

Philo café Tuesday Nov 5th 2013

Discuss : “Any dependency in relationship destroys relationship” (from Krishnamurti’s fifth talk “On Truth”) London 1952.

It was universally acknowledged in the group that the text of this talk is difficult to penetrate, at least in part because it is so convoluted. As ever we had to grapple with the very words themselves. What is relationship? It cannot be oversimplified. It has both positive and negative aspects. Circumstance has an effect on any given relationship. We are alone but we are together. Between birth and death we share time and space but we usually enter and exit the stage of life alone. Our old friend paradox seemed to be amongst us again. We know well the words attributed to St Francis : “for it is in giving that we receive”, a further twist perhaps inconveniently not in line with the stark dynamic presented by Krishnamurti’s declaration. From very early on in the meeting there was an unease and even antipathy towards the statement we were discussing.

How could we not mention Marriage? It may be a deeply rooted institution but even so it is no guarantee of relationship. Our early development is a key factor in how we relate. The very different social patterns of for example the Trobriand Islanders were brought up - showing how social norms can vary massively between cultures. In this case placing greater significance even on the sharing of food than the sharing of the bed. How would our ideas of relationship fit in here?

Nature was brought into the discussion. Our early socialisation is a mixture of nature and nurture but in Nature herself we could be counted as being apart from animals: We do not simply exist and fit into the natural environment as we find it to the same extent as animals. We are born into this world highly incomplete - it might be said premature. Humans reflect aspects of each other to each other . This being so, it would seem there is something intrinsically unavoidable about dependency in relationship.

As we talked more, it became more and more strongly expressed that relationship is something far from perfection. As for Plato’s suggestion of our perfect partner: the search is still on! Is it really someone else who completes us or would we be better brought into life by a relationship in which the other allows the partner to be true to themselves? To give only (like St Francis) may not be to relate. Does greater independence equal less relationship? Is some degree of co-dependency not in fact essential? What was seeming to be said was : isn’t the imperfection of dependency in fact essential?

Without being said, it seemed to be understood by the group that Krishnamurti’s words were somehow alluding to or insisting on some inhuman, unattainable state. Dependency is an intrinsic part of the trajectories of our lives. It exists on a scale and its dynamics have to be negotiated. Vulnerability goes with surrender. Independence and dependence may always be in some natural state of opposition. Surely it is an illusion to be completely independent : at some level we never escape a degree of dependency. Perhaps dependency only spoils a relationship if one or other partner cannot either value or enjoy having someone to depend upon?

How do we connect any of this with ourselves and God? Our Catholic God is Omniscient , Omnipresent and Omnipotent. How do we relate to that? Buddhist traditions do not cultivate an anthropomorphic god who is quite so overwhelming which may allow for greater intimacy! This subject is simply too massive to have been gone into that evening.

According to the group that night : to be in relationship requires some degree of imbalance and mismatch for it to work- be it individually or in groups or any combination of the two. The what and the how of the qualities we invest in each other are essential cogs of the overall dynamic(s) at work.

There was perhaps little emphasis placed on the positive value of independence that night - possibly because the feeling against the proposal was so high. For this reason I will suggest that independence should be cultivated only with regard and compassion for dependency. If independence were to be cultivated only as part of an integration towards wholeness rather than an absolute, it would surely not be the stark and cold master as we may have been fearing from Krishnamurti's talk.

In summary, we decided that night that with regard to dependency in relationship: Krishnamurti is Wrong.

However, let us all thank him for giving us such a good point for discussion.

Looking forward to seeing you all again soon,
Peter.