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ETHICS WITHIN A SPIRITUAL/ METAPHYSICAL WORLD VIEW TOWARDS INTEGRAL VALUE-BASED EDUCATION: J. KRISHNAMURTI AND THEOSOPHY AT THE JUNCTION OF THE WEST AND THE EAST.

Albert Ferrer ¹

Abstract

As it would be the case for Steiner, Hegel or R. Tagore, the humanistic dimension of Krishnamurti's educational philosophy must be properly comprehended within a world view that is deeply spiritual –not materialistic or utilitarian as in mainstream schooling-. This remarkable sage has been sometimes misunderstood –more often in Western countries than in India-. He was not an anarchist at all, nor some kind of Voltaire. He was a mystic “strictu sensu”; we try to show it in this paper as clearly as possible, which means that the humanistic dimension of his educational philosophy stems from that inner spirituality that we can truly call mystical, and that is obviously essential to the philosophical and pedagogic concerns of Plato or Steiner, Autobindo or Tagore –and even Hegel. We hope that this article will arise the interest and awareness of the reader to pursue further inquiry. This paper brings out the observation from the direct field work together with the academic study throughout these twenty years devoted to integral value education in an international horizon East/ West.

Introduction

J. Krishnamurti has become relatively well-known in Western countries; his books can be easily found in ordinary bookstalls. Nonetheless, the academic arena has largely ignored him, more sharply in Europe than in North America. Yet, we can regard him as an astounding philosopher who always showed a profound interest for education, and who outlined an educational philosophy that can certainly enrich the educational scenario especially in the horizon of integral value-based pedagogies.

Many educators concerned with holistic value education would primarily think of Steiner and Montessori –in Europe- or Dewey/ Kilpatrick –in North America-. This fascinating philosopher, J. Krishnamurti, who was born in India, was later educated in Europe and also stayed in the USA, offers an intercultural vision at the crossroads of the West and the East, and at the same time, lucid philosophical insights into pedagogy that may help educators evolve genuine paths of integral value-based education.

According to S.H. Forbes:

“Modern education is so obviously failing to solve the world's problems, is so criticized for failing to meet society's aspirations, and is so clearly unable to prepare people for the challenges of life.”

Krishnamurti was aware of this and he spoke about it many times, often with sharp words not in mild ways. For instance, he plainly said that the educational system implanted by the state is

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a catastrophe. Governments do not want people to think –freely-, a point which N. Chomsky or M. Foucault would certainly agree on. For Krishnamurti, governments want people to be like machines or robots; hence, the mainstream educational system teaches children what to think rather than to think –freely-, a point which J. Dewey would also agree on. Krishnamurti even warned that the present civilization is going towards a collapse sooner or later, which Mr Havel, President of Czechoslovakia, also expressed before a joint session of the Congress of the USA in 1991, and which major thinkers of the XXth century such as E. Laszlo or major scientists such as A. Einstein cautioned about. For Krishnamurti, as it would be the case for other well-known educationists, a profound change in education constitutes the only way out from the present break-down towards a break-through and a better future.

In Krishnamurti's own words:

“Present-day education is a complete failure because it has emphasized technique. In over-emphasizing technique we destroy man.”

In front of this scenario, the purpose of all education would be to bring about freedom, love, the flowering of goodness and the complete transformation of society. If we compare this philosophy of education to the existing mainstream educational system, it is obvious that there is a huge gap. Krishnamurti was aware of the gap, and the mainstream system has ignored him because his lucidity could only be uncomfortable and impertinent. In fact, the gap unveils the opposition between two paradigms, that of Krishnamurti, a mystical world view, and that of mainstream schooling and civilization, a materialistic and technocratic world view. For Krishnamurti, education should help create a totally different society, not through the social revolution and its intrinsic violence –as in communism- but through the inner transformation, a shift in consciousness –as in mystical philosophy and Philosophical Idealism, from Socrates to Steiner, from Upanishads to Vivekananda-.

As it would be the case for Steiner, Hegel or R. Tagore, the humanistic dimension of Krishnamurti's educational philosophy must be properly comprehended within a world view that is deeply spiritual –not materialistic or utilitarian as in mainstream schooling-. This remarkable sage has been sometimes misunderstood –more often in Western countries than in India-. He was not an anarchist at all, nor some kind of Voltaire. He was a mystic “strictu sensu”; we try to show it in this paper as clearly as possible, which means that the humanistic dimension of his educational philosophy stems from that inner spirituality that we can truly call mystical, and that is obviously essential to the philosophical and pedagogic concerns of Plato or Steiner, Autobindo or Tagore –and even Hegel as we explain in another paper-.

In order to understand this unique philosopher and educationist and his mystical world view, we must examine his fundamental relation with the Theosophical Society that adopted and educated him. It is well-known that the renowned sage cut with Theosophy at a certain point of his life. It is less often acknowledged that there was afterwards a gradual reconciliation. Still more meaningful, there was never a contradiction in depth, and an

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earnest study of Theosophy can show that this school of thought defends an integral value-based kind of education deeply akin to Steiner or Aurobindo, certainly, but also to Krishnamurti himself.

The Indian scholar, Vikrant Mishra, stresses a fundamental point that we should always keep in mind if we want to bring Krishnamurti to the academic arena and the school system:

“Throughout the ages sages have warned us that we can’t see what is true even when it is presented to us because that which is true isn’t what we expect or want to hear.”

What blocks the presentation of the truth may be some prejudice –personal and social-, cultural conditioning, pre-established ideologies that cut the way to new thinking, etc. Krishnamurti was an example of the true philosopher or sage that provokes the ego and the prevailing culture because he questions this prejudice, conditioning, ideologies, etc. This has been the task of the philosopher from Socrates / Plato to Nietzsche or the School of Frankfurt, from the Upanishadic “guru” to Ramana Maharshi. It is this deeper philosophical questioning what makes mainstream scholarship and schooling reluctant to hear Krishnamurti’s message.

