

Understanding Thought

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Abstract

This paper focuses on an aspect of thought that appears to control the way we act and move through life. This thought, or set of thoughts, has been built up in each one of us over time. It includes one's sense of self but for the most part is not something we are fully aware of. However, because this thought is essentially divisive, it is at the root of much conflict in the world, which means that it is imperative that we understand it and cease to be controlled by it. Such understanding, the paper argues, depends on a certain kind of observation of how this thought arises and directs us. Such observation cannot be based on the traditional duality of an observer and the observed - which is how we usually look - but needs, instead, to be of a kind where the observer and observed are one, which means where thought and cognition are absent. Such a state is one of heightened awareness where learning of a special and non-accumulative kind takes place. This learning is perception in the moment, which implies that what we learn today we can learn again tomorrow. Only in this state the paper argues can we be free of the constraints of the self, free of the psychological past and free of the conflict that that entails.

Keywords: Thought, Observation, Duality, Self, Perception, Conflict, Awareness

From the moment we wake up we are abuzz with thoughts. These zoom in as if unsolicited. For the most part they comprise a sort of diary of what is to be done on a particular day and they are very compelling, coercing us forward as we go about what we feel we "have" to do. This set of thoughts is no static and fixed thing but gets added to or modified as events unfold or as other thoughts are triggered. There is a vitality and seeming authority to them which makes them irresistible. And there seems to be a sense that there is also an 'I', a 'me' having these thoughts, namely something separate from them.

These thoughts spring from memory and they direct and shape our

movements, defining the very direction that we take through the day, a direction which often follows the lead of 'requirements' or 'obligations' connected to our jobs, families, relationships with others, as well as with desires and targets that we carry around with us.

Interestingly, the content of this set of thoughts is contingent on the particular place that we happen to occupy, be it the country that we live in, the job that we do, the ideas that we accept or are accepted by those around us, as well as the society that we are a part of. And within a particular country a certain subset of these thoughts glues us all together. So, while Korea or Japan for that matter, may be comprised of a large number of people with a variety of different opinions, there is still something, however difficult it might be to define precisely, that the people of those countries feel that they share. This will be connected to a shared language and history as well as to a shared culture and accepted way of doing things. In a similar way, what separates the Germans and the English, for example, will be a different set of thoughts about how to live their lives. These thoughts will also pertain to history, society, food, culture, values etc., which differ in certain ways.

At a more individual level, jobs and the particular things we engage in will also control us in slightly different ways. A bus driver, in whatever country, will focus on roads, passengers, timetables, other road users and issues of safety, for example. A chef in a restaurant will be focused on different things altogether, such as recipes, food, cooking, ovens, microwaves, pots pans and crockery and an overall interest in hygiene. The thoughts that prevail in those doing these jobs will have a different content and focus and will be a strong influence on how they spend their days and what they consider important.

The particular jobs that we do can, if we are not careful, control our lives and impact on our sense of who we think we are. However, this sense of who we think we are, this sense of self, relates not only to what we are currently doing, one big aspect of which might be our occupations, but also to what we have done in the past, in short to: the experiences that we have had, the conclusions we have formed and the ideas that we have absorbed and internalised. These things, together with the huge store of reactions we have accumulated go towards building a concept of self, all of which is recorded in the form of thought, that seems concrete, necessary and vital.

And yet clearly the country in which we have been brought up, the experiences that we have had and our reactions to the situations we have

come across - all in a sense contingent - make a very great contribution to this sense of self that we have. Imagine if you will, a scenario in which at birth a baby was mistakenly switched with another baby and somehow ended up in a completely different country, with a completely different culture and language. A child of British parents ends up in Russia and is raised there. A child of Japanese parents is transported to China. What very different languages, histories, cultures, these children would be exposed to. How very different their experiences, their expectations and consequently concept of self from the one they might otherwise have had.

