



Jiddu Krishnamurti – A Person who Philosophizes Nature

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Abstract:

Human beings are naturally inquisitive species. Humans are endowed with intellectual capability, through which they reason as well as wonder. The reasoning is mostly done philosophically. As Plato said, wondering and reasoning is very much the affection of a philosopher; for there is no other beginning of philosophy than that. Most of the time, when they reason, they look through the evidences in nature or the natural processes. Aristotle reasons that what is true examples of natural world is also true concepts relating to human beings. This paper attempts to study Jiddu Krishnamurti's observation of nature and how he relates it with human society. J Krishnamurti, however, does not romanticize nature as Wordsworth or Keats but philosophizes it in his own way.

Keywords

Jiddu Krishnamurti, Nature, Philosophy, Deep Ecology

1. Philosophy – an overview:

Philosophy, in general, is the study of fundamental problems associated with the truth, existence, values, beliefs, ideals, knowledge, reasons and sense etc., says wikipedia. In short, the word philosophy is from the greek word philosophia where 'phil' refers to love and 'sophia' means wisdom. Therefore, philosophy means 'love of wisdom'. However, there are other alternative definitions. It is

not always of the speculations and investigation of 'god or the existence of god'.

According to Will Druant [1], philosophy specifically means and includes five fields of study and discourse: logic, ethics, esthetics, politics and metaphysics. 'Logic' as he says is the study of ideal method in thought and research. It includes certain form of human activities such as observation, introspection, deduction, introduction, hypothesis, experiment, analysis for an ideal understanding. Esthetics [sic], as he mentions, is the study of ideal form or beauty – it the philosophy of art. Ethics, he says, is the study of ideal conduct – the highest knowledge. Politics, he states, is the study of ideal social organization; it deals with monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, socialism, anarchism, feminism. Metaphysics is the study of 'ultimate reality' of all things: of the real and final nature of 'matter' (ontology), 'of mind' (philosophical psychology) and of the interrelation of 'mind' and 'matter' (epistemology).

Therefore, philosophy includes everyone and everyone has a philosophy. Everyone has an idea or an opinion about the purpose of life, the meaning of life, the nature of life, the nature of human beings, the way of the world, the question of good and bad and the like. There are several means to understand them; several ways to look at them. The happiness, sorrow, anxiety, fear, betrayal, friendship - all such sufferings and experiences in human life will teach philosophy in some form. The understanding of the relationship between the self and the environment has been the sole content of any philosophy. And, nature's role has been a great source to bring about this understanding.

2. Nature of Philosophy – Deep Ecology:

The word ‘nature’ has varied denotative and connotative meaning. Humans, predominantly, associate nature with plants, animals, the landscape, the rivers, the sea, the celestial bodies etc. However, there are other literal and figurative meanings for this word. According to google dictionary[9] the word ‘nature’ means the physical force regarded as causing and regulating the phenomena of the world, the basic or inherent features, character, or qualities of something. The innate or essential qualities or character of a person or animal, inborn or hereditary characteristics as an influence on or determinant of personality, a person of a specified character. The first meaning, in the primal order, according to Google dictionary[9] is “the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations”. It is mentioned that anything that is not of humans or human creation is what is meant as *nature*. However, factually – both scientifically and philosophically human is part of nature. The theory that supports this is known as ‘Deep Ecology’.

Deep ecology is where one experiences oneself as part of the living earth and finding one’s role in nurturing the environment. It lays emphasis not only on the interdependent value of all forms of life but also on the ecosystem and natural processes. Deep ecology advocates that not only humankind but also the environment and other forms of life have the equal right to live on earth. Like any other philosophy, Deep Ecology also includes fundamental questions such as who we are and what human progress means. In 2002, P S Ramakrishna, professor of ecology at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, suggested that Jiddu Krishnamurti was represented as a Deep Ecologist. [4]

3. Jiddu Krishnamurti’s Teachings through Nature:

Jiddu Krishnamurti has always been a person who appreciated the details of Nature, though he viewed it in a holistic way. He always questions and makes people think and find answers.