We hope that this article will arise the interest and awareness of the reader to pursue further inquiry.

Still, another Indian scholar, Meenakshi Thapan, underlines the impact of Krishnamurti’s educational philosophy in India, especially amongst schools of holistic education:

“The impact of the philosopher J. Krishnamurti on the educational ethos of alternative Indian education has been of an unquantifiable quality, although this is often not visible in the formal components of secondary school education.

For more than twenty years the author of this paper has done research on integral value-based education in three continents, Europe, North America and India, especially from the point of view of Philosophical Idealism and spiritual philosophy. Through this scholarly research and parallel field work in schools and colleges in the three continents, the author has elaborated a new educational project, “International Education for a New World”, that blends in depth the most profound pedagogy from both the West and the East. Through all these years, the author has visited several schools founded by Krishnamurti himself or the Foundation bringing his name, both in India and California, USA. This paper brings out the observation from the direct field work together with the academic study throughout these twenty years devoted to integral value education in an international horizon East/ West.

Theosophy and education

The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 in New York by H. Blavatsky and Colonel H.S. Olcott –among others-. After a few years, the two founders moved to India, where they established the international headquarters at Adyar (Chennai).

The three objectives of the Theosophical Society would be:

- The study of comparative philosophy and spirituality, especially from the mystical point of view rather than outer organized systems of beliefs, which means that the Society has been a pioneer in the study and reassessment of Eastern traditions –we must remember that the Society was created when European imperialism was at its zenith-.
- The study of the deepest laws of nature and the inherent potential of man, which implies the unity of science and spirituality in a holistic vision. Here, the Society anticipates the advent of new science in dialogue with the traditions of mystical philosophy and wisdom, as it also intuits the new holistic paradigm in emergence through the XXth century –we must keep in mind that modern thought was still dominated by mechanism and materialism when the Society was established-.
- The ethical dimension: the formation of a universal brotherhood without distinction or discrimination towards the unity of mankind. Here, the Society foresees the international movement through the XXth century towards a world organization, cooperation and solidarity –whereas the world which Theosophists were working in, divided by nationalism, was evolving towards the two World Wars-.

We can easily realize that the triple objective of the Theosophical Society restates the loftiest and oldest ideals of human thought, in a world, however, that was clearly hostile against these ancient and noble ideals –a world of nationalism and war, colonization and imperialism, materialism and mechanism in the transition from the XIXth to the XXth centuries-. For this reason, anybody who shares humanistic ideals should be thankful to the Theosophical Society for being pioneers at the peak of modernity, having the courage to question the sinister status quo and predominating culture, and daring to defend radically different ideals that have later gained strength through the XXth century.

The brave pioneering spirit of Theosophists was once more manifested when their President, Mrs A. Besant and other members, publicly supported the independence of India in spite of their British origin. India still recognizes this gesture today.

The philosophical depth Theosophy can still be apprehended through its foundational spirit, which is truly Socratic and, in modern terms, we could say democratic. The Society was explicitly formed as a non-sectarian entity, to such an extent that its rules and regulations state that nobody can impose any belief to anybody, and nobody should blindly accept any truth from outside.

The Society totally agrees with Socrates and the inscription on the Temple of Delphos: Man know yourself and you will know the universe and the gods. What the Society promotes is an inner path of self-inquiry in freedom beyond any system of beliefs or dogmas.

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One of the central tenets of Theosophy would be the doctrine of The Intelligent Evolution of All Existence at a cosmic scale, integrating both the physical and the non-physical dimensions of the universe. This theory is expounded in detail in the “Secret Doctrine”, the magnum opus of Mme Blavastsky. This notion of a universal spiritual evolution has been suggested by other mystical philosophers, in particular by Sri Aurobindo.

In any case, the Theosophical Society does not impose any system of beliefs to anybody, nor the Secret Doctrine, since it stresses that the path towards truth is that of a Socratic self-inquiry, which implies self-realization as the major goal of life.

Another more esoteric facet of the Theosophical Society would be the connection with the Mahatmas, Hidden Masters or the Hidden Hierarchy, immortal Masters that are mentioned by the mystical traditions and that are especially popular in a country like India. For instance, Swami Yogananda makes clear reference to one of these Masters, with whom he would be somewhat connected.

Krishnamurti also acknowledged to be in touch with some of these Masters when he was adopted by the leaders of the Society, Mrs Besant and Mr Leadbeater; even after the formal schism with the Society till the end of his life, he always recognized in private circles that this kind of contacts had been real and had continued.

Another famous scission was that of R. Steiner, who was a prominent member of the German branch of the Society, and cut with it later to establish his own society, Anthroposophy.

Theosophy’s pedagogic endeavour

The three main objectives of the Theosophical Society may be translated into the educational arena as the three main goals of the pedagogic process:

To unfold all the potential of the growing child from within in interdependence with the cosmos.

To unveil the innermost spiritual nature of the growing child through self-inquiry in an open inter-religious horizon.

To foster a cosmopolitan and intercultural spirit towards the brotherhood and unity of mankind.

Theosophical education is clearly child-centred, requesting the educational system to respect the child’s individuality.

Moreover, theosophical education is deeply integral or holistic, comprising all the dimensions of humanity through an all round syllabus.

Theosophy also stresses the development of character in positive terms and in a transformative horizon: the basal role of ethics in education.

The theosophical school is democratic, enhancing children's participation. The theosophical pedagogy stresses cooperation and the sense of community.

It is interesting to notice that from the very beginning the first Theosophists were concerned by education and were directly involved in Western and Indian educational systems, manifesting a clear support for child centred or integral/ progressive pedagogies. Pioneers of these educational ideals formed an international movement between the two World Wars, and Theosophists played a prominent role in it. Madame Blavatsky already criticized Western educational systems for having lost the spiritual foundation and distorting religion, in particular Christianity. The Theosophical Publishing Society very soon started printing issues on education.

