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## Writing a biography of the philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti

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### ABSTRACT

In writing, over the past four years, a biography of the philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, I have explored an argument for his life to be read in the context of a stream of Indian philosophy known as Advaita Vedanta, while also offering a 'Western' narration of his life supported by an historically-contextualising approach.

At the heart of the study has lain questions concerning 'self' and 'identity'. These concepts carry significantly different meanings within Hindu culture (into which Krishnamurti was born) than within Western culture (in which he lived the major part of his adult life).

In the West the word 'self' carries a connotation of the individual ego. In the West, too, there is commonly a differentiation between mind and body - or mind and matter - and an equation of mind and individual ego self. Whereas in India, 'self' or 'atman' carries a connotation of a link with a Godhead or life force, without a clear distinction between 'the ego self' and 'the transcendental self'.

In the ancient Upanishad texts c200 BCE a warning is given not to be carried away by the thinking mind (*manas*) and its attributes, but to try to know the thinker (*mantr*). A seer is interested in the knower behind the mind, that which causes the mind and senses to function. In a similar vein, the Advaita sage Sri Ramana Maharshi, suggested to people that they ask themselves, "Who am I? Who is the thinker? Who is feeling? Who wants to know?"

Krishnamurti encouraged people to practice 'awareness' or 'self-knowledge'. Don't try to work out intellectually what 'God' is, he advised. The human mind is too limited to understand 'God', which is beyond the concept which we call 'God'. The word or symbol is not the thing itself. In 1947 in Madras (now Chennai), for instance, Krishnamurti advised that, "The regeneration of society can only come through the regeneration of the individual. ... This self-knowledge cannot be learnt through a book or through another. ... The beginning of self-knowledge is to be aware of your mental and emotional activities."

Perhaps the closest explanation of this understanding to be found in Western science might be that put forward by the quantum physicist, Henry P Stapp, who describes "experiential knowings" as the basic dynamical units, so that we might come to understand that the world we inhabit is more 'idea-like' than matter-based.

Similarly, in the field of psychoanalysis, Carl Jung came to an understanding that it is not only possible but fairly probable that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing.

Krishnamurti experienced many cultures in his lifetime (1895–1986) and moved with ease from a three-piece suit to a dhoti and back again to a crisply-ironed shirt, slacks and English brogues, depending on geographical and cultural obligation.

Who was Krishnamurti? It might be argued that there has been more value for me as a biographer in exploring the question of his identity than in arriving at an answer.

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## **PAPER**

Who was Jiddu Krishnamurti? The question is discussed in relation to Indian philosophical concepts of the 'self' ('Who Am I?') and in the context of an image of him as a 'World Teacher', an image placed on him by an English spiritual group early this century.

Krishnamurti made six visits to Australia between 1922 and 1970, his first providing the setting for the impulse towards his initial 'enlightenment' experience in Ojai, California.

He was Indian-born; he was a young man educated in England; he was a resident of the West Coast of the United States; he was a world traveller. These descriptions not only tell us very little about him, they certainly limit an understanding of his identity by linking it with his physical presence in space. He fitted all these descriptions yet he also moved beyond them. Rather than a world traveller, it might be said that Krishnamurti was a mind traveller.

The concept of his identity cannot be understood outside of the issues of ethnicity and nationality, culture and religion, and yet philosophical questions concerning being, knowledge and behaviour which are common to human

beings all over the world perhaps offer the greatest accessibility in gaining an understanding of who he was. This paper will very briefly consider these issues with reference to interviews, and Krishnamurti's publications and correspondence. How far did he comply with others' cultural, nationalist, religious and philosophical views of him? I would say that a chameleon exists in the view of the viewer only within the setting in which it is found.

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Krishnamurti was born into a Telugu-speaking Brahmin family in what is often described imperially as 'south India' a few years before the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> His father became a Theosophist and Krishnamurti, a dreamy child, was adopted at the age of fourteen, along with a younger brother, Nitya, by a leader of the Theosophical Society<sup>2</sup>, Mrs Annie Besant, after it was claimed he had a very large aura and on this basis, a future as the next 'World Teacher' was predicted for him. He was educated in English language, manners and customs, first in India and later in England and

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<sup>1</sup>Madanapalle in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Nobel laureate Octavio Paz who was Mexican ambassador to India in the 1960s questions whether India is actually a nation, proposing that the project to create a true nation out of a conglomeration of peoples was "born in the nineteenth century among the intellectual elite, chiefly in Bengal, ... the result of philosophical and political ideas imported by the British". He maintains that "the history of India has been the absence of a universal state that would unite all the various peoples of different languages and cultures" until the British Empire became the "agent of unification". Octavio Paz, 1997, *In Light of India*, Harcourt Brace, London, pp 75, 76, 130

<sup>2</sup> The philosophy of the TS was based on Blavatsky's outline of the sources of esoteric knowledge from ancient Egyptian mythology, Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. See Blavatsky HP, 1980, *The Esoteric Writings of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky: A Synthesis of Science, Philosophy and Religion* (Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton Illinois, and *The Secret Doctrine* Theosophical Publishing Company, London, 1888 & Vol III of same 1897. The philosophy included explanations of the evolution of root races and sub root races, the next race being called the Austral-American, characterised by the development of intuitive faculties, in Australia and the west coast of America. See Tillett, Gregory, *The Elder Brother A biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater* Routledge & Kegan Paul Lon 1982, p 106

Europe. The adoption was challenged by Krishnamurti's father in the High Court of India, to no avail.<sup>3</sup>

By the 1920s Krishnamurti had embarked on a life of international travel, regularly staying in hotels or the homes of friends for days, weeks or months, before moving to a different country as part of a schedule of public lectures.

Krishnamurti was schooled as the new Messiah, or Maitreya,<sup>4</sup> the next Buddha, or World Teacher. His life was circumscribed and pampered. He was educated as an upper-class European. He travelled the world and lectured to hundreds of followers of the Order of the Star in the East, an esoteric order within the Theosophical Society, established with a 'Coming' through Krishnamurti, as its goal. It was claimed by those who were present at lectures in the mid 1920s that an Enlightened Being was beginning to emerge on certain occasions. Krishnamurti lectured on ethics and morality and religion.<sup>5</sup> Then in 1929, at the age of 34, he renounced the Theosophical Society, its support, protection and teachings, and claimed he wanted no

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<sup>3</sup> His father won the case, and although it was successfully appealed by Mrs Besant, by this time Krishnamurti and his brother had been whisked away to Taormina in Sicily to be beyond the jurisdiction of the court in case the decision went against the Theosophists, and were close to the age of consent in any case. Krishnamurti's relationship with his father was severely damaged. Mary Lutyens (*Krishnamurti The Years of Awakening* Avon NY 1975 p 144) relates Nitya's description of the father, Narianiah, as 'gaga' when the two sons met him again in 1922 and Krishnamurti's recollection that they touched his feet with their foreheads whereupon Narianiah immediately went and washed his feet because they had been touched by pariahs. He died in February 1924. Krishnamurti's mother died when he was ten (Lutyens 1975 p 5-7, so it could be said that his relationship with his parents was severed by the time of the advent of his adulthood.

