fear is the fact, not the abstraction of it. If one can move away from the abstraction then we can deal with fact. But if they are both running parallel all the time then there is a conflict between the two. That is, the idea, the ideology dominating the fact and the fact sometimes dominating the idea. (2nd Conversation, 5th October, Brockwood Park, 1984)

Krishnamurti is again emphasizing that we have to be aware of these two things : actual fear and the idea or the abstraction as the word 'fear'. If we are able to separate these two, then we are in a position to deal with fact, the practical awareness of what goes through us. But if we are unaware of this distinction, we will run the two things together and remain in confusion. It is a simple but telling point and one we will need to return to because our minds seem reluctant to stay with simple facts and are forever galloping ahead to destinations of their own making. We so quickly get involved in implications and eagerly seek out conclusions.

MZ : Most people would say that the fact of fear is the very painful emotion of fear.

K : Now let us look at that, not the idea of fear. (Ibid)

So the first thing we are being asked to get clear about is the importance of staying with the fact of fear — namely the painful emotion of fear. Can we stay with it as it arises? This is not a hypothetical or rhetorical question but a practical request that we remain rooted in what is actually happening. This means staying with the feeling without pushing it away — looking at it carefully and with interest as one might an old school photograph one comes across by chance. In the case of the photograph, which is unlikely to be seen as a threat,

this is usually rather easy. Can we treat the feeling with similar impartiality? For this is to be our first marker: Can we stay with the feeling and the accompanying thoughts?

Fear in Relation

As well as it being important to remain with the fact of fear, the actual feeling of fear, we also need to be aware of the circumstances in which it arises. Is it something that just happens from time to time for no apparent reason or is it connected, or related to something else? Krishnamurti addresses this question at many different times and places. Here are two of his responses.

You want to know how to get rid of fear? Do you know what you are afraid of? Go slowly with me. Fear is something in relation to something else. Fear does not exist by itself. It exists in relation to a snake, to what my parents might say to a teacher, to death; it is in connection with something. Do you understand? Fear is not a thing by itself; it exists in contact, in relation, in touch with something else. Are you conscious, aware that you are afraid in relation to something else? Do you know you are afraid? Are you not afraid of your parents; are you not afraid of your teachers? I hope not, but probably you are. Are you not afraid that you might not pass your examinations? Are you not afraid that people should think of you nicely and decently and say what a great man you are? (Talks to Students, 1954.)

Fear is always in relation to something; it does not exist by itself. There is fear of what happened yesterday in relation to the possibility of its repetition tomorrow; there is always a fixed point from which relationship takes place. How does fear come into this? I had pain yesterday; there is the memory of it and I do not want it again tomorrow. Thinking about the pain of yesterday, thinking which involves the memory of yesterday's pain, projects the fear of having pain

again tomorrow. (2nd Public Talk, San Diego, 1970)

The suggestion is that fear always exists in relation to something, that there must always be an object, but that the object can vary. Fear of death, of pain, of a boss, of a teacher, of a parent, of losing ones job, of not being able to compete, of missing a deadline, etc. The list can be extended almost indefinitely. The object varies and there must always be one, but the fear, although it may vary in intensity, remains something of a constant And so far, this seems to make sense and match with experience. People are afraid of so many things, of not reaching personal goals, of falling short in some way, of looking foolish, of not being able to cope, etc. The fears are not all of equal strength but depend largely on the desire for the thing in question : the stronger the desire, the stronger the fear of not achieving it. The point Krishnamurti is making is a valid one, but does it leave us examining the objects of fear? Surely, it cannot. Since, as we have noted, such objects can vary their extent is without measure. Almost anything can be an object of fear for some particular person at some place in time. Having to investigate each and every case would place an impossible burden upon us and would distract us from our task. We see that fear has a multitude of objects but in the process realize, too, that the object is a contingent factor. It becomes clear that we do not need to, indeed cannot, investigate all cases of fear. Krishnamurti pushes us on here ; fear always has an object but by looking closely at one example of fear, all is revealed :

Narrowing things down

...we are not talking about a particular form of fear, but what is fear? One may be frightened of the dark or frightened of what one's wife might say and so on. Those are all expressions of - multiple

expressions of the central fact of fear - right? We are talking about the central fact of fear, the root of fear, not the various forms of fear. (2nd Public Talk, Brockwood Park, 1984)

So, can we look at that fear, and in the very act of looking, watching fear, one begins to discover the origin of fear, the beginning, what is the causation of fear.

