

SEEDS OF TRUTH:

J. KRISHNAMURTI AS RELIGIOUS TEACHER AND EDUCATOR

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis is a critical evaluation of the work of J. Krishnamurti (1895-1986). Part One assesses his religious teaching and educational thought. It contains biographical details, a literature survey and a discussion of Krishnamurti's ideas. Some weaknesses in Krishnamurti's work are identified, notably a tendency towards assertiveness in argument and an over-emphasis on individual psychology as an explanation for social phenomena. It is also argued that Krishnamurti's educational discourse owes much to the New Education Movement which flourished in the 1920s and that he made few contributions to educational theory as such. On the other hand many positive features of his work emerge: in particular an outstanding ability to communicate, a concern with spirituality which is not bound to institutionalized religions, and practical suggestions for evolving forms of education which might develop a high level of awareness among staff and students. Part Two focuses on two schools founded by Krishnamurti. The first, Valley School near Bangalore, South India is a school for six to eighteen year olds. Educational innovations and efforts to encourage a sense of inquiry among its pupils are described and there are reports of interviews with staff and pupils. The other school, Brockwood Park in England, is an educational centre which includes a school for teenagers and a study centre for adults who wish to go on retreat. An account of school life and interviews with staff and students convey Brockwood's atmosphere, difficulties and achievements. The concluding chapter summarizes the observations from the schools and discusses the most significant contributions that Krishnamurti made as religious thinker. Finally some avenues for future research are proposed.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for the titles of books by J. Krishnamurti when references are given after quotations and in the appendix. Publication details are provided in the bibliography.

Life the Goal (1928)	LG
Talks in Auckland, New Zealand	TANZ
Authentic reports of 25 talks given by Krishnamurti in Latin America (1936)	LAT
Authentic report of sixteen talks given in 1945 & 1946 by Krishnamurti, Oak Grove, Ojai	OT1947
Krishnamurti's talks, Ojai, California, 1949	OT1950
Krishnamurti's talks, Ojai, California, 1953	OT1953
Education and the Significance of Life (1953)	ESL
Commentaries on Living, 1st series (1956)	CL1
Commentaries on Living, 2nd series (1959)	CL2
Commentaries on Living, 3rd series (1960)	CL3
Life Ahead (1963)	LA
Freedom from the Known (1969)	FK
Early Writings, Vol. II (1970)	EWII
Early Writings, Vol. III (1970)	EWIII
The Penguin Krishnamurti Reader (1970)	PKR
The Flight of the Eagle (1971)	FE
The Impossible Question (1972)	IQ
The Awakening of Intelligence (1973)	AI
The Second Penguin Krishnamurti Reader (1973)	SPKR
Krishnamurti on Education (1974)	KE
Beginnings of Learning (1975)	BL
Krishnamurti's Notebook (1976)	KN
Truth and Actuality (1977)	TA
Exploration into Insight (1979)	EI
Letters to the Schools Vol. 1 (1981)	LS1
The Network of Thought (1982)	NT
Letters to the Schools Vol. 2 (1985)	LS2
The Ending of Time (1985)	ET
The Krishnamurti Centre (pamphlet) (1987)	TKC

## INTRODUCTION

J. Krishnamurti (1895 - 1986) is recognised in India as a major religious teacher. He is also widely known in other parts of the world including Britain and the USA. He gave thousands of public talks, published many books, and in addition was actively involved with education. He founded his first school in India in 1928 and six others in India, England and the USA during the course of his life. He also published several books concerned with education.

The essence of his teaching was that there is a sacred or transcendent dimension to life, and the only way to come upon this is by deep inward reflection and sceptical inquiry which may lead to a transformation in consciousness. Krishnamurti warned against turning to scriptures or teachers for guidance but insisted on the absolute importance of independent and unprejudiced thinking. He rejected all religious traditions and maintained that adherence to any of them would limit a person's ability to explore fundamental questions.

Particularly as he grew older, he repeated with a sense of great urgency that humanity is in a dangerous crisis. Wars, famine, pollution, corruption and exploitation are the outward expression of the crisis, but its roots lie in the fact that human beings have failed to grasp their essential unity and instead live competitively, ambitiously and destructively. Krishnamurti intended to make his audiences confront the problems of the modern world by exposing the fundamental reasons for the crisis. Only by understanding these reasons could people understand their predicament and step out of it. His teaching, which has its origins in theosophy, is universal and non-sectarian in spirit: he spoke to audiences in many different countries, consistently criticising nationalism and sectarianism as divisive factors.