<sup>4</sup> Maitreya is the word for the next incarnation of Buddha. Tillett (1982 p 107) points to the difference between Blavatsky's views on when the 'Fifth Buddha' would come and Leadbeater's identification of Krishnamurti as providing the body for the incarnation of Krishna/Christ/Maitreya.

<sup>5</sup> See the monthly journals published by the Order, *The Herald of the Star*, as well as *The Australian Theosophist*, *Theosophy in Australia* and *The Theosophist* which throughout the

followers, and that 'truth is a pathless land'. Another organisation, Krishnamurti Writings Inc, continued to support him with generous endowments from wealthy friends, in effect 'followers' of his teaching. And he did not give up his travels nor his lectures to meetings of often thousands of spiritual seekers and his 'dialogues' in more intimate small-group settings.

Krishnamurti settled in California and went on to set up Krishnamurti Foundations and schools to disseminate his teachings in three major centres in the United States, England and India.

After more than fifty years of declaring that he was of no culture since he had experienced a total revolution of the mind, Krishnamurti died in 1986 and his ashes were scattered on three continents.

Following that brief biographical narrative I'd now like to concentrate as a biographer on the question, 'Who was Krishnamurti?', in the light of the idea that one's portrait of another's life is very much a reflection of one's own thoughts and values, or a reflection of one's 'self'. I use the word 'self' here conspicuously, to draw attention to the difference in definition of the 'self' between some Eastern and Western schools of philosophy. In Indian philosophy the 'self', or atman, is one's authentic identity, apart from one's roles, and is immortal and immutable. To quote from a researcher for the Indian Council for Philosophical Research, K. Satchidananda Murty, "It is important to note that the Upanishadic self [ie that referred to in the traditional

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1920s referred increasingly to the disciples needed for the imminent arrival of a World Teacher whose body was still in preparation.

Hindu texts written down about 700 BCE] is not either the logical, psychological or epistemological-critical subject, or the willing and active self of European idealism. It is the pure knowing Subject (prajna atma)", which has also been translated as 'wisdom soul'.<sup>6</sup>

The relation between mind and body has long been the subject of study in the West, with the two dichotomised as mind and matter. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Hegelian method of 'dialectic logic' which is said to date from the time of the ancient Greek, Heraclitus, sets up a 'this and that' construct. "Thought is what is ideal in the world; the world is what is concrete in the Idea", as Robert S Hartman explains it.<sup>7</sup>

Or as Hegel himself wrote: "Nature is *implicitly* divine in that it is in the Idea; but in *reality* its being does not correspond to its Notion, and it is rather the unresolved contradiction".<sup>8</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Descartes had conceived of a separation of mind from matter, or dualism, freeing science from religious dogma so that it could explore what Henry P Stapp calls "the important mathematical regularities of the observed physical world" - and Newton's mechanics might later specify a deterministic character to this observed world. And so Newton's notion became the ruling dogma of Western science. However, according to Stapp, "experiential knowings" are now understood as the basic dynamical units of

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<sup>6</sup>Satchidananda Murty, K, 1991, *Philosophy in India*, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, (reprint), p 13. Translation of term from Feuerstein, G, 1997, *Shambala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, Shambala, Boston.

<sup>7</sup> Robert S Hartman 1953 *Reason in History* The Liberal Arts Press New York p xii

life in the universe and “what had in earlier times been understood as material particles that could exist apart from knowings, must be replaced by a knowledge-bearing structure”.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to Western thinking, Indian philosophy might be considered to have maintained a subtle approach to the subject of the nature of the mind in "recognizing mind or *manas* as something distinct from the self or the Atman, though partaking of its nature as intelligence through association with it".<sup>10</sup> This view is based on the descriptions of the nature of the mind in the Vedas, descriptions which incorporate psychical and epistemological functions, with mind also said to include the body.

Before beginning my research into Krishnamurti with the aim of writing a biography of him I studied a little of Advaita Vedanta, a Hindu-based philosophy which explores the concept of duality, the way human consciousness splits the world of the senses into good and bad, likes and dislikes, and ultimately, oneself and other. Put simply, Advaita Vedanta teaches that in 'Reality' there is no split; that that division arises in our act of viewing. The Advaita philosophy was first enunciated by the mystic Shankara around 800 CE, in reviving Hinduism following the major impact made by the Mahayana Buddhist philosopher, Nagarjuna, about seven centuries earlier.<sup>11</sup> Advaita philosophy has as its linchpin the Upanishadic teaching of the first

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<sup>8</sup> Michael John Petry 1970 *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature* Allen & Unwin London p 209.

<sup>9</sup> Henry P Stapp *Knowings* from <http://www-physics.lbl.gov/~stapp/Book1.txt> accessed 14 July 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Sarasvati Chennakesavan, 1960, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, p1

<sup>11</sup> Smart, Ninian, 1981, *Classical Hindu Philosophy and Theology*, The Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

century BCE that, 'the whole universe has it as its Self: That is the Real: That is the Self: That you are...' (*tat tvam asi*), which one might be brave enough to simplify as the individual soul, or self, and Brahman or the Absolute, being understood as one.<sup>12</sup>

Bradley Malkovsky in his essay on the question of the possible personhood of this Absolute, or para brahman, and its far-reaching implications for the interreligious encounter between Christian and Hindu thought, points out that there is much misunderstanding between the two about the nature of the Supreme Reality and its relation to the world.<sup>13</sup> Considering the question of personhood, he quotes Julius Lipner's thoughts: "The Advaitic absolute is trans-personal rather than impersonal", extrapolating that "*Brahman*, then, transcends the ordinary human mode of personhood, but is surely not less than personal."<sup>14</sup>

A renowned Advaita mystic who was a contemporary of Krishnamurti, Sri Ramana Maharshi, suggested to people who wanted to know the Self that the question "Who Am I?" be posed until the questioner realised that 'Reality', a

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<sup>12</sup>Zaehner, RC (ed), 1938, *Hindu Scriptures*, Dent, London. See Chandogya Upanishad (VI,x,3) & (VII,xxv,1&2), one of the oldest mystical, oral scriptures thought to have been composed in the middle of the second millennium BCE. The (VII,xxv, 1&2), as translated above, links three states, the infinite, the ego and the Self, in symmetry. See also David Aberbach, 1993, "Mystical Union and Grief: The Baal Shem Tov and Krishnamurti", *The Harvard Theological Review* Vol 86 No 3 July p 309 "The idea of mystical union with God or a higher being is universal in theological systems ... In Hinduism this concept is expressed in the saying *Tat tvam asi* ("This is thou"); a human being, by finding his or her true immortal self (*atman*) becomes united with Brahman and, in so doing, achieves *nirvana*."