MZ : Sir, the causation that you are speaking of is presumably not an individual fear, a particular fear? You are speaking of the causation of fear itself.

K : Fear itself, not the various forms of fear. (2nd Conversation, Brockwood Park, 1984)

We are beginning now to see beyond the multiplicity of examples of fear. The suggestion is that each case of fear, despite having a different object as its focus, has something in common with other cases of fear. This central aspect is a feature of all fear. Krishnamurti calls it the 'the root of fear' or 'the causation of fear'. This is extremely important, so let us go very slowly and examine our position. Up to now, we have seen that we must stay with the fact of fear and stay clear of abstractions and flights into imagination. This means staying with the emotion as it actually arises. We have further observed that fear can have many different objects, something our own experience can confirm. Now the submission is that by staying with the fact of fear in one particular case the root cause of fear itself is revealed. So, we have the fact of fear — the fear itself ; the associated object which we see can vary ; and now we are approaching the question of the cause, not of a particular fear, but of fear itself. And all the time, we follow this not by following a line of reasoning, not by hypothesizing, but by hands on awareness. This means, that we have to find out the truth or falsity of these points from our own case, by experiment. We have to look at ourselves and observe. This is not a question of saying, 'I see what you mean,' or of

saying, 'Well, let's suppose you are right.' It is not a theoretical question or supposition but a practical task with oneself as subject.

With this in mind, let us begin to look at the root of fear.

So let's go into this question : what is the root of fear? Is it thought? Thought being the accumulated memories born of knowledge, experience, and thought born of knowledge and knowledge being limited, so thought is limited. Is fear subjectively first, inwardly first, is that fear born of thought? Thinking about tomorrow, thinking about what might happen. One's wife may run away. Thinking in terms of not the actual present, but in terms of the future, or the past. Is that the cause of fear, thought? If it is the cause of fear, which the speaker says it is and please don't accept it, then what will you do with thought? (2nd Public Talk, Brockwood Park, 1984)

According to Krishnamurti, thought is the root of fear. Thinking about what might happen gives rise to fears. 'I might fail the exam. What will my parents say?' 'I haven't done my homework ; my teacher will get really angry.' 'If I don't do what she asks, I'll be in trouble.' 'I might catch that new flu virus.' 'He won't like it, if I do that.' And so it goes on, almost endlessly. If we look, we see that associated with the uncomfortable jolt of fear is a very clear thought. In fact, the thought and the feeling come as one, do they not?

As soon as we reach this realization, for many of us intellectual or theoretical questions arise almost spontaneously, perhaps as part of our education to date. We may ask, 'Why does this particular thought come up at this time?' or 'Why does this thought bring fear with it but not that one?' etc. Since we are always drawing conclusions or looking for reasons or ramifications, these questions, or ones like them, spring up and can occupy centre stage, all attention given to them. They are in fact interesting questions and they interest us largely because, as yet, we haven't answered them. They point us to new ground, unexplored territory, as it were, and hence to a new challenge. We demand answers for them and this

'compels' us to look. However, by going in this direction, by trying to find answers for them, we are moving away from our task, moving away from understanding fear, and we are doing it without realizing it. None of which is to say that they are unimportant questions. Hold on to them if you must, but for the present return to our current concern, which is that thought is the crux of fear.

And then I ask - one asks : is there another cause of fear? Time. Time is a movement, a series of movements and time, which is tomorrow, I might lose my job, I might become blind, I might - all the rest of it - tomorrow. So time is a factor of fear - right? So time and thought are the roots of fear. Time is thought. So that is the root of fear. I understand this, one understands this intellectually, verbally, it has been explained very carefully. (Ibid)

Time, as Krishnamurti uses the term, concerns involvement in thought about the past and the future. It is primarily memory driven and contributes in great measure to the worries and concerns we have about ourselves. 'I played that game and broke my leg. It might happen again.' 'The last time I visited the dentist the treatment was really painful. If I go there tomorrow, I'm sure it'll happen again.' The memory of the past haunts the present and becomes part of an imagined future. Accompanying these thoughts is the uncomfortable and distressing feeling of fear. We can watch this in action. Psychological in nature, this type of thought reflects our personal judgments about things that happen to us. It constitutes our reactions to past events and our anticipations of imagined 'future' ones. These considerations actually all take place in an ever-changing present, but for most of us they represent 'time', a movement away from that present. And so it is that we entertain certain ideas - I might lose my job, I might go blind, this might happen, that might happen. But all of this fear-drenched speculation, is still fundamentally the activity of thought, which simply underlines the fact that thought is the underlying cause or ground of fear. Just as

before, however, once this is seen questions may well rush in. 'If thought is the cause, how do we get rid of it?' or 'If this is the case, how do we control thought?' Krishnamurti pursues this point.