Jiddu Krishnamurti believed that nature and humanity are one. His thoughts have always been inspired by *nature*. He strongly believes that if humans lose touch with *nature*, they lose touch with

humanity itself. However, it is because humans lost touch with nature, they became killers not for the matter of survival but even for entertainment. In the name of ‘blood sport’ they killed trees, animals, birds, whales, dolphins etc. He says:

“Then *nature* is frightened of you, withdrawing its beauty. You may take long walks in the woods or camp in lovely places, but you are a killer and so lose their friendship”. [3]

From this, it can be inferred that it is because humans destroyed *nature*, they lost the relationship with it. He says one can walk through *nature* and yet one is not related to it.

4. Understanding Oneself by Understanding Nature:

According to Jiddu Krishnamurti, it is only in the understanding of *nature*, one understands oneself. His question “What is your relationship with nature (nature being the rivers, the trees, the swift-flying birds, the fish in the water, the minerals under the earth, the waterfalls, and shallow pools)?” [3] makes one realize that one is unaware of that relationship. He even claims that ‘one never looks at a tree’[3]; by which he means that one does not know to look at a tree as a tree but as an object that gives shade, or gives lumber. One looks at a tree for the benefits one gets out of it, with a utilitarian purpose. Even when one enjoy the beauty of a tree, it is not for the love of it but for the love of oneself.

He says that the earth and its products are treated in the same way. He elaborates that “there has never been love of earth and there has only been the usage of the earth”[3]. *Nature* for humans is only for the materialistic purposes. He proves it in his statement “if one really loved the earth, there would be frugality in using the things of the earth”[3]. He means that we consume more from nature than what is needed for our sustenance and we never bothered to replace it.

5. The Order in Nature and Disorder in Humans:

Jiddu Krishnamurti, in his interactions and writings, usually explains a natural scene and relates it with human nature. One of them is the description of the view from a house he stayed at Malibu. In it, he explains every detail of the Mediterranean Sea right from its colour and its vastness and the breeze that gently touches the sea. Then he explains that the

house has a beautiful garden where rabbits wander in the morning and in the evening to forage. He begins to state that we must keep the rabbits out of the garden to save the pansies, the marigold and other flowers that the rabbits feed on. He sees order even when the garden is likely to be at stake.

“... a cat and a barn owl brought order to the garden; the black cat wandered about the garden; the owl perched itself during the day among the thick eucalyptus. You could see it, motionless, eyes closed, round and big. The rabbits disappeared and the garden flourished...”[3]

J K talks about nature’s balance - how each creature in nature has a role to play in maintaining this balance. He describes, in nature, one balances the other order whereas with humans, there’s only disorder. He states that humans bring disorder not only to themselves but to the whole universe by being ruthless and violent to nature. Even laying wastes around causes great disorder. He says “there is no order in him, so what he touches becomes soiled and chaotic”[3]. He calls human’s politics as a refined gangsterism of power, deceit, personal or national group against group. He considers even the society as an immoral one for there is only freedom under tyranny. Though there are thousands of scientific, philosophical, judicial explanations as to why they should not be cruel, irresponsible and disastrous to the environment, they are merely words. JK says that “the description is not the described; the word is not the thing”[3]. He states very clearly that as long as humans are looking for outward causes believing that the outer change transforms the inner being, humans will remain unchanged. He says:

“This division as the outer and inner is the beginning of his conflict and misery. The outer and the inner are imagination and the invention of thought; as thought is fragmentary, it makes for disorder and conflict, which is division”[3].