<sup>13</sup>Bradley Malkovsky, 1997, *The Personhood of Samkara's Para Brahman*, Journal of Religion, Vol 77 No 4 October p 562. Malkovsky describes Samkara [this spelling denotes the meaning 'grace'] as "not only the best-known and most influential thinker of his particular brand of Upanishad interpretation but ... also the most famous figure in the entire history of Hindu reflective thought". p 541

<sup>14</sup>ibid p 561. Julius Lipner, 1989, 'Sankara on Metaphor' Indian Philosophy of Religion ed RW Perrett, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers No 9 p 169



state where the questioner, the act of questioning and the answer to the question, were all one.<sup>15</sup> In the same way that an observer, the act of observation and what is observed are bound together.

It is appropriate here to contextualise Krishnamurti's life using these concepts since Krishnamurti adopted, among other roles, that of a philosopher concerned with the ontological, teleological and epistemological concepts of self, God and knowledge – even though he said he was not speaking about concepts. His writings exhibit many references to ideas outlined in Advaita philosophy. For example, in a talk in London in 1952 he spoke in terms of duality, describing a person who looks at consciousness as being just a part of a whole, an analyser gaining only a partial understanding "which is no understanding at all," he said.

"So long as there is the interpreter, the analyser, the total process cannot be understood ... it is the analyser, the separate being that is looking... And when the investigator, who is the result of memory, tries to understand part of himself, he is incapable of understanding it. ... You can only understand it when there is complete identity, the cessation of the analyser... as long as the superficial mind, through partial awareness, separates itself and analyses, it cannot understand the totality."<sup>16</sup>

So, in the context of the question, 'Who Am I?' as it was understood by educated Indians at least in the twenty years leading up to Sri Ramana Maharshi's death in 1950<sup>17</sup> - and since - we come again to the question: 'Who was Krishnamurti?' But first it must be noted that the name Krishnamurti

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<sup>15</sup> TMP Mahadevan (ed), 1994, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, TN Venkataraman, Tiruvannamalai.

<sup>16</sup> J Krishnamurti, 1952, 'Thought Has To Come To An End', 24 April, *KFI Bulletin* 1999/1 p 15

<sup>17</sup> The Krishnamurti Foundation Archives in Chennai contain many of Sri Ramana's published books. See also 'Sir Thomas' an English 'Master' who criticises Krishnamurti for attempting to teach Advaita without naming it, paying honour to its tradition and chelas or using Sanskrit terms. See Scott, Cyril, 1932, *The Initiate in the Dark Cycle*, Routledge, London, pp 136-139.

means an image or model of Krishna, the God incarnate of the Vaishnava tradition, a puller of hearts, associated with darkness.

In a televised BBC interview in 1970, Krishnamurti spoke of the mind in relation to propaganda and conditioning. In the same year he told a radio interviewer, Tara McCarthy,<sup>18</sup> that it is conditioning that causes fragmentation and contradiction in the human mind, and that "the inward state of Man is the outward expression of what he is". So that if a person has fragmented views, as we all have, then the outward expression of our lives will be fragmented:

"The act of observation is the highest form of creation ... each one has to understand oneself. ... One fragment, the observer, assumes the authority ... and likes or dislikes, as the censor, the analyser, the entity who decides what is right and wrong. So there's always division between the observer and the thing observed."

Having seen a connection between what Krishnamurti taught and traditional Advaita philosophy, I view Krishnamurti's writings within that context, being also aware that Western scholars who have not had any experience of formal Advaitic meditative training view Krishnamurti's words within a context of their own educational background - that involving conceptualisation of philosophical, religious, political, educational, social and meditative ideas and experiences.

It seems appropriate to allude here to a work by Professor Roger Ames, Director of Chinese Studies at the University of Hawaii, titled 'Through a Glass Darkly' in which he describes how we are unable to see into other cultures

because what is to be seen does not correspond with what we expect to see, which is dependent on our own cultural expectations. It's as if we are trying to look through a window into another culture from our own brightly-lit room, and can see nothing but our own reflection in the window.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless without knowing anything of Advaita philosophy, many people found wisdom in what Krishnamurti had to say and it might be argued that a universality of language and message in Krishnamurti's 'teachings' largely accounts for its adaptability across the ground of cultural and nationalist prejudice, language barriers and religious bigotries.<sup>20</sup> Krishnamurti spoke a modernist, individualist language as heard by Westerners, whereas Indian thinkers heard classic Advaita spoken from the mouth of a radical non-traditionalist who rejected the concept of a guru without, a guru in materialised human form:

"...we must discard the whole process of what we have learned as meditation. Then meditation is not for a few minutes or an hour during the day, but is a constant process, all the time seeking, discovering, what is true. Then, as you go deeper into the problem, you will see that the mind becomes extraordinarily quiet – not disciplined, not the quietness of stagnation, of enclosure, but a quietness, a tranquillity, in which all movement of thought has ceased. But what most of us want is to experience, to gather more. It is the desire for the more that makes us meditate, that makes us do spiritual exercises. ... When all that has dropped away, then there is a silence, there is a tranquillity of the mind, in which the experiencer, the interpreter, is absent. ... So we can see that a confused mind, a mind ridden with sorrow, a mind that is aware of its own emptiness, loneliness, can never find that which is beyond itself. ... Surely the purpose of existence is to go beyond the self-centred activity of the mind."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Shirley du Boulay (producer) 1970 *Doubts and Certainties*, interview with Oliver Hunkin, BBC, producer Shirley du Boulay. Interview with Tara McCarthy Brockwood June 1970 held by McCarthy.

<sup>19</sup> Paper given at ASCAP conference, Sydney, 1998

<sup>20</sup> Cp Ninian Smart's thesis of a philosophy of religion being extended to a 'philosophy of worldviews' in 'The Philosophy of Worldviews, or the Philosophy of Religion Transformed,' in Thomas Dean (ed) 1995 *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays on the Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, Albany: SUNY Press, pp 17-31

<sup>21</sup> London talk, 24 April 1952, KFA Archives.

What may at first seem a contradiction - that Krishnamurti was mouthing a philosophy that had been handed down from generation to generation since the time of recorded history while rejecting its traditional method of teaching through the devotion of student to guru - this contradiction, provides the very cornerstone of his philosophy.

