

SIMPLICITY AND AWARENESS

Sunnie D. Kidd
James W. Kidd

Throughout the works of Jiddu Krishnamurti the themes of self-knowledge, simplicity, awareness, sensitivity and freedom consistently appear. These themes are all integrally related and although it is not possible to separate them without disturbing that integral relationship, it is possible to distinguish between them to bring two of them into sharper focus. The themes of simplicity and awareness will be explored in an attempt to more fully understand what Krishnamurti proposes when he suggests that each person must discover one's own truth. Throughout Krishnamurti's discussions, he consistently brings the reader down a single path, each step taken describing clearly and explicitly a simple, direct approach to finding solutions both to personal and to social problems. This path is itself a simple, direct approach and ultimately leads to the true purpose of his work, personal freedom, finding one's own truth. As with a majority of Krishnamurti's inquiries he begins by asking, what are simplicity and awareness and how can we understand them?

Beginning with simplicity, Krishnamurti first makes an important distinction between two different kinds of simplicity. First, there is simplicity in the outward sense, where a person may choose to live an austere lifestyle, reducing to a minimum what material items one has and owns, possessing only a few basic necessities of life. Outward simplicity can be seen in a person who lives a monk-like existence or perhaps lives in a community with other persons who share the same quest for truth, all of whom possess the bare essentials necessary to sustain physical existence. This reduces the outward need for "things" in general and frequently involves some type of spiritual practice or follows a chosen philosophical-spiritual discipline and teaching.

Secondly, Krishnamurti describes simplicity in the inward sense. This kind of simplicity is the basis for finding one's liberation and personal freedom. It is simplicity in life. It should be noted, that simplicity is not something to be sought as an end in itself, it is not an objective or a goal that is to be actively pursued. Simplicity is a way to be open to oneself, to be aware and sensitive not only to one's own way of being but aware of oneself in relationship to things, to ideas and to others. Simplicity in the inward sense allows one, through awareness, to witness one's own beliefs, fears, impediments, attachment to others, ideas, feelings, thoughts and value systems. Simplicity in the inward sense opens one to awareness and awareness expands the seed of sensitivity.

The question now arises as to how to understand simplicity. What does it mean to be “simple” in the inward sense? How can we find simplicity? Krishnamurti tells us this is possible through self-knowledge. Self-knowledge allows simplicity in the inward sense to emerge. Self-knowledge engenders a deep familiarity with oneself and one’s life, leading to simplicity, awareness and ultimately, through self-understanding, to personal liberation and freedom. From Krishnamurti’s perspective, all understanding first begins with understanding oneself. He says that human beings are nothing other than their relationships with others and the world, one can know oneself by observing oneself in relationships.

Krishnamurti says that we are our relationships with others and the world. What does that mean? He goes on to say that the qualities found in relationships with friends, family or even our enemies, are the qualities found in the larger social world. *We are* our relationships. The world is relationships of others to each other. Accordingly, the social problems which exist in the world today, the war, strife, violence, tyranny, destitution and suffering are reflections of the anger, violence, suffering and destitution which exist in relationships with one another. The outward projection of these problems will never be overcome by creating new social agencies, by enforcing ever-increasing numbers of laws and regulations or any other external system of social reform. These social problems can only be resolved within in each person, by each person. This happens through self-knowledge, by a true understanding of one’s own life, awareness of one’s thoughts, responses and actions. For Krishnamurti self-knowledge is the beginning of understanding and is the beginning of freedom and the beginning of wisdom.

How does one arrive at true self-understanding? Krishnamurti answers that this begins by observing what occurs in one’s relationships. This observation is a passive watching without condemnation, without evaluation and without separation. It is an emotionally uninvolved viewing of the events that come and go as if they were someone else’s, observing one’s own reactions and responses without evaluating, explaining or interpreting them. There is no attachment. This allows an unattached, direct observation that then permits an immediate, spontaneous relationship to others, thoughts, ideas and surroundings from moment-to-moment. This way of observing, of allowing self-knowledge to emerge, leads to an immediate awareness of every action, thought, idea and activity. It leads to quick perception and quick reception. The basis for the ability to move in a fluid, constantly alert state requires great sensitivity. Simplicity leads to sensitivity and with the consistent alert awareness, to freedom from belief. In Krishnamurti’s thinking freedom from all belief means to be free inwardly. This requires intelligence, which in turn is founded on one’s awareness of impediments. To be aware one must be ever vigilant, one must not be established in any particular pattern or thought, as Krishnamurti says, in any particular

“groove.” Simplicity and awareness then, are action without idea,¹ creativeness in the truest sense.

Understanding one’s relationships begins with self-knowledge, which opens one to awareness of oneself through a detached passive observation of one’s relationships. This allows a true self-understanding to emerge. It should be remembered that Krishnamurti is not speaking about understanding the outward image of oneself, how one looks, dresses or appears but again, is looking at understanding oneself inwardly. To truly understand oneself in the inward sense brings with it a revolution in values and thereby changes one’s relationship to the world. To understand the world then, one must first understand oneself. Awareness of things, awareness of things about oneself and awareness of others and ideas is unitary, non-dualistic and wholistic. It is the awareness of everything without accumulation, awareness without judgment, without separation, without evaluation or condemnation. This means that one does not have beliefs, follow any particular system of philosophy, religion or spiritual practice. It is not seeking.

This is personal freedom. It is an immediate intuitive alertness. There is no striving, no effort to overcome or avoid what happens in life. Krishnamurti’s way of thinking presents the framework for a radical freedom. It is a release from all effort, it is unification with life as it is, allowing one to be creative in the truest sense at each and every moment. In order to create this image in our minds, Krishnamurti draws on the analogy of our experiences during creative activity such as when one sings, paints, draws or is fully engaged in some other act of creativity. During these times there is no effort, no “trying” to do, there is simply doing, fully, complete and effortlessly. This is simplicity in action. There is no need to try to overcome or avoid life or to make it into something. There is no conflict, no strife, no sense of one’s being separate from *what is*. Krishnamurti stresses this fact again and again, that while we are engaged in activities which we are trying to guide, direct or to achieve a certain end, to make things happen, we are not unified, not wholistic, not letting *what is* happen but trying rather to change *what is*. In true freedom, in a very real sense, one *is* “nothing.”

To resolve social difficulties one must first resolve them within oneself. After following out this path it can be understood how one’s own liberation would, when taken into relationships shared with others, resolve conflict. When two or more persons who have discovered personal freedom and found true understanding are together, then there is true cooperation *Inbetween* them. There is no competition, no conflicting belief systems, no conflicting religious systems, no conflicting social systems, no conflicting political systems. True cooperation means to be nothing together. It is liberation that arises from *Inbetweenness*. Truly being together, without striving to transform, modify, avoid or suppress *what is*, engenders a

unifying, wholistic and harmonious vibration of care to emerge. From *Inbetweenness* flows creativity at its finest which truly frees human beings. Indeed then *we are all our relationships*.

Notes

- 1) Jiddu Krishnamurti, *The First and Last Freedom* (Wheaton: The Theosophical Association, 1968), p. 272.