He says as long as the thinker remains to be the thinker and as long as the separation exists between the two entities, there cannot be any change. However, when the thinker becomes the thought, and the perceiver becomes the perceived, then there’s no division or separation. Where there is no division there’s no conflict.[6]

His observations not only include the objects of nature, but also how they are inter-related and self-protective. He explains the nature of *nature* beautifully in one of his talks. He says:

“It was a beautiful morning with a clear blue sky, warm and the air was softly pleasant. The quails in the bushes were fussing about, with their sharp calls; a sparrow-hawk was hovering in the air, motionless, and soon it came down to sit on a branch in the next orange tree and went to sleep. It was so close that the sharp claws, the marvelous speckled feathers and the sharp beak were clearly visible; it was within the reach of an arm. It had been earlier in the morning along the avenue of mimosa and the small birds were crying out their alarm. Under the bushes two King snakes, with their dark brown rings along the length of their bodies, were curling around each other, and as they passed close by they were utterly unaware of a human presence. They had been on a shelf in the shed, stretched out, their dark, bright eyes watching and waiting for the mice. They stared without blinking for they had no eyelids. They must have been there during the night and now they were among the bushes. It was their ground and they were seen often, and on picking up one of them, it coiled around the arm and felt cold to the touch. All those living things seemed to have their own order, their own discipline and their own play and gaiety”[5]

Similarly, a closer examination of the following dialogue overtly explains the kind of knowledge and understanding he had on *nature*. Though he uses words like ‘poisonous’, ‘deadly poisonous’, ‘frighteningly cruel’, it can be assumed that they are used for rousing the listener to contemplate, critically analyse and understand the manifestations of nature.

Krishnamurti: Look, Sir. You have seen those bushes in India; they have got long thorns, nearly two inches long.

Naude: Yes.

Krishnamurti: There are snakes which are poisonous, deadly poisonous, there are other things which are frighteningly cruel in nature, like the white shark, that appalling thing we saw the other day. Is that evil?

Naude: No.

Krishnamurti: No?

Naude: No, Sir.

Krishnamurti: It is protecting itself: the thorn is protecting itself against the animal so that the leaves are not eaten.

Naude: Yes and so is the snake.

Krishnamurti: So is the snake.

Naude: And the shark is following its nature.[5]

Krishnamurti’s statements are both philosophical and scientific. For, the snakes’ poison is to protect itself and to assist its digestion. [10] So, when a

snake uses its venom, it is doing what nature has designed it to do. JK most probably gained this knowledge and understanding of nature through his keen observation and realization.

6. To Be in Communion With Nature to Live in Harmony:

According to JK, if one is not in communion with nature, one is a dead human being. By 'to be in communion with nature', he means that communion without any interference of the past knowledge and fresh observation. He says that it is only when we are in such communion with nature, we can live in harmony. He says to be in communion with a tree is to have no thoughts and memories of the tree that will interfere one's observation, feeling, sensibility, attention. To be in communion with a tree is that there's only the tree not that one is looking at it.[6]

"what it is to be in communion, communion with yourself, not with the higher self, not with the Atman, god, and all that, but to be actually in contact with yourself, with your greed, envy, ambition, brutality, deception, and then from there move. Then you will find out for yourself—find out, not be told, which has no meaning—that there is a total action only when there is complete silence of the mind from which there is action." [3]

Therefore, he says that to be in communion with oneself means to be completely silent so that the mind can be silently in communion with itself about everything. He says that emptiness brings about action that is total and creative. That is when one can be in communion with oneself. To be able to look at oneself without an attitude, without any opinion, judgment, evaluation, brings clarity, and it is that clarity that is not a conclusion, not an attitude, that dispels this total structure of brutality and hostility. Then humans can live in harmony with nature. [3]

He himself is an example to live in total harmony with nature. He was able to be in communion with a Hoopoe, a bird that constantly visited him during his talks. Those who observed this have documented it "When we entered the room, we could see the bird, framed by the picture-window, sitting on the branch of the Spathodia tree, its crest fanned out, listening to Krishnamurti who lay on his bed talking measured tones." [p19][9]. J K would not have looked at the bird as a Hoopoe for he said: "the day you teach a child the name of a bird, the child will never see that bird again" [8].

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