In the rejection of tradition in education, the throwing out of guruhood for himself and others, is to be found the true mystic's approach. Do not believe what others say, sound it out for yourselves. Krishnamurti believed it was up to each individual to find some chink of enlightenment and act on his or her realisations. In the words of one student of Krishnamurti:

I suppose the first thing that really set me off [in the 1950s], was the fact that he always would say, 'Don't believe it because I say it. This is something you have to test for yourself.'. And every other religion seemed to me to be asking you to believe something ... whereas here he was actually asking you to, you know, experience it. [Not intellectually] ... it was a much more profound way really. ... One had to find a way of expressing it in the way one was living.<sup>22</sup>

In the West, thinking ourselves individuals, we believe that we might change ourselves: "when you say it's impossible to change it deprives you of energy" Krishnamurti told McCarthy in 1970. "You have energy only when you see the possibility of changing the human mind completely".<sup>23</sup> He was not speaking about trying to change for the better, improving oneself, doing good works. He'd rejected 'spiritual' ambition and the do-gooders of the Theosophical Society twenty years before.<sup>24</sup> Rather than to aspire, he was advising us to drop aspiration and seeking. To accept choiceless awareness.

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<sup>22</sup> Author's interview with Jane Hammond at Brockwood, Hampshire, December 1998.

<sup>23</sup> McCarthy (1970)

<sup>24</sup> The texts of TS publications during the 1920s reflect the encouragement of members to strive to become good disciples of the 'Coming World Teacher'

But not drop out. Self-awareness is disclosed in the working out of a life in interaction between the self and other. He told McCarthy: "Each one has an image about themselves and about the other. These images - verbal, emotional - [are] put together by past experience".<sup>25</sup> The word is not the thing itself, nor the image the thing, Krishnamurti told us, a concept which lies at the heart of an understanding of language and symbolism, in knowing cultural artefacts to be representations of human reflective thought.

Professor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland, Professor Raymond Martin, has made the observation that Krishnamurti's work is largely overlooked or ignored by Western academic scholars of philosophy. "Theorizing is one thing, meditating a wholly different thing, perhaps even an antithetical thing. They are like oil and water. So one reason Krishnamurti has not been accepted at the university may be that academics are interested in theories, Krishnamurti in meditation, and theory and meditation do not mix."<sup>26</sup> However Martin goes on to make a comparison between Krishnamurti's concept of 'the self' and that proposed by Hume in which "we mistakenly interpret the self as a succession of individual 'perceptions'". Martin refers to his own interpretation of what Krishnamurti says as a 'theory' in relation to "the role of the psychological process of identification in the constitution of the self".<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> McCarthy (1970)

<sup>26</sup> Krishnamurti Foundation of America NEWSLETTER Fall 1998 reprinted in 'On Education', *The Link* No 15 Autumn-Winter 1998, Krishnamurti Link International, pp 31-33

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. See Martin, Raymond, 1998, *Self-Concern*, Cambridge University Press.

It may seem curious to consider establishing theories about what Krishnamurti taught, when he was anti-theories and pro-direct experience, but with Krishnamurti Centres and Committees established in 33 different countries perhaps it's time to recognise that he produced a body of philosophical work which remains in publication and continues to influence.

Krishnamurti's views on meditation changed over the decades, from 1920s Theosophist exhortations to improve oneself, to his decree in 1983 that all effort to meditate was the denial of meditation, which introduced an element of understanding about the power of meditation being beyond personal volition.<sup>28</sup>

What Krishnamurti was offering over the decades was the wisdom of the ages, spoken in a modernist language, with its concentration on the power of the individual and the overturning of tradition, in tune with the audience before him on each occasion. This was his starting point: to step back and acknowledge the process of thought itself, before playing a game of exploring one's inner thoughts, which might be likened to looking into the interiors of an infinite set of Russian dolls. As he placed himself on show before the thoughts of an audience, it might be likened to watching yourself in two mirrors facing each other back into infinity. The Vedas themselves were the product of the meditations of sages: *[Sages] well-practised (yoga) in meditation have beheld God's native (atma) power deep-hidden by his attributes (guna)*, the seers sang. Buddha in his Sermon of the Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma said that he had seen an old path, an old road, traversed by the supremely enlightened ones that had gone before. Shankara

(c800 CE) advised a three-fold spiritual discipline – study of the scriptures at the feet of a master, reasoning, and meditation upon the identity of the individual ‘Self’ with ‘Brahman’ until the identity became immediately felt. The Advaita sage, Sri Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai, told British author, Paul Brunton, in the 1930s, “Trace thought to its place of origin”, just as he had advised so many ‘seekers’ throughout the first half of last century to ask themselves, “Who Am I?” until an understanding manifested. The Mumbai sage, an inheritor of the Sri Ramana Maharshi/Nisagardatta Maharaj Advaita tradition, Ramesh Balsekar, describes ‘Self-realisation’ or ‘Enlightenment’ as nothing more than the deepest possible understanding that there is no individual doer of any action and that seeking and search are simply part of the functioning of the “Totality”. True understanding, or enlightenment, according to Balsekar, happens only when there is total effortlessness – “in other words, in the utter *absence of any comprehender*”. Krishnamurti’s terms were “choiceless awareness” and “the observer is the observed”. According to Balsekar, human problems arise because “the basic fact of phenomenal manifestation is ignored – that the entire manifestation is *merely conceptual*”. Stating this quite clearly elsewhere, he says,

“the very existence of ...[a] manifestation depends on its being perceived, and for this reason the basic separation arises, of the perceiver object and the perceived object. ... Space-time is a concept, and therefore the manifestation therein must also necessarily be a concept, an illusion, an appearance in Consciousness”.

Or as the quantum physicist, Henry P Stapp explains it, “We live in an *idealike* world, not a matterlike world”. More than a decade earlier, the theoretical physicist, David Bohm, who was significantly influenced by Krishnamurti,

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<sup>28</sup> J Krishnamurti 1980 *Meditations* Harper & Row New York Foreword.  
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wrote of the “common ground” of matter and consciousness and of an ‘implicate order’ in which “the totality of existence is enfolded within each region of space (and time)”.<sup>29</sup>

The concept of the unity of all things is fundamental to Indian philosophy, as the distinguished philosopher, Hajime Nakamura pointed out. It is expressed earliest in the *Rig-Veda* and later in the *Upanishads*, to be reinforced further in Shankara’s commentary on the *Brahma Sutras* of the first millenium. Nakamura maintained that most contemporary Indian pundits (or traditional philosophical scholars) belong to the school of Shankara, with the main current of Advaita Vedantic metaphysics being “a thoroughgoing monism imposed on pluralistic but illusory phenomena”. From ancient times the Vedantists had “a strong tendency to think of the multifarious phenomena of the world as self-realizations of the one Absolute Being”. As another Indian scholar, Sarasvati Chennakesavan, has pointed out, Shankara believed it was natural for humans to make the mistake of mutually superimposing the attributes of subject and object, known as *adhyasa*, which was the basis of all relative experiences.<sup>30</sup>