In June 1914, Annie Besant opened a conference on pedagogics at the University of London. Other spiritual and progressive organizations also participated, manifesting once more the non-sectarian and open spirit of the Society. Interesting enough, the Indian Tata Foundation was involved.

Besant would develop in detail the theosophical principles of education in clearly integral value-based terms akin to other major progressive pedagogies. In 1913 she founded the Theosophical Educational Trust in India to pursue the educational ideals of the Central Hindu College which she had initiated at Benares in 1898. In Chennai, South India, the Educational Trust would open the Adyar school which is still running today within the premises of the international headquarters of the Society. Theosophists would also open schools and educational societies in England.

Before Second World War broke out, the Theosophical Society invited Dr M. Montessori to the main campus in Adyar (Chennai) and followed her suggestions. Not by chance, R. Steiner, who was an important member of the German branch of the Society, started Waldorf Schools after his schism from Theosophy.

Annie Besant'educational philosophy.

Annie Besant has been one of the most famous leaders of the Theosophical Society. While being the President of the Society, she adopted J. Krishnamurti together with Ch. Leadbeater. Without this adoption, the world would have never had the profound, lucid and illuminating teachings of this unique sage of the modern world. Besant is also well-known for her support of the independence of India –although this support was shared by many Theosophists in spite of their Western or British origin-.

Among other facets and works, she clearly formulated the educational principles of Theosophy. Her educational ideas are expounded in a number of publications, such as "Principles of Education", "Education for the New Era", etc.

The main principles of Besant's educational philosophy.

- All round or integral education.
- Child-centred pedagogy.
- Value-based pedagogy and ethics.
- Spiritual foundation directed towards the inner realm, through meditation, yoga, etc.
- To train the growing child to subdue body, feeling and mind to Spirit.
- Emotional education, following Plato's statement, that is, to educate the emotions so that the growing youth may love all that is beautiful.
- To train the mind in right thinking and right judgement, not only in mere academics.
- To cultivate compassion and solidarity, so that children may sympathise with the joys and sorrows of others while being open to serve the community and their fellow beings.
- Systemic outlook, taking into account the social context as an input and as an output; hence, forming good members of the community.
- To cultivate a sense of unity of mankind and universal brotherhood.

"Education as service"

Krishnamurti's educational ideas in the frame of the Theosophical Society.

Krishnamurti's interest in education was life-long and started as early as 1912, when he published "Education as Service"; he was seventeen only, and was taken care of by the Theosophical Society. This short book published in 1912 brings a preface by Annie Besant, whom Krishnamurti literally calls as a mother.

Like the French philosopher Descartes, the young Krishnamurti starts his reflection on education by recalling his own experience in school. In the first sentence of the book, Krishnamurti refers to one of the Masters mentioned above, and makes it clear that all what he writes in this small book follows the instruction given by the Master to him. Krishnamurti had previously referred to the Master in his very first book, "At the Feet of the Master", published when he was fourteen.

Educational principles stated by Krishnamurti in "Education as Service"

The office of the teacher is the most sacred, although modern societies do not pay the due respect to teachers, for which, Krishnamurti deploras, the cleverest boys are not drawn towards this noble profession.

Love is the first qualification that a teacher ought to have. Here, the young Krishnamurti totally coincides with Sathya Sai Baba, who always stressed love as the most important among the fundamental human values, and the cornerstone of the educational process. Needless to say, modern schooling has totally banned love from the educational process. Like Sathya Sai Baba, Krishnamurti recalls the depth and beauty of the relationship between master and pupil based on pure love between them. In his own words:
"The most important qualification in education is love."

“My master taught me that love will enable a man to acquire all other qualities and that “all the rest without it would never be sufficient”.”

The most famous spiritual master of India in the last decades and maybe in the whole modern age, Sathya Sai Baba, insisted that love is the foundation of all human values and the very essence of what we call “God”. Jesus Christ did not preach something very different either.

For Krishnamurti, the love of the teacher for his pupil will bring out love from the pupil in turn. Through this pedagogic love, the teacher will draw out all the good qualities from his student –the very concept of Socratic education or the Indian “bala vikas”, unfolding from within, presented by 17 year-old Krishnamurti-. There is no proper education without the human and spiritual dimensions, which are inseparable.

“This love of the teacher for his pupil, protecting and helping him, will bring out from the pupil in turn, (...)”

“Living in this atmosphere of love during school hours, the boy will become a better son and a better brother at home, (...)”

This is the very essence of the Indian “gurukula” –the community of the master with the disciples- exemplified by the Upanishadic dialogues or living figures such as Shankaracharya. The renowned scholar and sage from contemporary India, Vimala Thakar, emphasized the beauty of this ancient pedagogy of India, and she dared to conclude that this was one of the heights of philosophy and pedagogy in the history of humanity, from Vedas and Upanishads to Vedanta. This pedagogy of Ancient India would obviously be very close to the Socratic pedagogic love and dialogue in the Platonic works. When observing this ancient pedagogy of India and Greece, we can realize how far is modern mainstream schooling from it, and how far has gone the dehumanization and demythification already deplored by the Romantics two centuries back.

The young Krishnamurti highlights the depth and beauty of the “gurukula”, the relationship between master and disciple:

“Love on the physical plane has many forms. We have the love of husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, the affection between relatives and friends. But all these are blended and enriched in the love of the Master to His disciple.”

Krishnamurti also values happiness in the process of growing up; the teacher should be cheerful himself, and happiness should also evolve within the school premises, something that was anticipated two centuries back by the eminent philosopher of education, J.J. Rousseau.

“No teacher who really loves his students can be anything but cheerful during school hours.”

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Instead of negatively pointing out the faults of the students, the teacher must help them to unveil their highest nature: a positive transformation of character.

“The whole idea of what is called “punishment” is not only wrong but foolish.”