Hold it like a jewel

What generally happens is that one hears a statement, like, all time is now. I don't quite understand it but I make an idea of it, a concept of it, and then I try to follow that concept. That concept is not the actual, so again I enter into the field of conflict. So can I, can one listen completely to this fact? That time and thought are the root of fear. Time, thought, is the root, the beginning of fear. Just to perceive it, not what to do about it. You understand? We want - unfortunately we want to achieve that so we are making an effort.

(2nd Public Talk, Brockwood Park, 1984)

If we understand the statement that thought is the root of fear conceptually, if we treat it as an idea, we are going off at a tangent and will lose the very thing we are trying to come to terms with. Again, a digression may help. Let us look at something, which is clearly not conceptual — the taste of coffee. We are talking about the sensation of the liquid in the mouth and the combination of nose and other receptors in determining the aroma, the flavor. This is a very physical thing. When you 'need' a cup of coffee, the exhortation to think about one will in no way help. However much we talk about coffee, it will not provide the sensation we are looking for, but will remain in the realm of ideas. What we want is the coffee in the mouth and the aroma through the nose. There is nothing so very complicated about this; it's a demand for something physical, something actual.

In the same way, when we say that thought roots fear, this is based on something actual — the first hand observation of thought accompanying the very

real sensations of fear that we have. Extending this to other cases of fear is a generalization, so we have to keep it rooted in the particular. We always have to be aware of the moment. Like a tightrope walker halfway across Niagara Falls, each moment is felt — carefully, physically and with great attention. Never for one minute is reality given up to an idea. Nor do we need to look beyond that moment. Let's remind ourselves about what has just been said.

Time, thought, is the root, the beginning of fear. Just to perceive it, not what to do about it. You understand? We want - unfortunately we want to achieve that so we are making an effort.

(Ibid)

The first step is the perception. This is central. Just to see without any attempt to move from that space, with no demands and no expectations. There is no personal sense of achievement in seeing the truth of this ; it either happens or doesn't happen in the here and now. The watching one can prepare for. It should be done, like taking a bath, in a straightforward manner. In the case of taking a bath, we have an agenda of a kind but hardly one that we think of in terms of achievement. We do it to get clean, as part of personal hygiene and perhaps also as a way of relaxing. The attention we pay to detail as we scrub our bodies has nothing to do with achievement in any great sense ; we have no special ulterior motive when we do it. But, unlike in the above case, there is a clear beginning and end that we are aware of before we begin the activity and also the focus is not on perceiving something, so the analogy is limited, as all analogies are. The purpose of introducing it is only to offer another way of looking that might reveal a new insight. By watching the sensations and the accompanying thoughts that flow through us, which in the current context means looking at the thought and fear as they impinge, there is a sense of wonderment. Like watching a nature film about the life of ants or the world under the sea, we

sit absorbed as they go about their business in a universe we have up to now been unaware of. We see all the details and watch at one with the spectacle.

But if you listen quietly, silently, not be mesmerized, but listen to it quietly, deeply, then you see, then the very perception of that silence and watching without any effort, fear has no place at all. This is not a romantic illusion. This is a fact. When you hold something without movement you see the beauty, or the ugliness of that jewel completely. But we never look at the jewel. We say, "How beautiful" and pass it on. But when we hold it in our hands, the most extraordinary jewel in the world, and look at it carefully, how extraordinarily complex, how delicate, subtle, its capacity so great. One begins to learn what it is. Learning is different from memorizing - right? (Ibid)

Just to stay with the feeling ; such a rare and delicate thing. A feather floating in the wind. As if watching a bird close at hand, we make not a sound, do nothing to disturb this exquisite creature. Movement of any kind will transport it away, bring the observation to an end. As we watch we learn, we are aware of the moment, observing a dynamic, an ever-changing terrain. Learning is being aware of this movement, in the moment. Krishnamurti continues :

Have you ever held fear? Hold it. Not move away from it. Not try to suppress it, run away from it, or transcend it, or do all kinds of things with it, just to see the depth of the fear, the extraordinary subtleties of fear. And you can only be aware of all that when one is looking at it without any motive, without trying to do a thing about it, just watch it.