The question has been posed in relation to Krishnamurti’s teaching that he may not have known “union” himself, despite his early claims, and may,

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<sup>29</sup> RC Zaehner (translator) 1966 *Hindu Scriptures* JM Dent London p 203, *Svetasvatara Upanishad* I iii. P Brunton 1934 *A Search in Secret India* Rider, London p 304. Ernest Wood 1977 *Zen Dictionary* Pelican Harmondsworth, pp 66, 67. Y Keshava Menon 1976 *The Mind of Adi Shankaracharya* Jaico Publishing House Mumbai, pp 15, 16. Ramesh S Balsekar 1992 *Consciousness Speaks* Advaita Press Redondo Beach California, p 301. Ramesh S Balsekar 1996 *A Net of Jewels* Advaita Press Redondo Beach California, entries for 22 & 30 September. Ramesh S Balsekar 1989 *A Duet of One* Advaita Press Redondo Beach p 115. Henry P Stapp 1993 *Mind Matter and Quantum Mechanics* Springer-Verlag New York p 221. David Bohm 1983 *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* Routledge & Kegan Paul London pp 172, 213.

<sup>30</sup> Hajime Nakamura 1964 *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples* East-West Center Press Honolulu pp 47, 67-69, referring to Surendranath Dasgupta 1949 *A History of Indian Philosophy*, I, Cambridge University Press p 429. Sarasvati Chennakesavan 1960 *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy* Asia Publishing House Bombay p 33.



instead, have read many works by earlier mystical masters, and simply reiterated their knowledge.<sup>31</sup> Great argument ensues over whether and how much he read, apart from detective stories that he willingly confessed to enjoying. He denied he knew the work of major philosophers or the scriptures yet there is evidence that he read quite broadly. No-one can really know whether what he spoke about publicly, over and over again, year after year, decade after decade, with very little change in substance but always couched in contemporary language, was spontaneous knowledge which came to him through meditation, as he described it, or whether it was caught in his memory from the many sources of instruction he had encountered in his youth, and throughout his life. The debate goes on – did he read about this wisdom or, as a mystic, ‘see’ it? One question that does not seem to have been raised by scholars is: who was speaking over the seven decades that Krishnamurti’s lectures spanned? Was Krishnamurti speaking as an individual, was he the ‘vehicle’ for a supra-natural force, or was he merely a mouthpiece for the mind of the audience itself? Perhaps he could travel no further than the attention, will or understanding of each silent, spellbound gathering. His words reflected the concerns of the minds of those who constituted his audiences in each and every decade. In the 1920s he was beginning to break with the Theosophists, and thereafter he spoke the language of the intellectual humanists with whom he mostly mixed. Yet it might be maintained that his mind was fundamentally influenced by the major principle of Advaita philosophy – of oneness or non-duality. By the end of his life Krishnamurti was expressing his frustration with

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<sup>31</sup> Before his break with Theosophy in 1929 Krishnamurti repeatedly spoke or wrote of finding the ‘Beloved’ or ‘Liberation’ and even in 1944 he said that right thinking came with “self-knowledge”, implying that he had gained it, J Krishnamurti 1944 *Authentic Report of Ten Talks May-July* Star Publishing Trust Ojai.

the capacities of his audiences, and no wonder he felt frustrated, after a lifetime of public speaking on the same subjects. On the platform his speech was complex and during these public appearances he was surrounded by acolytes, but day to day as a mature adult, he always lived his life as simply as possible, in meditative mode, with as few intimates around him as possible.<sup>32</sup>

Krishnamurti is just one of many thinkers and public speakers who have offered a vehicle for continuity between East and West since at least Plato's time, among them: Richard Burton and Max Muller in the nineteenth century; Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his disciple, Swami Vivekananda, who attended the World Parliament of Religions in the United States seven years before the beginning of the twentieth century; Sri Chinmoy, who became United Nations peace ambassador in 1931; WB Yeats' friend and tutor in Indian philosophy, Sri Purohit Swami; Paramahansa Yogananda whose book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, published in 1946, globalised part of India's Hindu tradition; Maharishi Mahesh, who established the world-wide TM movement of transcendental meditation and whose teachings had a major impact on one of the greatest musical influences of twentieth century popular music, The Beatles; Sri Aurobindo, international peace worker, and Bhagwan Rajneesh, known later fondly as Osho, the radical academic philosopher-turned-guru. All of these figures may be seen as stepping stones between cultures.

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<sup>32</sup> Before his break with Theosophy in 1929 Krishnamurti repeatedly spoke or wrote of finding the 'Beloved' or 'Liberation' and even in 1944 he said that right thinking came with "self-knowledge", implying that he had gained it, J Krishnamurti 1944 *Authentic Report of Ten Talks May-July* Star Publishing Trust Ojai.

Acknowledging this, it must also be acknowledged that the split, the division of the world into Eastern and Western thought and culture is an artificial construct of the mind, able to be overcome only when it is recognised as such. Further, it might be argued that Krishnamurti, and others of this band of culture-spanners, provided a globalising force in human thinking, in that most of what Krishnamurti spoke about crossed geographical boundaries. He spoke publicly in the United States, England, France, Holland, Australia, New Zealand, Colombia, India, Sri Lanka - the list goes on. He's been described as reflecting in his talks the concerns and mood of whichever country he was in at the time yet also introducing the 'exotic'.<sup>33</sup> The subject matter of his talks was personal yet universal, addressing questions pertaining to fear, anger, jealousy, love - offering some understanding of emotions and the role they play in human interaction and self-awareness the world over. Love and hate are not restricted to any particular geographical or cultural space - identification with place or group is common to all humanity. There's a match between the nationality, culture and geography of an identity and its expression. In the case of Krishnamurti it is useful to consider whether the bonds of identity forged from culture and nationality were broken down by his very cultural fluidity. It might be argued that what he achieved was an abandonment of identification with any one culture, with his past, his origins in India.

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<sup>33</sup> A close associate in India, Miss Ahalya Chari, confirms this, as does Tara McCarthy who heard talks in the United States, India and England

It is profitable to consider Paul Brunton's description of his first meeting with the non-traditional Advaita guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi, in relation to an understanding of Maharshi's question, 'Who Am I?':

"I know only that a steady river of quietness seems to be flowing near me, that a great peace is penetrating the inner reaches of my being ... I perceive with sudden clarity that the intellect creates its own problems and then makes itself miserable trying to solve them. This is indeed a novel concept to enter the mind of one who has hitherto placed such high value upon intellect"<sup>34</sup>

The description of some realisation which takes place beyond the intellect bears a resemblance to the description by a student of Krishnamurti of the effect of his charisma on her<sup>35</sup> on hearing one of his talks in 1960.