Krishnamurti also emphasizes the training of self-discipline or self-control. The teacher must be tolerant and respect the ideas of his students. Finally, Krishnamurti insists that spirituality and ethics should be the very foundation of the educational process and school life.

THE HEIRS OF THEOSOPHY: J. KRISHNAMURTI AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AND KRISHNAMURTI' S FOUNDATION AND SCHOOLS.

According to many relevant intellectuals, scientists, artists, politicians and spiritual leaders of the XXth century, such as Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, David Bohm, Fritjof Capra, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Charles Chaplin, Greta Garbo, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, etc, Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895- 1986) would be one of the purest and most profound characters of the XXth century, a genuine philosopher and true sage that can also be regarded as a major educationist and who was even compared to Buddha. His enlightening message will stay for generations to come as one of the cornerstones of educational philosophy in a language suitable for the modern word.

His fascinating life is already a living presentation of his teachings. His inspirational legacy contains the most important reflections for the future of humanity on Earth, regarding education and the crucial issue of consciousness. Few philosophers have so sharply put forward the most fundamental questions for the human race, and his educational philosophy underlines in the clearest terms the very core of what proper education should be.

The fact that he has been persistently ignored by the academic arena indicates the predominant cultural state of the modern world. If humanity has to have future on Earth, it will have to address the key reflections put forward by Krishnamurti; it is not his personality what really matters, though it is undoubtedly fascinating; what really matters is the reflection by itself, which has been expressed in the clearest terms by him, and in ways comprehensible to the modern mind.

In the early years of the XXth century, when he wa a tennage boy, Krishnamurti was taken care of by the Theosophical Society, in particular by its leaders A. Besant and Ch. Leadbeater, who really felt that there was a unique depth and purity in that young boy –and they were not wrong at all-. The Society trained the young Krishnamurti to become not only a world leader and teacher, but more specifically the channel for an immortal Master, Maitreya. A special organization was established around him, the Order of the Star. It is well-known that in 1929 –the year of the economic crack-, Krishnamurti disavowed this role, and started a solitary path that would bring to the creation of a new organization around him, the Krishnamurti Foundation.

Some people have found special satisfaction in cultivating the enmity between Krishnamurti and the Theosophical Society –drawn by their own bias and negative emotions-, for which we feel it fundamental to outline some sensible conclusions.

Krishnamurti and the Theosophical Society.
The depth of a misunderstood sage.

Krishnamurti was not some kind of atheistic or agnostic free thinker demolishing spirituality –some of his followers may have been like this, especially in Western countries rather than in India-.

Throughout his life, he shared and exemplified the main goals of Theosophy:

- I. Free self-inquiry towards self-realization;
- II. The unity of science and spirituality towards a deeper understanding of reality.
- III. Brotherhood and the unity of mankind.

Krishnamurti is a living example of the Socratic path of self-inquiry in the XXth century, but some people pulled by prejudice out of ignorance forget that this is the number one goal of the Theosophical Society. Some people underline that Krishnamurti questioned all systems of belief, dogmas and organizations repressing freedom and life; but less people know that this is exactly the ideal of the Theosophical Society, clearly stated in its major texts. Another thing is whether some members of the Society have distorted the goals in their human imperfection, but this has obviously happened within the Krishnamurti Foundation too, and in any human organization.

It is fundamental to realize that there is no contradiction between Krishnamurti and Theosophy in depth. The differences arose from organizational matters, questions of egos, and the inevitable distortion that human beings produce in any organization out of the foundational goals.

In fact, through his life, and even more in the last years, there was an undeniable reconciliation between Krishnamurti and the Theosophical Society, and today some prominent persons, especially in India, are members of both the Krishnamurti Foundation and the Theosophical Society –as many leaders of the Theosophical Society have been at the same time members of Freemasonry-. Few people know that Krishnamurti stated several times in Vasanta Vihar –the beautiful estate of the Krishnamurti Foundation in Chennai- that Theosophists were the ones who better understood him.

Krishnamurti was a true mystic, we dare to say that he is one of the most fascinating mystics in the history of mankind, and his whole legacy is a mystical philosophy imbued with wisdom. We must recollect his astonishing mystical experiences, especially when he was young, but in general throughout his entire life: classical mystical experiences of the Light, expansion towards cosmic consciousness, etc.

Albert Ferrer

Cynical people that overstress Krishnamurti's questioning of spiritual/ meditative techniques overlook the fact that Krishnamurti reached the state of consciousness of later years due to all the meditation he himself practised for many years.

There is a Socratic reaction in Krishnamurti against religious hypocrisy and repression, mechanical practice without any coherence that has lost the essence; what Krishnamurti advocates then is not an atheistic or agnostic critical thinking –like in the School of Frankfurt- but a genuine return to the purity of the vision, to the essence beyond all the paraphernalia.

Krishnamurti always acknowledged –throughout his whole life till the end- that the contact with other realms of reality and immortal masters during his training years with the Theosophical Society were true, genuine and real. In fact, he often spoke about this kind of contact still in the last years of his life with the Krishnamurti Foundation.

Here we will concentrate on the penetrating and enlightening philosophy of education of this true sage of the XXth century, compared to Buddha by a number of scholars and intellectuals. Krishnamurti's interest in education was long standing and started as early as 1912 with what is probably his first book, "Education as Service". His approach is certainly integral or holistic, undoubtedly humanistic, and above all, deeply ethical and spiritual –we can even say mystical-. This presentation of Krishnamurti may question some misunderstanding that has been created around him –especially in the Western world-.

Below we will develop his educational philosophy in the light of the mystical depth of his life that can only be overlooked through prejudice or bias.

After "Education as Service" (1912), Krishnamurti's first work on education would be "Education and the Significance of Life" (1953), after which followed two compilations of Krishnamurti's direct interaction with students, "Life ahead" (1963) and "This Matter of Culture" (1964). We should still mention latter publications such as "On Education", "Letters to the Schools", "Beginnings of Learning", etc, where a Socratic Krishnamurti elucidates the very foundation of education –not the technicalities that haunt many parents and teachers- usually in dialogue with teachers and also students.