There is a sense, is there not, as we are now suggesting, in which things might have turned out very differently? Let us consider another case. Two people, who ordinarily might have spent their lives together in Japan find themselves overseas. The mother pregnant in Japan, gives birth, for example, in the States and the child is subsequently raised there. Never returning to Japan, for whatever reason, and being brought up in a thoroughly American setting, never speaking Japanese, would surely give rise to a different sense of self and a different way of looking at the world and acting in it, from that of the same child born and raised in Japan. This suggests that this sense of who we are, this sense of self, which directs our movements, and which seems so necessary, may not be at all.

And yet, it is this sense of self, based on identification with history, nationality, ideas, culture, personal experience and belief that roots the separation between people. The wars, the battles, the fierce arguments, the conflicts that arise, all stem from the set of ideas that develop in each one of us.

It is hugely dependent on the time, place and ideology of the space where we have our being. Many of the ideas that drive us will be deeply ingrained thoughts that we have learned and internalised as we have been brought up and lots of these will be culturally dependent. Other thoughts that direct us will depend on the particular jobs and relationships that we find ourselves currently engaged in.

This thought, a kind of program that drives us, as distinct from clear rational thinking, is not changed easily but forms the bedrock of our existence even though we may not be especially clear about it. Thinking in a non-psychological way is often related to a task in hand. One uses it when planning what to cook for an evening meal, when deciding an itinerary or writing a computer program, for example. It is sometimes spontaneous, often purposive and for the most part endeavours to be logical, which

makes it a very valuable tool. Thought, by way of contrast, in the sense that it is being used here, is related to ideas that form a sense of who we are both culturally and individually, and it is with this latter sense that we will be concerned in this paper because it is thought in this sense that seems to relate to many of the problems that exist in the world, not only between countries and across cultures but between groups and individuals within them. This kind of thought, which relates to our sense of self, springs out almost before we are aware of it. The boss comes in and we jump to attention. Someone who fails to observe a queuing convention, perhaps, elicits some kind of response from those present. Smoking in a non-smoking area, blowing one's nose in public, etc., are simple but obvious examples of how internalised thought can get triggered and bring about negative reactions. For the most part these are simple conventions, but ideas about how things should be are deep within each one of us, and these and countless others are internalised from childhood, and we are directed by them without realising it.

Can we become aware of the pressure of this rock of thought, the stuff that seems to control or direct us, in such a way that we understand it and are no longer compelled by it? Because, surely it is this that creates the divide between human beings and leads to the never ending turmoil. Can the rock somehow implode? Can we bring about a revolution in the way we think, because unless we become free from the ideas and beliefs that bind us, we are condemned to live in division and hence in conflict, which is surely no way to be. In this context, Jiddu Krishnamurti (1970), who talked about this and related issues throughout his life writes:

I don't know how you feel about what is happening in the world, in our environment, to our culture and society. It seems to me there is so much chaos, so much contradiction and so much strife and war, hatred and sorrow. And various leaders, both political and religious, try to find an answer either in some ideology, or in some belief, or in a cultivated faith. And none of these things seems to answer the problems. Our problems go on endlessly. And if we could.....be serious enough to go into this question of how to bring about, not only in ourselves but in society, a revolution, not a physical revolution because that only leads to tyranny and the heightened control of bureaucracy. If we could very deeply find out for ourselves what to do, not depending on any authority, including that of the speaker, or on a

book, on a philosophy, on any structural behavioural pattern, but actually find out irrevocably, if one can, what to do about all this confusion, this strife, this extraordinary, contradictory, hypocritical life one leads. (Brockwood, 1970, p1)