He'd get up on the platform and sit there, and you'd think, 'Gosh, he's so little and so brown'. ... I mean funny things go through your head ... and then he would sort of pause and he'd say, 'I don't know what I'm going to talk about,' and then he would begin to talk. And from that moment the little man and the brownness just went. He was talking as a human being. Tremendous dynamic energy would come from listening to him ... [he was] speaking so dynamically that you had to watch that you weren't just swept along ... But the interesting thing for me was that ... I would go in with a question which was a stupid thing to do because that meant you weren't going to listen to what he was saying, but after a bit, at the end of the talk, you realised he'd answered your question.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps the unusual effects of being in the presence of Krishnamurti which many people described might be linked with a reported emergence of 'Enlightenment' from within Krishnamurti's body which initially appeared after a visit to Sydney, his first, in 1922. This was not an easy trip for Krishnamurti as he felt estranged not least as a result of the stark contrasts of adulation matched by isolated incidents of racism he faced. For example, on the voyage to Fremantle in 1922 an Englishman on board ship refused

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<sup>34</sup> Paul Brunton, 1934, *A Search in Secret India*, Rider, London.

<sup>35</sup> Hammond (1998)

<sup>36</sup> Hammond (1998). The President of 'Krishnamurti Australia', Donald Ingram Smith, also talks about the mirroring effect of being with Krishnamurti. Interview with author 22.10.98 held by author.

Krishnamurti's editor, Rajagopal, a seat beside him on a sofa, declaring 'What bloody cheek' and this angered Krishnamurti.<sup>37</sup>

When Krishna and his brother, Nitya, left Sydney, Krishna must have been preoccupied by a message which is said to have come to him from a 'Master' during a spiritual session with his mentor, Charles Leadbeater.<sup>38</sup> Krishnamurti was still a member of the TS at this stage. He wrote from Ojai, in California, to Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater about an incident which marks the beginning of a 'process', as Krishnamurti and Nitya called it, which would continue, in a discontinuous way, all his life.

"Ever since I left Australia I have been thinking and deliberating about the message which the Master KH gave me while I was there," he wrote. He meditated every morning: "With ease which rather astonished me I found the main interest on that high plane was to serve the Lord Maitreya."<sup>39</sup>

Krishnamurti's brother Nitya chronicled in detail the following description-in-part of the painful enlightening process which spanned 45 nights, beginning on August 17, 1922: "...we [Rosalind, a friend, Mr Warrington, and I, Nitya] felt the presence of a Great Being flooding the room ... It was a ghastly night of suffering [for Krishna] ...every time he fainted we did our best to wake him up, touching his spine as a last resort."<sup>40</sup> Krishnamurti later described the experience of being in everything or everything being in him - birds, ants, wind, dust, noise.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Mary Lutyens (1975) p 147

<sup>38</sup> Mary Lutyens, (1975) p 162

<sup>39</sup> Page 1 of a 6-page document dated 2 Sep 1922, Krishnamurti Foundation of India Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Description written by Nitya February 11 1923 of October 5 and 6 1922, Krishnamurti Foundation of India Archives.

Years later, in 1947, Krishnamurti was asked by his eldest brother, Shivaram, "What is the self?", and Krishnamurti told him, "Just a bundle of memories".<sup>42</sup> Krishnamurti employed his brother's son, G. Narayan, in one of his schools and Narayan who related this story in a statutory declaration, also implied his belief that his uncle, Krishnamurti, was an instrument of enlightenment, or Buddhahood. This raises the question how we in the West, who are so dependent on the rigour of our 'individual' intellects to judge the validity of a matter, can ever be expected to judge whether a person is "enlightened" or not? We may have some understanding of a psychoanalytical term such as "fully integrated", as an ideal, but can hardly presume to be able to judge another's "enlightenment" without having reached such a perfect state ourselves.

A writer who was raised in what might be called a ménage-à-trois household, between Krishnamurti, her mother, Rosalind, and her father, Krishnamurti's editor, Rajagopal, cast doubt in 1991 on Krishna's 'enlightenment process'. The writer, Radha Rajagopal Sloss, claimed in a biography of Krishnamurti that her mother never experienced what Nitya described in August 1922, having fallen asleep. Rajagopal Sloss raises the possibility of Krishnamurti suffering malaria, epilepsy or even dissociation of personality, including hallucinatory symptoms, and says her mother attributed Krishnamurti's behaviour to a strong need to be mothered.<sup>43</sup> Rosalind was alive at the time of

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<sup>41</sup> M Lutyens (1975) p 170

<sup>42</sup> Statutory declaration testimony of Shivaram's son, G Narayan, taken down during 1992 and checked Jan 1993, held by Krishnamurti Foundation of India Archives, Chennai.

<sup>43</sup> Radha Rajagopal Sloss, 1991, *Lives in the Shadow*, pp 60, 61, 215, 315 Bloomsbury, London. See also Mary Lutyens, 1983, *Krishnamurti The Years of Fulfilment*, Farrer Strauss Giroux John Murray, London, pp 88-93 for descriptions of Krishnamurti's attachment to Lady

her daughter's claim. She was also alive at the time of the earlier claim by Krishnamurti's brother and she never refuted it while she remained Krishnamurti's lover. The ongoing 'process' was described in detail, including Krishnamurti's pleading for his mother and mistaking his lover for his mother, in a book for which publication was held up by Krishnamurti in 1954.<sup>44</sup> It might be expected that Rosalind had read it then. When Krishnamurti met a woman called Nandini Mehta in India in 1947, relations between Rosalind and Krishnamurti began to cool. They cooled further in 1955 when Rosalind accompanied him to Sydney and then India and saw his devotees there. This devotion was a very un-American phenomenon, not acceptable in the New World of equality. Soon after, Rosalind asked that he not return to California.<sup>45</sup> By the end of the 1960s the Rajagopals and Krishnamurti were locked in a legal battle which was finally settled out of court after Krishnamurti's death nearly twenty years after the action was initiated by him.<sup>46</sup>

Krishnamurti may or may not have reached enlightenment for periods of his life but he still had to act out his life, every day, just as everyone does, to express knowledge in living. And a lot of people placed a lot of images onto Krishnamurti about what he should represent, creating an icon in their own image. He acted many roles: wise counsellor in human relationships who had no experience of marriage or legal parenting; a spiritual adviser who was thought not to have sexual relationships yet did; a religious person who

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Emily Lutyens and p 165 for a description of Rosalind's role as carer. David Aberbach (1993 p 316) draws links between the grieving process and mystical union, proposing Krishnamurti's desire to belong to the world may have resulted from his grief and sense of loss over his mother's death.