At the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s Krishnamurti created two schools, one in South India, Rishi Valley, in the hills of southern Andhra Pradesh, and another one in North India, Rajghat, in the outskirts of the oldest city of the world, Varanasi. Between the fifties and the seventies, six more schools were established, four in India and two in the Western world, South England and Ojai, California in the USA.

We have had the privilege of visiting some of these schools and teaching to the students, observing the living legacy of the sage in the schools that continue to evolve as well as they can a pedagogic practice beyond the limitations of mainstream schooling, being aware that it is not easy to divert from the mainstream system, first and foremost because

the academic affiliation of the school implies the heavy burden of the syllabus with public exams that do not allow a Krishnamurti School or any school of integral education to do what they would like to do.

From our scholarly research and field work, these would be the main points of Krishnamurti's educational philosophy, that Krishnamurti Schools have been trying to put into practice in a world that does not make it easy –often the parents make it as difficult as the governments-.

Krishnamurti's educational philosophy to be implemented in Krishnamurti Schools. Krishnamurti never designed a specific pedagogic frame, neither did he specify any particular method or technique of education.

The spirit of a Krishnamurti School should be deeply Socratic in the sense that nobody should impose or dictate what teachers or students must believe in; in a Krishnamurti School there would not be any scope for any dogma, fixed formula or final authority.

Furhtermore, students –or teachers- are not supposed to blindly accept anything from outside, or to simply believe or imitate what is taught outside. Again, the purest spirit of Buddha or Socrates breathes in Krishnamurti's educational philosophy, encouraging both students and teachers to freely inquire by themselves.

For Krishnamurti, mainstream schooling is the opposite of the Socratic spirit: "Instead of awakening the integrated intelligence of the individual, education is encouraging him to conform to a pattern and so is hindering his comprehension of himself as a total process."

For the sage, the present civilization parallel to the average state of consciousness is based on fragmentation and conflict, which is obviously inseparable from the ego and its intrinsic egoism and separation. All this nurtures people's inability to see relationship in depth and the underlying interconnectedness.

Krishnamurti had a quantum mind; his world view was deeply akin to the discoveries and conclusions of quantum physics, which is exemplified by the fascinating dialogues he had with the quantum physicist D. Bohm. In fact, we can say that all mystics have a quantum mind; the major figures of quantum physics have spoken explicitly about the convergence of quantum physics and mystical philosophy.

In front of this chaotic world and the chaotic mind that has produced it, Krishnamurti advocated a new form of education that is at the same time very old, the education of consciousness to awaken deeper or higher states of consciousness and free human beings from the present mess and sorrow.

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Krishnamurti's pedagogy is truly integral, and Krishnamurti Schools attempt to cover all aspects of humanity and life in a balanced harmonious way, without overstressing any particular aspect to the detriment of the whole.

"This book ("Education and the Significance of Life") offers an approach to teaching and learning that is deeply holistic. The word "holistic" was not in use when he wrote this book; instead Krishnamurti uses the word "integrated"."

A Krishnamurti School must create a positive nurturing environment that naturally develops love of Nature, sensitiveness for music and the arts, and curiosity to learn.

This pedagogy is also child-centred, helping every child to discover his or her own interests and talents instead of mechanically standardizing –as in the mainstream schooling of the modern age-, which also implies self-learning and self-knowledge –in depth, not only in cognitive/ academic terms but also in a Socratic way-.

For Krishnamurti, the child's personality needs to be explored and revealed by himself or herself rather than shaped into an external mould –as in mainstream schooling and conventional society-. To Krishnamurti, each person has a unique vocation that needs to be discovered –which constitutes a major theme amongst all advocates of integral education-. What the child really loves to do has to be found and then pursued. This inner vocation would ultimately unveil a deeper spiritual dimension –which has nothing to do with rituals or dogmas-. Steiner or Montessori would totally agree with Krishnamurti.

"Self-knowledge, or "awareness of one's total psychological process", was another important aim for Krishnamurti. He believed that the student should "observe and understand his own self-projected values" and the conditioning influences that have influenced the student."

Although a Krishnamurti School can be run for day scholars, residential schools may be preferable, since they allow us to better develop the fundamental role of relationship in education and life, so beautifully expounded by Krishnamurti himself –and one of his major themes, in deep coherence with Raimon Panikkar's contribution to dialogue-.

For Krishnamurti, the campus atmosphere must be imbued with care and affection, so that the child grows free from fear –the main enemy of love, creativity and freedom-.

Academic excellence must stress creativity and free thinking together with the capacity of expressing oneself; good results in examinations should be a by-product of academic excellence, not an end in itself.

Instead of teaching the child what to think, we should teach him how to think.

However, education cannot be reduced to the intellectual mind; it must integrate the emotions –ours and those of others-; the famous concept of emotional intelligence, so fashionable today, was clearly apprehended by Krishnamurti.

The great role of aesthetics: the schools founded by Krishnamurti are beautiful places

indeed; Rishi Valley would be the best example. For the sage, as for Plato, beauty is very important, helping the growing child to undergo his positive transformative process. Beauty is intimately linked to sensitivity, and both unfold the true spiritual feeling.

Accompanying the child cannot consist of authoritarian repression and punishment; rather, we must help the child to understand himself in order to positively correct himself. Education must be transformative, not repressive. This also means that education must be essentially ethical; however, true ethics stems from within, not from outer coercion nor from outer rules.

“Krishnamurti was also critical of attempts to control children and to use rewards and punishments.”

It is very important to nurture the child's love for Nature, so that he can feel part of it, and live in harmony with the environment –a major Rousseauian theme, deeply felt by Krishnamurti, who stressed the respect for all life and sensitivity to the beauty of Nature, a typically Romantic state of mind, not alien to a pure soul like Krishnamurti who highly appreciated some of the great Romantic poets-. That is why the schools founded by the sage are located in parks or the countryside.