Strong words. As he says, the world is in chaos. Certainly, there have been major advances in science and technology. This is undeniable; but the reality is that we live in a world where wars and battles are going on everywhere. We cannot seem to agree. There are disagreements between countries based on ideas and there are battles within countries, within and between companies and within and between groups and families. We live in conflict and we seem to accept that it is inevitable. Moreover, we act as if we believe in permanent growth and in the process of pursuing it we are destroying the world. This is simply how things are. Various leaders try to propose solutions but they are not long term and they are not working. Can we bring about a real change not only in ourselves but also in society? Can we talk about this together? Can we first of all find out about ourselves? In particular can we look at the thoughts which divide us? And this is not a request to recall some of our past experiences which we may have forgotten, but is a request to find out about how we operate, about how we function based on the ideas and feelings or thoughts that pass through us. It is a request, as Krishnamurti points out in the following passage, for us to observe with passion and attention. And to do this there must be freedom from reaction and a quietness, a special kind of awareness or sensitivity from which observation can take place.

To me it seems to be fairly clear that to observe there must be freedom. Not only the outward phenomenon, but also to observe what is going on within ourselves, to observe without any prejudice, without taking any side, but to examine very closely, freely, the whole process of our thinking and our activity, our pleasures, fears, and all the things that we have built around ourselves, not only outwardly but in ourselves as a form of resistance, compulsive demands, escapes and so on. If we could do that consistently, with full intention, to discover for ourselves a way of living that is not contradictory, then perhaps these talks will be worthwhile. Otherwise it will be another lecture, another entertainment, pleasurable or rather absurd, logical or illogical and so on. So if we could completely give ourselves to the examination, to

observe intimately what is going on, both outwardly and inwardly. (Ibid, p1)

We are brought up as members of a particular country with a specific nationality which means we are divided and see ourselves as separate from each other, not only in terms of geography but also in terms of ideology and culture, which ultimately reduces to specific forms of thought. And through these separate world-views we interact and judge one another. Separating out in terms of nationality is one major form of division, but within each nation, of course, there is further and more intricate separation with regard to regions and then groups right on down to separation in terms of 'you' and 'I' or 'her' and 'they'. From these divisions from these partialities, from the images we have of the world and of each other, we move, we act. And so many of these images will be at odds with each other. A's view of A is unlikely to cohere with B's view of A, for example, which by itself will give rise to confusion and misunderstanding. If we multiply this by the huge number of people involved and combine it with the fact that so many of us are pursuing desires which may well conflict with those of a great many others, we may begin to see why, despite our best efforts at imposing law and order, problems always seem to arise. Are we willing to investigate this? And can we begin by looking at ourselves, and most particularly at the thought that guides us? If we are to do so, there must be a certain quietness of mind or freedom as Krishnamurti says. We need to be free from prejudice, distortion and reactions of any kind in order to see clearly what is going on. But first of all we need to be prepared to look, to look at our pleasures, our fears, our escapes and our reactions. We need to be willing to look at how we function. And this looking must be done in a way which is not introspective, which would simply be the movement of more thought. We need to look without any kind of judgment, which even for those prepared to attempt it, is not easy.

Now the difficulty in this lies, it seems to me, in the capacity to observe, to see things as they are, not as we would like them to be, or what they should be, but actually what is going on. To so observe has its own discipline, not the discipline of imitation, or compulsion, or conformity but that very observation brings its own discipline, not imposed, not conforming to any particular pattern, which implies suppression. After all when you do observe something very closely, or

listen to somebody very fully, that very listening and seeing, in that is implied attention. And where there is attention there is discipline, without being disciplined. (Ibid, p2)

In order to find out about ourselves it is imperative that we observe. This observation has to be clear and it has to be done without coercion, without pushing ourselves and without concentration, which is an effort of will. There can be no pursuit of hoped-for results, which means it must be done without motive. There is no room for 'what should be' only an acute awareness of what is the case. For example, as one listens to music one can be aware of each note as it is played and one can be aware without reaction, (or if there is one, one can be aware of that, too.) There is perfect order and nothing is imposed; there is just clear perception of the music. This is observation. It has its own order, its own structure and clarity. There is no attempt to impose. There is simply attention and awareness..