<sup>44</sup> *Candles in the Sun* by Lady Emily Lutyens was published in 1957, with accounts of the beginnings of the 'process' at Ojai omitted.

<sup>45</sup> Rajagopal Sloss, (1991) p 255

scorned all religion including Hinduism yet practised *hatha yoga* and chanted in Sanskrit; a meditative man who renounced formal meditation techniques; an educated Indian living in the West, who spoke several languages but not his mother-tongue.

India's modernism and internationalist orientation post-Independence placed Krishnamurti in an quasi-ambassadorial role for 'Indian' culture. In espousing cessation of conflict of the mind in order to have world conflict cease, he was articulating a traditional Advaita philosophy. Yet viewed from a Western perspective, Krishnamurti's public statements were post-Enlightenment notions of rationalism leading to equality, liberty, pacifism and humanitarianism. As the West looked East for spiritual answers, most searchers could see only their own reflections, couched in their own language and heritage. It might be argued that Krishnamurti influenced and was influenced by modernist cultural cross-currents, yet for many his role was as a mirror of major post-war cultural change fired within the crucibles of individuals' lives. For he experienced many cultures, moving with ease from a three-piece suit to a *dhoti* and back again to a crisply-ironed shirt, slacks and English brogues, depending on geographical and social obligation. For all the imagery of enlightenment which was placed on him and that he experienced and encouraged others to experience directly but refused to describe publicly, Krishnamurti was able at times to dispense with his past, to abandon the geographic boundaries of his birthplace and the imprint of his early cultural education, and perhaps even the influences of the other countries which he later adopted as home. He was at times able to embody and reflect the



divinity in each of those listeners and readers who were prepared to overthrow the tyranny of their own conditioned analyser within.

Perhaps here I've sketched a person who had a fragmented mind living out the conflicts within him. Or it might be more accurate to see this brief biographical picture as a reflection of the conflicts within the people surrounding him, past observers whose biases and prejudices persist still. Or of conflicts within the people who observe his life today. Perhaps it reflects the conflicts inherent in society, the conformist moral codes and judgements of communities made up of conflicted individuals the world over.

Viewed in another way, perhaps the sketch reflects Krishnamurti's growth toward Buddhahood, that ecstatic state of experiencing the changeless within one.<sup>47</sup> Or his shortfall from Buddhahood.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps it's a reflection of how far he failed to surrender to the image-making of others. Krishnamurti did recognise the great design of an 'implicate order' - a concept presented by theoretical physicist David Bohm, with whom Krishnamurti held televised 'dialogues'.<sup>49</sup> Ultimately Krishnamurti was who you see him to be - it is for the

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<sup>47</sup> As Stephen H. Phillips points out, the word 'buddha' comes from the common Sanskrit verb 'to awaken', so that "'on being buddha' or *buddhatve* in Sanskrit means 'on being awakened'". Review of *On Being Buddha* by Paul J Griffiths by Stephen H Phillips, *Philosophy of Religion*, Vol 41 No 1 February 1997 p 67. Phillips points out "how thoroughly committed Buddhists are to the experiential nature of being awakened", p 69.

<sup>48</sup> John Wren-Lewis in "Flesh-and-blood Buddha or stained-glass saint?" proposes that not even as much as "delusions of avatarhood" but "the more limited idealization involved in the world teacher role forced him [Krishnamurti] to an evasion of his own human 'what is', and this was his undoing". *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Winter 96, Vol 36 Issue 1 (p 7 online). This raises the question of the origin of the idea or idealization of the role of world teacher that 'forced' Krishnamurti to evasion and how this idealization and evasion could have been anything other than part of who he was and therefore what he could achieve as the person he was.

<sup>49</sup> David Bohm's concept of the 'implicate order' is one in which "all the information in the entire universe is said to be enfolded in its smallest parts in a holographic manner". Corey, MA, *God and the New Cosmology* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Maryland 1993 p 139.

viewer, the reader, to answer the question. Was he simply a man; was he a saint or an avatar? Was he what others expected him to be?

Along with David Bohm, another physicist who was prepared to embrace mysticism, Fritoj Capra, might throw some light on the identity Krishnamurti held for him. Mysticism was a field of study considered outside the strictured world of science in the 1960s and early 1970s, and yet Capra found vibrant connections to assist his understanding of high-energy physics, as he explains in *The Turning Point* and *The Tao of Physics*.<sup>50</sup> Krishnamurti was Capra's first direct encounter with a radical spiritual teacher and he found the experience "liberating", after Krishnamurti told Capra that first he was a human being, then a scientist.<sup>51</sup>

"The problem that Krishnamurti had solved for me, Zen-like with one stroke, is the problem most physicists face when confronted with the ideas of mystical traditions - how can one transcend thinking without losing one's commitment to science? It is the reason, I believe, that so many of my colleagues feel threatened by my comparisons between physics and mysticism. Perhaps it will help them to know that I, too, felt the same threat. I felt it with my whole being, but it appeared at an early stage of my career and I had the great fortune that the person who made me realize the threat also helped me to transcend it."<sup>52</sup>

Invariably Krishnamurti's lectures would end either on a question, full-circle from his starting point, or on the role of love in understanding the meaning of life ... as exemplified in the text quoted above which ends with the rhetorical question posed, "Surely the purpose of existence is to go beyond the self-centred activity of the mind?" The inference to a Western mind in the use of the word 'self' is an individual - the individual-centred activity of the mind. In

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<sup>50</sup> Fritjof Capra *UnCommon Wisdom* HarperCollins London 1988 p 25. He describes *The Dance of Shiva* as his first article about the parallels between modern physics and Eastern mysticism p 25. Capra also observes that Bohm was strongly influenced by Krishnamurti who, over the years, became his spiritual mentor p 66.

<sup>51</sup> Capra (1988) p 28

<sup>52</sup> Capra (1988) p 30

other words, the small mind, the mind active with petty concerns, rather than a mind which governs all other minds. But what if the capital 'S', the Self-centred, Soul-centred, activity of the mind is the very same as the individual mind? To go beyond this is to go where? Krishnamurti was on about something, and few people in the West who were trying to follow him intellectually could understand what it was he was on about, even while they sat and felt the heat radiating off the mind and body.