Krishnamurti Schools organize all sorts of clubs for various activities and different classes for the arts, crafts, music, dance, drama, etc –even gardening, excursions, hiking, etc, and hence the contact with Nature.

Following the profound spirit of Theosophy, Krishnamurti Schools must understand that the quest for truth is the highest religion; in this perspective, they attempt to reconcile the dramatic divorce between science and spirituality. The scientific temper and the spiritual quest can go together again.

Krishnamurti loved Keats' poetry, and he knew very well that for the Romantic poet, beauty is related to truth, something that R. Tagore would totally endorse. In fact, Indian philosophy has spoken through centuries of the metaphysical trinity that also existed in Ancient Greece: “satyam” –truth- “sundaram” –beauty-, “shivam” –good-. Krishnamurti embraced the Vedantic trinity not because he learnt it as bookish knowledge but rather because he experienced it inwardly. And his educational philosophy is an invitation to awaken this higher truth or deeper reality in the children.

But can the teacher do it if he or she does not live it already? For Krishnamurti, the human and spiritual quality of the teacher is fundamental, and teachers' training must be primarily focused on this.

In any case isn't this truly spiritual? Several scholars such as Vikrant Mishra and S.H. Forbes have insisted that Krishnamurti's pedagogy and philosophy is deeply spiritual; we dare to say, truly mystical. This mystical world view unveils an underlying unity or wholeness.

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Krishnamurti summarizes his educational philosophy with a few words:

“The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole.”

Therefore, the spiritual dimension of Krishnamurti’s educational philosophy is not related to temples or rituals, but rather to self-knowledge. Again, the genuine Socratic spirit of free self-inquiry which is the essence of the genuine spiritual path –beyond all the distortions of organizations and egos, and beyond all sorts of mechanical practices, rituals or beliefs-

This path of self-inquiry turning inward instead of outward brings out the deeper meaning of meditation beyond mere meditative techniques and spiritual ego.

For this, Krishnamurti Schools should encourage the reflection upon the meaning and purpose of life, leaving some time to be with oneself, and to experience silence. The sage insisted that schools must have special places for silence, not on the periphery of the campus but in the centre of them, like a sanctum sanctorum at the heart of the educational space. Can we deny the spiritual foundation of education in Krishnamurti’s vision?

Like Sathya Sai Baba, Krishnamurti also wanted the school to be imbued by a certain atmosphere or ethos that would nurture the children; this ethos should obviously be value-based and spiritual.

The major theme of Krishnamurti’s philosophy, the transformation of human consciousness, should be at the core of a Krishnamurti School.

According to Vikrant Mishra:

“For Jiddu Krishnamurthy, the intentions of education must be the inner transformation and liberation of the human being, and from that, society would be transformed.”

We must recognize that human society needs some external order and discipline without becoming excessive or oppressive-; but we must also understand that the external order will never bring order inside, in our mind. And the simple imitation of what they believe outside, or the simple imposition of the external order above the individual, will never bring order inside.

Only when there is order inside, in our minds, can an outer order and discipline follow as a natural corollary like the freshness of life, always recreating itself, in a true and living coherence between our thoughts, our words and our deeds.

Kant would agree with Krishnamurti on a fundamental point: it is not the compliance with external rules or coercion that brings out genuine ethics, but rather the unfolding of an ethical conviction from within; this internal conviction would be more intellectual and rational in Kant, truly mystical in Krishnamurti.

This requires an earnest process of understanding ourselves and others –beyond judgement and belief-. This understanding is inseparable from love –for ourselves and for all-.

Only this is right living: living in natural order without fear and without compulsion. Then we can truly cooperate with each other without seeking any advantage and without pretending any exploitation.

Krishnamurti's educational philosophy breathes the purest spirit of Dharma, striving for genuine righteousness, not for the satisfying hypocrisy of the ego, that believes that he is good unaware of all its contradictions, but rather for true right living, which is nothing else than the freshness of life, the purity of mind –Chaitanya, the pure consciousness of Indian mystical philosophy-.

In Krishnamurti's own words:

"Education in the true sense is helping the individual to be mature and free, to flower greatly in love and goodness."

It is interesting to note that Krishnamurti frequently used the verb "to flower". Virtually nobody knows in the Western world that this corresponds exactly to a Sanskrit word that is fundamental in the educational philosophy of Ancient India: "bala vikas", which literally means the flowering or blossoming of the boy/ child. "Bala vikas" is one of the words in Sanskrit to refer to the form of integral education that Krishnamurti defended, and the coincidence cannot be fortuitous. In the mystical world view that Krishnamurti experienced –like the Indian "rishis" or sages- consciousness unfolds from within, flowering from that wholeness buried inside and awaiting to be unveiled.

A Krishnamurti School is finally a challenge –the challenge of life, that we face each one of us-. We are free to accept the challenge, as Krishnamurti did, or not –true freedom lies at the core of his enlightening pedagogy-.

The very core of Krishnamurti's educational philosophy

In Krishnamurti's words, schools exist for the enlightenment of man; they should be based on the understanding of correct action, the depth and beauty of relationship, and the sacredness of a religious life. As he said, children must be educated so that they become religious (= spiritual) human beings.

This means that the teacher himself must live internally what he should awaken in the student. Krishnamurti was aware of the importance of the teacher's character in depth in any school devoted to the transformation of the human being beyond bookish knowledge. All educationists promoting integral value education have insisted upon teachers' training not in academic terms but rather from a human, ethical and spiritual dimension. Can anybody deny the ethical and even spiritual foundation of Krishnamurti's pedagogy, and his mystical/ Idealistic depth? (Much closer to Plato and Hegel than utilitarian valueless mainstream schooling.)

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To merely cultivate academic instruction and technical training while overlooking these fundamental issues -this very foundation of education- brings mankind to the present wars, conflict and destruction.