Besides propounding his philosophy in public talks, private discussions and publications, Krishnamurti founded schools where staff and students could co-operate in religious inquiry. He recognised the need for academic work, and all his schools provide an academic education for their students, preparing them for public examinations or university entrance. However, he stated many times that the fundamental purpose of his schools was religious: for example in 'The Intent of the Krishnamurti Schools', an unpublished statement c.1980, he wrote:

From the ancient of times, man has sought something beyond the materialistic world, something immeasurable, something sacred. It is the intent of these schools [the Krishnamurti schools] to inquire into this possibility.

Krishnamurti was not primarily concerned with influencing the policies of other schools by proposing new educational ideas, nor did he address questions of academic studies or educational theory in detail. Towards the end of his life he emphasized the religious purpose of the schools in his writings and also established study centres for adults in the grounds of three of his schools. The study centres are intended to be places of retreat for people interested in Krishnamurti's religious teaching.

In the context of religious studies, Krishnamurti can be viewed from a variety of standpoints. First, he was influenced by the Theosophical Society. He was discovered by leading members of the society in his childhood, proclaimed to be a new Messiah and groomed to spread the theosophical message around the world. Although he rejected the role that was assigned to him and in 1929 dramatically dissolved the organisation that proclaimed him, he nevertheless retained some elements of theosophical thought in later life. As we shall see, the society was based on ideas which may seem bizarre to contemporary readers: most members believed in the existence of a brotherhood of advanced beings who guided the fortunes of humanity



and Krishnamurti himself was thought by many to be an incarnation of the Lord Maitreya (see 1.2). Despite its eccentricity, however, the society attracted and encouraged a number of talented people who played an important role in the spread of orientalism in the west, and others who became important figures in art, music and cultural life. Among the most famous were Tagore, Kandinsky, Scriabin and Rudolf Steiner, and Krishnamurti was perhaps the greatest of the society's off-spring. Comparatively little academic research has been done on theosophy's contribution to contemporary thought, on the concept of the world-teacher or on Krishnamurti's debt to theosophy.

Secondly, Krishnamurti can be viewed as an outstanding exponent of the Indian religious tradition. He rejected the outward forms of Hinduism and Buddhism, denying the validity of the scriptures, worship and deities. However, his philosophy is similar in many respects to *advaita vedanta* and certain schools of Buddhism in its emphasis on introspective inquiry leading to transcendence. At the same time he represents a modern version of the *rishi*, the enlightened teacher whose life is devoted to illuminating his followers, and who is in turn regarded by them with great reverence and devotion. As will be seen, despite his life in twentieth century Europe and America, and despite his own disclaimers, the ethos around Krishnamurti retained some features of traditional Indian religious culture. In India he was accorded great respect by leading figures in Hindu and Buddhist circles.

Thirdly, through theosophy Krishnamurti came into contact with currents of educational and psychological thought in Europe during and after the First World War. Theosophical educational thinking was closely linked to the New Education Movement, which in turn had its roots in European Romanticism. The movement was also influenced by ideas derived from Freud and his disciples and by ideas taken from eastern religious traditions via theosophy. Krishnamurti had his roots in India and theosophy, but he was deeply influenced by his contact with European and American culture. On the one hand he

displayed a lyrical view of nature which is reminiscent of the English Romantic poets, and a belief in the power of the liberated individual confronting a corrupt society which is almost Rousseauian; on the other he adopted a critique of organised religion which seems derived from nineteenth century European rationalism. Krishnamurti's thought is a fascinating merger of east and west.

Fourth, Krishnamurti was an important figure in California in the 1940s where the Ramakrishna movement under Swami Prabhavananda began to make an impact after attracting a number of well-known adherents including Christopher Isherwood and Gerald Heard. He was a close friend of Aldous Huxley and much admired by Alan Watts. After the Second World War he attracted thousands of people to his public talks in Europe and the USA and his books reached thousands more, making him among the most influential of teachers in the resurgence of interest in eastern religions in the 1960s. He also held numerous dialogues and seminars with scientists who were interested in his ideas, for example Professor David Bohm.