Music may be one thing but can the same degree of clarity be there when we look at ourselves? Most of us look from a particular perspective or perhaps expect certain results. However, the observation that is being talked about requires that we look without anything of ourselves impinging. When we see a marvellous sky or a beautiful sunset or something very striking, we are stopped in our tracks and this sight takes over very briefly before we respond with comments like: "How lovely!" The type of observation we are looking for is observation of the kind before the comment comes in. The same sense of observation can be there when, usually as children, we take something apart and put it back together again to see how it works. There is great care and passion as one does this, as one tries to see how the parts relate to the whole. There is a quietness and sensitivity, a certain order and seriousness as one goes about the task with a sense of joy. But perhaps this is to rush ahead. Can we in the first instance be aware of simple thoughts as they pop up, as one might be aware, for example, of two separate drops of rain falling on one's arm? We usually respond immediately to thoughts which arise by having other thoughts, without dwelling too much on the initial thought. Can we start to be aware of these simple thoughts? Be aware without a response? Because it is this very response that is so often automatic, driven by a bedrock of thought, that keeps us entrenched in habit.

For the most part, however we do not observe in the manner suggested. We do not even get close to doing so because our whole way of

looking is driven by a process of thought that is based on division and duality. This is at the root of all conflict and prevents real observation. We look from the point of view of 'a thinker' and 'what the thinker sees' and it is this that we need to learn about, this that we need to be free of. Krishnamurti, (1970), helps us here:

The next point is, in observing there is always the observer. The observer who, with his prejudices, with his conditionings, with his fears and guilt and all the rest of it, he is the observer, the censor, and through his eyes he looks, and therefore he is really not looking at all, he is merely coming to conclusions based upon his past experiences and knowledge. The past experiences, conclusions and knowledge prevent actually seeing. And when there is such an observer what he observes is something different, or something which he has to conquer, or change and so on; whereas if the observer is the observed--I think this is really a radical thing to understand, really the most important thing to understand if we are going to discuss anything seriously: that in us there is this division, this contradiction, the observer and the many fragments which he observes.(Ibid, p3)

We talked earlier about growing up in a particular country with a certain ideology and culture and how this gives rise to certain tendencies, certain ways of looking in the person brought up there. Our conditioning has a tremendous influence on what we are and how we look and it makes each one of us partial to a certain degree but what Krishnamurti says goes deeper than that. We look as an observer, who is separate from what is observed. There is an 'I' and what the 'I' sees, and of course, this 'I', this observer, this 'me' is based on experiences and prejudices, etc., - a certain set of thoughts - that have been internalised and which are of the past and are stored in memory. Consequently we are always looking from a particular point of view, that of the 'I', the self. The observed is "other", something the observer must conquer. As Krishnamurti says, we look from a duality, a separation, a conceptual divide, which is the source of all our problems.

In order to look in the sense requested we have to:

1. Be passionate, sensitive and quiet in the way explained.
2. See the duality from which we operate, that of the observer and the observed

The problem for most of us is:

- A. We cannot be quiet, we simply react because that is what we have always done.
- B. We look from a duality and we are not prepared to examine this.

Only if we see the need to be quiet and are aware of reactions and also see the duality from which we function can we then ask what Krishnamurti asks, which is: Can there be pure observation without the censor, the self, the 'me', in short without the observer? In coming to terms with this question we need to be very clear about what the observer is:

Is there an observation, the seeing, without the 'me' as the observer seeing? And therefore creating a duality, a division. That's really our problem, isn't it, basically? We have divided the world, the geographical world, as the British, the French, the Indian, the American, Russian and so on, and inwardly we have divided psychologically the world, those who believe and those who do not believe, my country, your country, my god, your god and all the rest of it. And this division has brought about wars. And a man who would live completely at peace, not only with himself but with the world, has to understand this division, this separation. And can thought bring about this complete, total observation? I don't know if we are going together in this? Who is responsible for this division? The Catholic, the Protestant, the Communist, the Socialist, the Muslim, the Hindu? You follow? This division that is going on within, outwardly and inwardly - who is responsible? The Pope? The Archbishop? The politicians? Who is it? Is it thought? The intellect? (Ibid, p4)