According to S.H. Forbes:

“Krishnamurti’ insights on education are still radical and frequently ignored or dismissed as impractical. This is possibly due largely to the fact that Krishnamurti presents education as a religious (= spiritual) activity in an age when most people still see it predominantly as preparation for succeeding in a material world.”

In Krishnamurti’s vision, education should also help children understand what is true freedom. However, Krishnamurti makes it clear that freedom must be at the beginning, not to be gained at the end –of compulsion-. The outcome of compulsion is compulsion. To sum up, the very goal of education in Krishnamurti’s views is nothing else than the inner transformation of the human being, the liberation of the human being from all sorts of bondage –not only external but especially internal-. Only this psychological revolution, only this shift in consciousness, can bring a real transformation of human society. Krishnamurti adheres here to the loftiest ideals of Enlightenment and the Kantian project of human emancipation. He also adheres to the Gospel of Jesus Christ when he utters the most beautiful message he ever gave; life is to be lived in the plenitude of love, and only this warmth of love will bring about a new state, a new culture, a new world.

This is a pathless land in the sense that no external systems of beliefs and no social organizations can ever bring about this change. To reach this pathless land there is only one path: the Socratic or Buddhist process of free self-inquiry in relation and dialogue. This is the very core of Krishnamurti’s message.

Whether mankind is ready to understand and face it is another thing. The present crisis, which is not economic in depth but anthropological, shows that there is no future for the present prejudice, ignorance and illusion.

Like Sathya Sai Baba, Krishnamurti stressed the human, ethical and spiritual quality of the teachers. If adults do not live themselves the values or the spiritual feeling, how can they inspire the children? In Krishnamurti schools the students will not have Krishnamurti as a teacher, and in Waldorf Schools they will not have Steiner, but ordinary men and women who should live internally the same depth of experience than them if they must awaken this in the children. Ultimately, integral value education does not educate the children only, but also the teachers and the parents, the adults too; it is systemic, it should have an impact in the community around and interact with its surrounding reality. In Krishnamurti’s words, to help students towards freedom and a spiritual mind, the educator must previously change his own values and transform his own mind. He too must get rid of the selfish ego; he too must flower in love and goodness. This process of mutual education creates an altogether different relationship between the teacher and the student.

Above all, the over-riding quality of an educator should be spirituality –the true feeling unfolding from within, not the external adherence to rituals and systems of beliefs amidst all sorts of hypocrisy and compulsion-. If the educator is truly spiritual, he will be centred in the being, from which right doing will naturally follow.

Conclusion

Krishnamurti once acknowledged in front of the staff of his own school that he was himself a vague, dreamy school boy, bad at all academics, but sensitive, full of wonder, and affectionate. Then, Krishnamurti asked to his staff if, according to their criteria, they would have accepted him as a student. A painful silence followed to the sage's question. Most probably, any Krishnamurti School would have closed the door to Krishnamurti himself as a boy. This is the most important question that any school of integral education must face for the future. This is the kind of question that we must address because here lies the very core of the human condition in this world.

We have had the privilege of visiting a number of Krishnamurti Schools both in South India and California. Did they follow what Krishnamurti said about education so many times for so many years?

Krishnamurti repeatedly complained that nobody had understood him, even or very especially within the Krishnamurti Foundation itself. In fact, when he was talking in the beautiful estate of Vasanta Vihar in Chennai and the Theosophists were coming from the neighbouring Theosophical Society by crossing the Bridge over the Adyar River, Krishnamurti would often provoke the people of his own Krishnamurti Foundation by commenting that the ones who crossed the bridge (Theosophists) understood him better than his own people (from the Krishnamurti Foundation).

According to the Buddhist scriptures, after enlightenment prince Siddhartha, the Awakened One, Buddha, hesitated whether to teach or not, wondering whether anybody would understand him in this world. Then a most beautiful boy appeared in the light; it was Lord Brahma, who encouraged him to go to the world and teach others.

It seems through history that this has been a common wound amongst most sages, philosophers and even spiritual masters: the awareness of being so far from the average state of consciousness on Earth that nobody or very few will understand.

It is clear that Krishnamurti would be one of them, and it is also clear that Krishnamurti Schools would have closed the door to the boy who was the young Krishnamurti.

We will conclude this paper with one question that the author may raise as a Christian. If Jesus Christ came back to the world today, would humanity crucify Him again?

Or to put it in other words: Has humanity changed significantly in terms of consciousness –not technology-? Many thinkers have said in the last decades and even in the last centuries

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that the average humanity has not changed so much. We leave it to the reader, to his or her own consideration. Herder already deplored at the very end of the XVIIIth century that there was an increasing gap between the rapid material development and consciousness that did not develop in parallel terms. Two centuries have passed; isn't the gap still wider?

According to Meenakshi Thapan:

“Krishnamurti’s discomfort with the present world order stemmed from his understanding of the human condition wherein no one is truly happy but ensnared within a psychological world of sorrow, jealousy, pain, anger, envy and troubled relationships. This inner turmoil, Krishnamurti understood, could not lead to harmonious relationships or a good society. It could only create conflict and contradictions that resulted in fragmentation and chaos. These conditions in turn led to exploitation, oppression and war.”

The reader will kindly allow us to play with words, and say that the only exit from this vicious circle will never be “brexit” but “philexit”; that is, the solution will never be political or economic –for Krishnamurti Marxism was an illusion and both right and left, separatists and unionists, pro-Europe and anti-Europe, would be the same, the same old state of consciousness staying in separation and conflict. The solution will never be political or economic; it will be philosophical –in its deeper meaning, which puts forward the crucial issue of conscience-. Only a psychological revolution –not communist-, only an inner transformation –not social- can cleanse the present mess and open a hidden depth and purity from within, the true innocence that Krishnamurti certainly experienced through his mystical experiences of unity, love and light.