These points serve to place Krishnamurti in historical context and to understand the sources of his ideas. However, he was a highly creative, individual and powerful teacher and it would be a mistake to consider him as only of interest as a historical or cultural curiosity. On the contrary, it seems to me that his work may be of great value to those interested in evolving a non-sectarian form of spirituality that is accessible to people of any cultural or religious background. For this reason, my thesis focuses for the most part on the teachings of Krishnamurti in his maturity, in particular after 1945. Before the Second World War Krishnamurti was still confirming his independence from theosophy, but when he restarted his teaching mission in 1946 he had evolved almost all the major themes that he was to develop in the rest of his career. Although it is necessary to understand the historical background to Krishnamurti's teaching, his major importance was as a teacher in his own right in the period 1945 - 1986.

This is also the key period for assessing his work in education. All but two of his schools were founded after 1953 and most of his educational works were also written after the Second World War. Krishnamurti was not only a religious teacher but poured his energy into the establishment and running of seven schools with the intention of discovering if it is possible to create a form of education that nurtures a religious consciousness among staff and pupils. It seems to me particularly important that this aspect of his work is made more widely known.

The question of spirituality in education is of great importance in Britain today when Christianity has lost its cultural monopoly and when many observers have noted a pervasive sense of loss of values. Contributions to the debate were published in the *British Journal of Religious Education* (Vol. 7 No. 3, Summer 1985), which devoted an issue to the question of 'Spirituality across the Curriculum'. Ursula King notes that the term 'spirituality' is used as vaguely as other terms such as 'mysticism', but suggests that 'spirituality' carries three levels of meaning: the living quality of a person with sensitivity to the realm of the spirit or the transcendent; the formulation of a teaching or guidance about these matters; and study by scholars of these two areas. Dr King also notes that while the term has a Christian background, its meaning has now been universalized to include the entire religious heritage of humanity (King, 1985:136-37). Another author quotes with approval a description given in a document entitled *Supplement to Curriculum 11-16* (DES:1977):

The spiritual area is concerned with the awareness a person has of those elements in existence and experience which may be defined in terms of inner feelings and beliefs...Often these feelings and beliefs lead people to claim to know God and to glimpse the transcendent; sometimes they represent that striving and longing for perfection which characterizes human beings but always they are concerned with matters at the heart and root of existence. (Priestley, 1985:114)

He goes on to suggest that spirituality is by its very nature dynamic and indefinable. It is 'most directly connected with being rather than doing, knowing or saying. It is that which gives rise to the 'essential me' or, in Tillichian language, it is 'the ground of my being' (ibid:115).

Despite differing emphases, the general consensus of meaning is clear and Krishnamurti's teaching clearly shares some of the characteristics just described: it is concerned with the quality of perception and awareness in daily life; it involves an openness to a transcendent dimension; a facing of fundamental questions of human existence such as death and meaning. It may be particularly attractive in contemporary secular society because Krishnamurti offers a non-formal, non-sectarian approach to spirituality.

To some observers an interest in spirituality may seem an unnecessary luxury in the face of the many material problems which exist in the world. However, it can also be argued that the population explosion and the destruction of the environment, among other factors, will produce a situation where human beings can no longer avoid facing fundamental value questions. For example, people in wealthy societies may be confronted with the need to consume less in order to avert a world crisis in resources. Weapon technology may reach such a pitch of efficiency that even local conflicts can have devastating impact. In short, it may be that if the human species is to survive with any happiness, more and more people will be obliged to consider questions which until now have only been of interest to a minority. An overriding concern of at least the west in the past few hundred years has been the development of technology and power. It may be that now there is an urgent need to balance this with an increased understanding of what it means to be human, how to avoid conflict and live in peaceful co-operation and ultimately how to relate to the cosmos. Put simply, society will have to change some of its priorities to avoid disaster.

If there is, then, a need for spirituality in education as in other aspects of life, to what extent can we look to Krishnamurti for answers? In this thesis I analyze and evaluate Krishnamurti's educational theory in the context of his overall religious teaching and illustrate its practical application by accounts of two Krishnamurti schools: Valley School near Bangalore, South India, and Brockwood Park in Hampshire, England. There are numerous definitions of education and its cognate terms, for example educated or educational. In the widest sense the terms are used to refer to many different kinds of activities and experiences: one could consider novels, paintings or even car accidents as providing educational experiences in certain circumstances. In this sense, Krishnamurti's books, public talks and private interviews were all educative: they provided new insights and ideas to many of his listeners and readers. A discussion of his educative function in this sense would be equivalent to an overall consideration of his work as religious teacher.