This is the crux of our problem. Can there be pure observation without the interference of the observer with all the past history involved? The observer being the 'partial' self, that rock of contingent, psychological thought built up over the years. The observer, the 'me' is simply thought, thought related to the self, and it is precisely the kind of thought that constitutes much of the inner dialogue that occupies us for much of the day. The particular groups that Krishnamurti refers to above are not responsible for the division within us, but each one of them is a product of that division, a product of separative and divisive thought.

Our question about looking at ourselves now reduces to: Can there be

observation without thought? Because such thought is the root cause of division.

Can thought observe without division? You follow? We observe--or thought observes--all the many factors of these divisions; and is it not thought itself that has brought about this division, the intellect? And the intellect is one of the divisions, one of the fragmentations and that intellect has become extraordinarily important, which is thought. Right? For us thought is the most extraordinarily important thing, the intellect. And we hope to solve all the problems of our life through thought, don't we? By thinking over a problem, trying to suppress it or give free rein to it. Thought is the factor, is the instrument, which is always observing. Right? (Ibid, p5)

Talking about thought in this way will, perhaps, shock many people who revere thought as something wonderful, which indeed it is, but we need to be aware of the different aspects of thought, of its limitations and dangers. Thought has been responsible for some truly great discoveries and innovations but it has also led to the development of armaments and bombs that could be used to remove mankind from the face of the earth. It is easy to see the strengths of thought, of the intellect and it is indeed, indispensable to life as we know it, but it extremely important to see where thought leads to problems. This occurs where thought makes divisions to which we become emotionally attached. This occurs when thought is focused on the self. The essence of this psychological thought is divisive and separative as we have seen: My country, my family, my property, my ideas, my beliefs, my possessions, etc.. We identify with these things; they contribute to our view of what we are, of who we are, our very sense of self. Thought is responsible for the separation of 'you' from 'me' and also for the division between the observer and the observed, between the 'me' and what I see. This sense of self is created and sustained by thought and it is this type of thought that, because of its divisive nature, necessarily leads to contradiction and conflict, not only within each person but also between one another.

So, if thought breeds contradiction, as 'yours' and 'mine', as 'heaven' and 'hell' and all the rest of it, then how shall we observe, see, without the fragment which we call thought? I do not know if you have ever

put this question to yourself. Thought is after all the response of the past, memories. Thought is never free, and with that thought, with that instrument, we are always looking at life, always responding to every challenge with thought. Now can we observe with eyes, with a mind that is not shaped by thought? That is, can we observe without any conclusion, without any prejudice, without being committed to any particular theory or action? Which means to observe with eyes that have learnt about these many factors, fragments, which make up the 'me'. That is, as long as there is no self-knowing, as long as I do not know myself completely and thoroughly, I must function in fragments. And how to observe myself, how to learn about myself, without the censor intervening in observation? Are we getting together? (Ibid, p6)

So, can we observe without thought and can we learn about the self, without the self intervening? We are always looking with thought, or strictly speaking thought is always looking, always responding.

Can we learn about ourselves? For example, when we look at feelings, we have to be aware that we have the feeling of hunger and the name 'hunger', the word 'hunger' used to describe that feeling. We are being asked to observe at the level of feelings and we are being asked, too, if that can be done without thought, which in the first instance means without naming coming in at all. This is no easy thing. Is it possible for there to be awareness of hunger, for example, without naming, without thought, in short without the cognitive process becoming activated? One climbs into a hot bath, aware of the heat, aware of the feeling, without the urge to name. The brush of a cat's tail against an arm coincides with a sudden rush of feeling and sensation. A chocolate on the tongue sends flavours cascading through the mouth. Can there be a simple awareness of these things without the symbol intruding? And of course without the symbol, the name, there is no residue, nothing remains. There is just the passage and movement of sensation