Krishnamurti said in explicit terms that the crisis which humanity faces is not political, nor scientific, nor religious –in the orthodox sense of the established religious traditions-; the human crisis lies in consciousness, in the mind, in the behaviour, in the relations that people have.

He explicitly warned that the revolution in human society must start with the inner psychological transformation of the individual. Only a psychological revolution, only a shift in consciousness, may induce significant changes for better, not any ideology, not any form of politics, not any social action with the same old mindset that has created the problem. Albert Einstein insisted that we cannot solve a problem within the same state of consciousness that created it; all ideologies, social reforms and politics have been doing that only.

Krishnamurti reminded his fellow beings that there is something else, which is really different; it is not an ideology, it is not the kind of thinking that is trapped in the old vicious circle. It is an inner experience, it is the very breath of life; and only from this true innocence, only from this pure love, can there be a real change in the world for better. In his own words:

“Religion is a way of life in which there is inward harmony, a feeling of complete unity.” For Krishnamurti, as for Plato, Steiner, Shakaracharya or Aurobindo, this should be the main aim of education –the inner transformation-. For all sages, Eastern or Western, the soulless, utilitarian, technocratic mainstream school system will only maintain and worsen the present conflict and chaos. Is there any hope ahead? In the horizon of this hope, Krishnamurti taught throughout his entire life and created several schools.

Meenakshi Thapan stresses that the foundation of Krishnamurti’s pedagogy lies in a certain world view. “Education forms a central core of Krishnamurti’s world view. In fact, Krishnamurti spent his entire life talking about education as being the agent not only of inner renewal but also of social change. Education is therefore the foundation on which the good society will build itself.

Krishnamurti always asserted the individual’s responsibility to the social order: “You are the world.”” Our conclusion after 20 years of scholarly research and field work in three continents would be that most of “progressive or holistic” schools –including Waldorf and Montessori, including Krishnamurti Schools- have just recreated mainstream schooling without being aware of it and have just given a more cheerful face to the mainstream system, because in depth nothing has changed and the “progressive or holistic” educators have just implemented some “progressive or holistic” techniques without unfolding the real depth of the matter, which means the world view or paradigm. Most of “progressive or holistic” educators and schools have been “progressive or holistic” in the techniques, not in the state of consciousness, which was still the same old mindset and the same old ego with all its blocks, prejudice, fragmentation, conflict, etc. The mindset has not changed, the ego has not changed; there has been no real transformation within, and the prevailing paradigm or world view has been unconsciously repeated because there was no internal experience of something else and different, really different –which Krishnamurti did experience, like Shankaracharya or R. Tagore-.

J.P. Miller has understood and clearly explained this crucial issue:

“Educational reform has also tended (like mainstream) to emphasize technique with regard to curriculum and instruction. Unfortunately, even those who call themselves holistic educators can fall into this trap and advocate a particular technique such as cooperative learning without linking the teaching technique to a larger context of holism.”

A “larger context of holism” is precisely the world view or paradigm and the underlying or corresponding state of consciousness, intention or mindset. To use a metaphor widely spread within his intimate circle, Krishnamurti had climbed the ladder to that other level of reality and spoke from there to a mass of followers and members of the Krishnamurti Foundation that were still down, unaware of being down, or even thinking that they were also up whereas they were not –which was obvious through their behaviour; the spiritual ego-. Krishnamurti left this world lamenting that almost nobody had understood him and almost nobody had really transformed himself or herself around him, which means that he was aware that even Krishnamurti Schools had become like other schools, maybe more cheerful –he said it explicitly in front of his own staff-.

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This is the major challenge for humanity on Earth. All the polemics about politics and all the ideologies have failed and will continue to fail to address the real problems and solve them –which requires the inner transformation without which there is no social change but the blind repetition of history as it has been till now-. As we said, the solution to humanity’s troubles is not “brexit” –politics- but “philexit” –philosophy- which implies the crucial issue of the paradigm and the state of consciousness.

In front of a proliferation of “holistic” techniques and illusions, Krishnamurti was a real philosopher who put forward a real philosophy of education of the uttermost importance for humanity. He has been widely and persistently ignored till now by mainstream schooling, scholarship and obviously ministries of education. By ignoring the real philosophy the world has gone into the right direction? Just look around and observe yourself. As the well-known philosopher of science, E. Laszlo warned, the present civilization is going towards a break-down. What Krishnamurti left to humanity may help to shift from a break-down to a break-through. All major quantum physicists have understood it –see Planck, Schroedinger, Bohm, Goswami, etc-. But they have also been ignored by mainstream science and governments too, who have perverted quantum science with its philosophical conclusions –see Heisenberg- turning it into quantum technologies more dangerous than ever without conscience.

More than ever, the warning of sages and great scientists is still valid. Michel de Montaigne cautioned: “Science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul.” And Albert Einstein insisted that the present science and technology without conscience is like an axe in the hands of a pathological criminal (the present ego, mindset or world view).

Krishnamurti gave to humanity a philosophy of education to raise consciousness from the present ruin of the soul, to transmute the axe in the hands of the pathological criminal into the blossoming of love, goodness and unity.

Will mainstream schooling, scholarship and governments continue to ignore him? Will humanity on Earth shift from the break-down to the break-through? We finalize this article with these questions left open to the consideration of the reader.

As Krishnamurti said, a genuine teacher cannot impose anything, he can only suggest. And as his friend, the renowned philosopher and scholar, Prof Raimon Panikkar, said, wisdom is an invitation only. You are free to take it or not.

In one of his famous conversations with the quantum physicist D. Bohm in Ojai, 15th April 1980, Krishnamurti put forward the most important question for the future of humanity. Till now human thought has persistently responded to hatred with hatred, to violence with violence, etc; just observe human history till now. Why have we lost that other way of looking at things? Why humanity has not advanced in the other direction, that of love, which has no cause?

We leave the reader with Krishnamurti’s question. This is the major question for the future of education too.

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