In a narrower sense, however, the terms are used to refer to activities in the specific social institutions known as 'schools', which typically involve transmission of knowledge and skills by teachers to students. My intention is to examine in detail this area of Krishnamurti's work and my discussion for the most part examines his ideas and activities centred around education in the context of schooling and the teacher/student relationship. This thesis is the first attempt at an overall assessment of Krishnamurti's work in education: as described in the literature survey (1.4.3), very little has been written about this aspect of his achievement.

My sources and methodology naturally suggested the division of the thesis into two parts. Part One is concerned with an evaluation of Krishnamurti as religious teacher and an assessment of his educational theory. The primary sources for this were the published works of Krishnamurti, details of which are to be found in 1.4.1 and in the bibliography. I was also able to draw on extensive personal

experience of Krishnamurti's teaching. In 1978 I had attended his public talks in England where he made an immediate, deep and positive impression on me. Over the following years I read his books carefully and attended about fifty public talks in England, Switzerland and India. I also visited Rishi Valley School in 1981 for a period of three weeks while Krishnamurti was there and attended some twelve meetings which he gave to a small group of interested people. I last saw him in the summer of 1985, about six months before his death.

Details of the secondary sources I consulted are to be found in the literature survey (1.4.3) and the bibliography. Krishnamurti's work has not been the object of much critical study. I drew on other writers for information about the Indian religious tradition, theosophy and educational theory, but found little of interest written about Krishnamurti himself. However, I did have the great advantage of discussing his work with many people who had been involved with Krishnamurti during his lifetime. These included teachers at the Krishnamurti schools, friends and people with whom Krishnamurti had held discussions.

The methodology of Part One is indebted to suggestions made by the educational philosopher T.W. Moore in *Educational Theory: An Introduction* (Moore, 1974:48ff). Moore argues that any educational theory rests on a set of assumptions held by the theorist. These assumptions may be overt and consciously held or unspoken and unrecognized, but in either case they will have a decisive effect on the theory. The most important assumptions are those concerning the nature of human beings, the aims of education and the methods used to attain these aims. Assessment of an educational theory should be based on a discussion of these three areas.

This suggested the structure for Part One of the thesis. The first two chapters are a critical appraisal of Krishnamurti's view of human nature. I draw on a variety of historical and philosophical sources to indicate the extent to which Krishnamurti was influenced

by the theosophical environment in which he grew up and to elucidate some weaknesses in his argument. Chapters Three and Four examine his educational theory, including his aims and the methods he proposed to attain them. Part One thus contains an exposition of Krishnamurti's teachings in general and his educational theory in particular and examines their strengths and weaknesses.

A main theme of my argument is that Krishnamurti's philosophy does not stand up to critical scrutiny in every detail. He was often careless in argument and could be dogmatic, particularly in his rejection of other philosophers. In particular his educational theory shares weaknesses with other theories that were current in his formative years: I suggest that it derives largely from an idealist school of thought which now appears anachronistic. However, I also suggest that he had great strengths as a religious teacher and represents a fine example of spirituality in the contemporary world.

To evaluate his achievement in education, it was essential that I should visit the Krishnamurti schools. Krishnamurti's books on education are certainly thought-provoking and stimulating, conveying serious moral convictions and a religious message. However, it is impossible to evaluate his educational work merely on the basis of his writing, which tends to be rather abstract and general. Much of Krishnamurti's input was on a practical level as he was involved with the founding of the schools, dealt with particular situations and held discussions with pupils and staff. Only after my visits to the schools and numerous interviews did I begin to understand more clearly his intentions and their practical application. These visits provided the material for Part Two.

I found that the two schools which I visited had successfully introduced a number of unusual ideas. For example, the school in South India has an extremely flexible and informal structure, with complete equality between all staff members. Brockwood Park in England has evolved a community of staff and pupils which encourages

a great sense of social responsibility and a high quality of relationships and dialogue. I also noted some questions, for example the evaluation of Krishnamurti's stature, where it seemed to me that the schools needed greater clarity.

Chapter One of the thesis includes an account of the early development of theosophy, a biographical outline of Krishnamurti and an introduction to his philosophy, public talks and personality. There is also a discussion of the audiences he attracted and the organisations he created. The review of literature covers books by Krishnamurti and the secondary literature concerning his work.

Chapter Two is a detailed discussion of Krishnamurti's religious teaching and philosophy of life. After an overview of his work there is an examination of four key areas in his thought: conditioning, psychology, inquiry and religion. His work is compared with that of other philosophers who have held a vision of transformation as central to their work and there is an assessment of Krishnamurti as religious teacher.