It is in this sense that Krishnamurti is talking about learning and it is connected to observation. To be aware of the source at first hand without the cognitive process impinging. The feelings, and also thoughts, pass through but trigger no reaction, no judgement and no compulsion to act in a certain way, (even though the "request" might be noted.) Awareness of this takes place in the moment and nothing of it remains. This awareness is, self-knowledge. We are learning about ourselves devoid of the symbol, an

intermediary that serves us so well in other areas; it is pure observation and is a very different kind of learning from what takes place when we study history, for example. There we consume facts and accumulate. There is memorisation and a residue, a body of information and judgment.

Learning about the self is like watching a performance of ballet without any naming or judgment of any kind; simply being aware of the movement. Perception without interpretation. Learning is being aware of the movement of one's mind in a completely impartial way, seeing the process without a reaction, which means without the presence of the critic, the self, which is usually responding and making judgments.

Look, I want to learn about myself because I see how extraordinarily important it is if I am at all to understand the world, action and a new way of living altogether. I have to understand myself—not according to some philosopher, psychologist however learned. I want to learn about myself as actually what I am, without any distortion, without suppressing anything, what I am both consciously as well as unconsciously. I want to know myself completely. Now how shall I learn? How shall I learn about what I am? To learn there must be a certain passion, a great deal of curiosity, without any assumption, taking things for granted, to look at myself without any formula. Can one do that? Otherwise you can't learn about yourself, obviously. If I say, 'I am jealous,' the very verbalization of that fact, or of that feeling, has already conditioned it. Right? Therefore, I cannot see anything further in it. So there must be a learning about the usage of words, not to be caught in words, and the realization that the word, the description, is not the described or the thing. (Ibid, p7)

Learning is seeing, being aware of the very fundament without classifying or categorizing. This involves staying with a feeling, for example, without naming it and being aware of that feeling in a non-accumulative way. Any term used to refer to this feeling is separate from it and is the product of cognition, which moves the focus on to thought and ideas, away from the feeling that gives rise to it.

Generally, feelings get named, categorized, very quickly. The triggering of cognition takes place, almost automatically, or so it seems, but to learn about the feelings, the fundament, a natural decoupling must occur. Can we observe this fundament, or rather what precedes the naming,

without cognition being set in motion? And, furthermore, can this observation take place without judgments, reactions or conclusions of any kind? Then there is no compulsion to act in ways dictated by the past.

The challenge is interesting and the self wants to rise to it, wants to find the answer, but the self is the very reaction that must be avoided. In its rush to understand, the self will be the very thing that prevents learning or seeing. For it is the self that judges, that draws conclusions. And many of these conclusions will depend on one's upbringing, on ideas learned in the past.

So, to look, to learn about oneself there must be freedom from all conclusion. "I am ugly, I don't want to look at myself." "I don't know what I shall find in myself. I am afraid to look at myself." You know all the things that we have come up with. So, can one observe without any sense of condemnation? Because if there is condemnation it is one of the fragments that has gathered, that has been conditioned by a particular society or culture in which it lives. If you are a Catholic you are conditioned - 2,000 years of propaganda has conditioned your mind, and with that mind you observe. And in that observation, there is already condemnation, justification, therefore you don't learn. Right? The act of learning implies there must be freedom from the past. Obviously. (Ibid, p7)

There must be freedom from the past, freedom from experience, freedom from conditioning. Raised as an English person, an Indian or a Japanese, for example, each one of us has internalized fixed ways of looking, set reactions that must be instantly dropped if there is to be observation without prejudice. To look as a Christian or a Buddhist or from any particular perspective, is to look in a certain way rooted in a set of ideas. There is already an ideology in operation, so learning becomes impossible. The conditioning impinges and affects the observation. Our central question is: Can there be freedom from this conditioning? Not, 'I will be free from it.' The 'I', the self, is the conditioning and so has to keep out of it, which means 'you' have to keep out of it, which proves almost impossible for most of us, especially, most ironically, those of us who want to keep out of it. Observation must take place without the filter of the self, without motive and without accumulation:

So, can you observe yourself without any image of yourself? The image of yourself is the conditioning. Right? And to observe without any image, which means I don't know what I am, I am going to find out. In that there is no assumption, conclusion, therefore the mind is free to observe, to learn. Right? But in learning the moment there is an accumulation you have stopped learning. Look sir, suppose I have observed myself and I see I am this, as a fact, and from that observation I have learnt something about myself. Having learnt about myself is the past. Right? With that past knowledge I am going to observe, therefore I cease to observe. It is only the past that is observing. Right? So can I, can the mind observe without accumulating? You understand the problem? Just look at the problem first, not what to do. When you understand the problem very clearly action follows naturally. I observe myself and through that observation I have learnt something. After having learnt, I further observe. Having learnt more, I go on to observe, therefore the observer becomes the analyzer. Right? Right? Please do see this. Let's go along. The observer, the analyzer, is the result of many things he has learnt about himself, and with the eyes of the past, as the analyzer, as the person who has accumulated knowledge, he examines, he looks, he learns. So the past is always trying to learn of what is going on in the present. Is this clear? (Ibid, p8)

We all have a sense of who we are: 'I'm an Asahi newspaper reader'; 'I support the Conservative party'; 'I am a Christian'; 'I cannot live without rice'. These are simple examples that display the conclusions from which we view. There must be freedom from this past if we are to learn about ourselves rather than continually repeat. And, as already noted, this learning is very different from what we usually mean by learning, when we study something like science or geography, for example, where we accumulate facts. What Krishnamurti means by learning is closer to immediate perception, awareness of the moment. In this "learning" there can be no accumulation because this then becomes part of the filter through which observation takes place. So, can we look without adding to memory? Can we really learn? It is as if one is standing up, unaided on a moving train trying to keep one's balance as the train jolts, rocks and swerves in unpredictable patterns. One is in the moment, aware, alive to all of this. There is no note taking, no past dictating, no accumulation. The

feelings that pass through, the urges that spring up, the compulsions to act in a certain way are seen but trigger no reaction. To learn is to be in the moment in real time; what we learn today, we can learn again tomorrow.

So, can there be a learning, that is, watching, observing, without any sense of accumulation, so that the mind is always fresh to learn? It is only such a mind that is a free mind. So can the mind be free of thought in observing, in learning? Because you see one wants to learn, naturally, seeing the transient nature of our life, the exhaustion of pleasure revived by thought, given continuity to pleasure by thought, seeing how everything comes to an end, one wants to find out if there is anything which is beyond, which is transcendental, which is something other than this daily routine, daily boredom, daily occupation, daily worry. After all that is what religions promise: seek god, love god. But to learn if there is anything that is beyond thought, beyond the intellect, beyond the routine, one must be free of all beliefs, mustn't one? Which doesn't mean you become an atheist. The atheists and the believers are both the same. (Ibid, p10)

So, no accumulation, no thought, no gathering of information. Observation is watching, being aware without recording, without cognition and without the presence of the superficial 'I'. The mind then is fresh, free. The 'what is', the movement of feelings and images that pass through, is ever changing but nothing is triggered. One is simply aware. These feelings, like little earthquakes of varying magnitudes pass through, make their appearances but are not named. They do not become ideas that direct us or compel us in certain directions. We can then use thought - or now, more specifically, thinking - rationally and sanely in our daily lives.

Unfortunately, most of us seem to be locked into our reactions. We cannot be free of them. We do not see 'what is', the fundament at all, but simply react to it, creatures of habit, attached to our routines. These reactions are us, and that is our tragedy.

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