One can do the same thing with pain, of course not extreme pain. When you watch pain carefully, not trying to rush to the dentist immediately, when you watch it, stay with it, not morbidly but see - all that is happening. How you react to it and so on and so on. If you do that the pain lessens naturally. In the same way if you hold this jewel. Fear is an extraordinary jewel, extraordinary something which has dominated human beings for forty thousand years and more. (Ibid)

Now, we are watching carefully. Like holding a jewel, or a beautiful piece

of porcelain, we treat it with great care, taking in its delicacy, its shape, the way it reflects the light. We notice the details. It's fragile like a flower, and like a flower, too, as we watch - it shows itself to us ; it has no hold but simply reveals its essence. As we look impartially, we see what is before our eyes and the beauty comes to the fore.

And if you can hold it and look at it, then one begins to see the ending of it. Not gradually, the ending of it completely. (Ibid)

So this watching is really most extraordinarily important, not how to end thought, or can I be free from fear, or what do you mean by time, and all the complications of it, which is complex, But when we are watching fear without any abstraction - which is the actual now, and in that quality of the now which contains all time, which is the present holds the past, the future and the present. So if we can listen to this very carefully, not only with the hearing of the ear, but listen to the word and go beyond the word, and see the actual nature of fear, not read about fear....watching becomes so extraordinarily beautiful, sensitive, alive. (2nd Conversation, Brockwood Park, 1984)

Does it end? Does it wither and die? Only you can say. Will it return? There are no guarantees, we will just have to watch and be ready. All we can do is be stable in our response. Quite what that response will be we cannot say in advance, which is how it must be.

Fear, for Krishnamurti, is part of our 'self centred, egotistic activity.'

Thought has created a centre as the 'me' - 'me', my opinion, my country, my God, my experience, my house, my furniture, my wife, my children, you know, 'me', 'me', 'me'. That is the centre from which you act. That centre divides. That centre and that division are the cause of conflict, obviously - when it is your opinion against somebody else's opinion, my country, your country, that is all division created by thought. You observe from that centre and you are still caught in fear, because

that centre has separated itself from the thing it has called fear ; it says, 'I must get rid of it,' 'I must analyze it', 'I must overcome it', 'resist it'and so on ; thereby you are strengthening fear.

Can the mind look at fear without the centre? - can you look at that fear without naming it? The moment you name it 'fear', it is already in the past. The moment you name something, you divide it off. So, can you observe without that centre, not naming the thing called fear, as it arises? It requires tremendous discipline. Then the mind is looking without the centre to which it has been accustomed and there is the ending of fear, both the hidden and the open. (2nd Public Talk, San Diego, 1970)

There are some very interesting points introduced here. The ego has separated itself from its own creations, in particular - thoughts and feelings. But the thought, the feeling is the 'me', not something distinct, and by treating it as something separate, as something other, its content is never completely revealed. This is why observing without preformed ideas, watching without prejudice, is so important and at the same time, so very difficult. The feelings are seen as something the 'I' experiences, something apart in the way perhaps that food is, or in the way that DVD software is distinct from the hardware on which it plays. The naming process, while so very useful for ordinary classification purposes, in the case of feelings actually prevents us from perceiving fully because in the moment of identifying and naming we are bringing in the past, thus bringing to an end the present moment and what is alive in it. A word has been given to it and its fragile identity has been snuffed out, pushed down and away, confined to the past, and all we are left with is a previously formed idea or concept. Only by ending this separation of ourselves from our experiences, from the feelings and thoughts that go through us, only by being as one with them — not by viewing through the lens of the 'I', will we see these feelings in all their beauty. The purity and undivided nature of the perception is paramount to understanding.

If you have not seen the truth of it this evening, do not take it home as a problem to think about. Truth is something which you must see immediately - and to see something clearly you must give your heart and your mind and your whole being to it immediately.

Questioner : Are you saying that, rather than trying to escape from fear - what is in essence fearing fear - we should accept fear?

Krishnamurti : No, sir. Do not accept anything. Do not accept fear but look at it. You have never looked at fear, have you? You have never said, 'Well, I am afraid, let me look.' Rather you have said, 'I am afraid, let me turn on the radio' - or go to Church or pick up a book, or resort to a belief - any movement away. Having never looked at fear you have never come directly into communication with it; you have never looked at fear without naming it, without running away, without trying to overcome it. Just be with it, without any movement away from it and if you do this, you will see a very strange thing happen. (2nd Public Talk, San Diego, 1970)

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