Chapter Three deals with Krishnamurti's educational thought. I examine the scope of his educational work and the historical context in which he operated, in particular the New Education Movement which was influential in the 1920s when Krishnamurti first formulated his ideas about education. There is a discussion of his critique of conventional education and in particular an examination of his educational aims.

Chapter Four is for the most part concerned with his more detailed suggestions about how his schools should operate and describes Krishnamurti's dialogues with students and teachers. I also discuss to what extent his concerns may be relevant to contemporary society and make an overall evaluation of his work as educational theorist.

Part Two is based on field-work in two Krishnamurti schools. Most of the material came from first-hand observation and interviews at



the schools, although I have used the findings of other educational researchers for purposes of comparison. The intention of Part Two is to show how Krishnamurti's schools operate in practice, how they implement his educational philosophy and how this affects the pupils and teachers at the schools.

Chapter Five first gives an overall description of the Krishnamurti schools. There is an account of my preparations for the fieldwork, the reasons for my choice of schools and the methodology I adopted during my visits.

Chapter Six is a report on the Valley School near Bangalore in South India where I spent one month attending classes and interviewing teachers and pupils. In the chapter I describe the practical organisation of the school, with particular reference to features that were influenced by Krishnamurti's philosophy. The focus of my interest was not so much on academic techniques or achievements but on the areas which teachers at the school particularly emphasize: the importance of good relationships and the sense of inquiry.

Chapter Seven is similar in intention, describing Brockwood Park, the Krishnamurti school in England. Although the schools were both founded by Krishnamurti they differ greatly in age range and structure: in particular Brockwood is more a centre for the study of Krishnamurti's religious teaching. The school is attended by young people above the age of fifteen, while the new Krishnamurti Study Centre caters for adult visitors.

Chapter Eight summarizes and concludes my findings. I discuss the positive features of the schools and some of the problem areas which became apparent in the course of my visits. I conclude my discussion of Krishnamurti as religious teacher and educator, and finally suggest some possible areas for future research.

**PART ONE**

## CHAPTER ONE

### KRISHNAMURTI: THE MAN AND HIS WORK

#### 1.1 THE ORIGINS OF THE TEACHINGS

In 1980, Krishnamurti made a synopsis of his own teachings which was published as a pamphlet entitled *The Core of Krishnamurti's Teaching*. Since this is an authentic statement of what Krishnamurti felt to be the essence of his own work it is reproduced here in full as a starting point for our discussion:

The core of Krishnamurti's teaching is contained in the statement he made in 1929 when he said 'Truth is a pathless land'. Man cannot come to it through any organisation, through any creed, through any dogma, priest or ritual, not through any philosophical knowledge or psychological technique. He has to find it through the mirror of relationship, through the understanding of the contents of his own mind, through observation and not through intellectual analysis or introspective dissection.

Man has built in himself images as a fence of security - religious, political, personal. These manifest as symbols, ideas, beliefs. The burden of these dominates man's thinking, relationships and daily life. These are the causes of our problems for they divide man from man in every relationship. His perception of life is shaped by the concepts already established in his mind. The content of this consciousness is this consciousness. This content is common to all humanity. The individuality is the name, the form and superficial culture he acquires from his environment. The uniqueness of the individual does not lie in the superficial but in the total freedom from the content of consciousness.

Freedom is not a reaction; freedom is not choice. It is man's pretence that because he has choice he is free. Freedom is pure observation without direction,

without fear of punishment and reward. Freedom is without motive; freedom is not at the end of the evolution of man but lies in the first step of his existence. In observation one begins to discover the lack of freedom. Freedom is found in the choiceless awareness of our daily existence.

Thought is time. Thought is born of experience, of knowledge, which are inseparable from time. Time is the psychological enemy of man. Our action is based on knowledge and therefore time, so man is always a slave to the past.

When 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.