In the words of the Christian monk and author, Bede Griffiths:

"We are slowly recovering the knowledge which was universal in the ancient world, that there is no such thing as a matter apart from mind or consciousness. Consciousness is latent in every particle of matter, and the mathematical order which science discovers in the universe is due to the working of this universal consciousness in it."<sup>53</sup>

This paper may be a reflection of my shortfall, my incapacity to reflect Krishnamurti to you as he was. If the question "Who was Krishnamurti?" is hard to answer it may be the fulfilment of his last wish: that people remember the teachings and forget the teacher. Central to these teachings was the statement that:

"When [a] man becomes aware of the movement of his own consciousness he will see the division between the thinker and the thought, the observer and the observed, the experiencer and the experience. He will discover that this division is an illusion. Then only is there pure observation, which is insight without any shadow of the past. This timeless insight brings about a deep radical change in the mind."<sup>54</sup>

There are parallels here with an inheritor of the Ramana Maharshi Advaita school, Ramesh Balsekar, referred to earlier, who says: "True understanding,

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<sup>53</sup> Bede Griffiths, *The Marriage of East and West* London p 52-3

<sup>54</sup> J Krishnamurti, 'The Core of Krishnamurti's Teaching', *Total Freedom* HarperSanFrancisco, 1996 p 257.

which is enlightenment, can happen only when there is total effortlessness - in other words, in the utter *absence of any comprehender*". As he explains: "All human problems arise only because the basic fact of phenomenal manifestation is ignored - that the entire manifestation is *merely conceptual*."<sup>55</sup>

The leading quantum physicist, Henry P Stapp, writes in a similar vein in *Mind, Matter and Quantum Mechanics* that, "we live in an *idealike* world, not a matterlike world".<sup>56</sup> He cites Mozart's holistic composition methods to illustrate a point about the "global" character of conscious thoughts and quantum states. Stapp presents in the book his basic message that "the enormous changes that have been wrought by quantum theory in our ideas about the fundamental nature of matter have altered radically the problem of the connection of mind to matter", pointing out the "profoundness and irrevocability of [the] collapse of the classical local-reductionistic conception of the physical universe".<sup>57</sup> He concludes with a hope that science might "deal successfully in a mathematically and logically coherent way" with "the connection between processes in human brains and the stream of human conscious experience".<sup>58</sup>

One explanation of Krishnamurti's role as teacher and mystic might be found in the work of great observers and thinkers in the fields of cultural and psychological studies, such as Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell. Perhaps

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<sup>55</sup>Ramesh Balsekar 1996 *A Net of Jewels* Advaita Press California entries for September 30 & 22.

<sup>56</sup> Henry P Stapp *Mind Matter and Quantum Mechanics* Springer-Verlag New York 1993 p 221.

<sup>57</sup> Henry P Stapp (1993) p 30

<sup>58</sup> Henry P Stapp (1993) p 225

Jung's explanations of the unconscious, including his ideas about the collective unconscious and "numinous" archetypes, can help the reader to understand what seem to have been Krishna's extraordinarily knowledge-gaining quests through different realms of consciousness. In his essay, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, Jung refers to Ignatius Loyola's apparitions of bright light and multiple eyes and the Rig-Veda's "thousand-eyed" *Purusha* to demonstrate how introspective intuitions can capture images from the state of the unconscious.

Since consciousness has always been described in terms derived from the behaviour of light, it is in my view not too much to assume that these multiple luminosities correspond to tiny conscious phenomena. If the luminosity appears in monadic form as a single star, sun, or eye, it readily assumes the shape of a mandala and must then be interpreted as the self. ... the symbols of the self have a "uniting" character.<sup>59</sup>

Later in the essay Jung confronts the problem of the impossibility of proof for psychological theory since the human organ of consciousness is both a transformer and a transformation of original instinctual images or archetypal knowledge. Or as Krishnamurti explained it, "Water can never find out what water is".<sup>i</sup> Jung's conclusion, meticulously arrived at by tracing archetypes, resonates with the conclusions of physicists:

Since psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and moreover are in continuous contact with one another and ultimately rest on irrepresentable, transcendental factors, it is not only possible but fairly probable, even, that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> C Jung 1973 *On the Nature of the Psyche* Routledge & Kegan Paul London pp 108-09, 125. Krishna's description of the 1922 occurrences included "... over my head I saw the Star, bright and clear" and "I have seen the Light ... Never can I be in utter darkness; I have seen the glorious and healing Light", Lutyens (1976) p 171; and in 1972 he had tried to describe an energy that woke him in the night as "a sense of extraordinary fire, a light burning in the mind", Lutyens (1988) p 40.

<sup>59</sup> M Lutyens (1990) p 166.

<sup>60</sup> C Jung (1973) pp 111-125.

Perhaps too these concepts help to explain Krishna's command over his own mind and the mind or minds of large audiences. His talks demonstrated his own understanding, explanation and practice of ideas such as 'the word is not the thing' and 'consciousness as the common ground of all humanity for thousands of years'.<sup>61</sup>

Joseph Campbell has studied the role of shamans in society and the power that emanates from their ability to access states or dimensions of consciousness not available to most people. As he wrote in 1959,

... in contrast to the life-maiming psychology of a neurosis ... the shamanistic crisis, when properly fostered, yields an adult not only of superior intelligence and refinement, but also of greater physical stamina and vitality of spirit than is normal to the members of his group.<sup>62</sup>

Campbell also spoke of Eden, "the Kingdom of the Father ... spread upon the earth", unseen by most people, and the end of the world not being an

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<sup>61</sup> M Lutyens (1990) p 166.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Campbell 1960 *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* Secker & Warburg London pp 253-54. Campbell refers to William James' and Paul Radin's views that spontaneous intuitions occur in sensitive people no less in "primitive than in higher societies". Stephen Larson 1988 *The Shaman's Doorway - Opening Imagination to Power and Myth* Station Hill Press New York p 80. See also Paul Gillen 1982 *Hope Beheld: the Ideology of Spiritualism* unpublished PhD dissertation, Macquarie University Sydney p 147, "the goal of progress is a dangerous one: the 'psychic sense' which the medium aims to 'develop' is not easily distinguishable from, and can become, madness". The contribution by R Vernon 2000 *Star in the East* Constable London p 127 to the question of Krishnamurti's experiences in relation to shamanism, or even trance or hypnosis recognised by modern psychoanalysis "as a way of disgorging repressed emotion", is to say that it is not inconceivable that Krishna's "suffering and awakening at Ojai were symptoms of a nervous stress disorder". But he rejects Radha's "theory" that Krishna's aim, consciously or otherwise, was to gain sexual intimacy with Rosalind and other women, and points to the "staggering consistency" of Krishna's symptoms over the years.

event but a psychological transformation in which you see “not the world of solid things but a world of radiance”.<sup>63</sup>

So perhaps we need to go on asking, 'Who was Krishnamurti?' only in so far as we each reflectively ask ourselves, 'Who Am I?'

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<sup>63</sup> Joseph Campbell 1988 *The Power of Myth* Doubleday New York p 230. It might be useful to compare these views with those of Agha Khan III 1976 *The Light at the Center* Ross-Erikson, Santa Barbara pp 61, 200 who believes that all mystics know euphoria but give different descriptions of it and that mysticism, per se, constitutes what is “*illicit*”.