Total negation is the essence of the positive. When there is negation of all those things which are not love - desire, pleasure - then love is, with its compassion and intelligence. (Quoted in Lutyens, 1983:204)

The above was written by Krishnamurti towards the end of his life and summarizes a philosophy which he evolved over fifty years of change and creativity. In 1930 he began to emancipate himself from the doctrines and language of theosophy; by 1980 his philosophy was a clearly defined, personal synthesis of ideas. As can be seen from the synopsis, Krishnamurti's teaching has resonances with both east and west: for example the idea of reaching the positive - love and compassion - by total negation is highly characteristic of the Indian religious tradition (Nakamura, 1964:57), while the rejection of symbols, dogmas and priests reminds one of western rationalism. In Chapter Two we will examine these teachings in depth, but before we can unravel the details of Krishnamurti's philosophy it is essential to understand something of his life: his teachings are inextricably connected with his personality, his background and ultimately the culture in which he grew up and lived. How did a person, born in 1895 into an orthodox Brahman family in South India,

come to be proclaimed the new Messiah, the saviour of the modern age? How could anyone then calmly walk away from such a role and insist that he would not accept disciples? Was he a westerner, an Indian, or truly a world figure? From which cultural milieu did his ideas arise? Why was he so highly regarded by religious figures and scientists, artists and teachers?

The first stage on a rather curious journey into Krishnamurti's past takes us to nineteenth century North America. In the middle of that century orthodox Christian churches were disturbed by the proliferation of new sects which bore striking resemblances to the 'new religious movements' that were to appear a hundred years later. Among the most influential were the Transcendentalist Movement, which started in the 1830s and counted Ralph Waldo Emerson among its most famous adherents, and Spiritualism, which became even more popular some twenty years later. Despite many minor differences between the movements, there were underlying similarities. For example, they were deeply influenced by oriental religions in a period when knowledge of Hindu and Buddhist scriptures was spreading. They shared an antipathy to orthodox Christianity and in general a tendency towards anti-clericalism and anti-denominationalism. In sympathy with the spirit of American individualism, freedom for the individual seeker was emphasized rather than communal unity of belief, and the movements tended to support progressive social ideas including fairer treatment for American Indians and equality for women. [1]

Many groups affiliated to the movements were involved with western occult traditions, Rosicrucianism and Swedenborg being major influences (Campbell, 1980:12-14). Two of the most important beliefs current in these circles were of a secret wisdom tradition and the possibility of communication with spirits and discarnate beings. The doctrine of the wisdom tradition held that there was a body of secret teachings which had been known to ancient civilizations but subsequently hidden or lost. It was thought that some writings which contained this wisdom were still in existence,

and speculations were rife about the connections with ancient Egypt, India and Tibet in particular. Accounts of contacts with the spirit world often referred back to the work of the Swedish mystic Swedenborg who had described how he was inspired by clairvoyant visits to departed spirits and angels. Numerous groups of spiritualists tried to follow his example.

By the 1870s there was widespread interest in these groups, which attracted up to two million adherents according to one estimate (Campbell, 1980:16). The climate was evidently suitable for the foundation of a new society, the Theosophical Society, which held its first meeting in New York in 1875 and was to prove one of the most influential of all the esoteric organisations. [2] It would be easy to ridicule the society. Its charismatic leader, Madame Blavatsky, was almost certainly a fraud and some of the society's beliefs seem so absurd that it is hard now to understand their attraction for many educated and apparently intelligent individuals (Campbell, 1980:53ff). Nevertheless, the organisation performed useful work both in India and the west. In Sri Lanka theosophists contributed enormously to the revival of Buddhism while in India they were active in education, social work, in the independence movement and in the renaissance of Hindu culture. In the west the society was responsible for the popularisation of orientalism and certainly played a positive role in the formation of western attitudes towards eastern cultures.

The Theosophical Society's doctrines were at first mostly derived from the writings of H. P. Blavatsky. Little of her work was original and charges of plagiarism against her were forcefully argued. Her ideas were for the most part taken from translations of Buddhist and Hindu scriptures, with much also drawn from Syrian/Egyptian gnostic sources and the western esoteric tradition. Other leading theosophists were Christians. Theosophy thus became an eclectic body of ideas based on the three religions - Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism - that contributed most to it. Many of the moral values it espoused were similar to those of these

religions and the society developed a metaphysical world-view which aspirants to the spiritual life were supposed to study. There was a strong sense of hierarchy and belief in the divinity of certain figures such as Christ and Krishna (Campbell, 1980:61-74; Lutyens, 1975:10-12).

In 1882, the society purchased a large estate outside Madras, South India, to serve as a new headquarters. The two leading figures of the society, Blavatsky and her close associate Colonel Olcott, moved in and the society rapidly expanded its work in India. Not surprisingly this led to an increase in the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism on theosophical doctrines. Theosophists were not at all worried by eclecticism in doctrine: a fundamental tenet of the society was that the essence of all the major religions was a timeless wisdom. Theosophists felt that this wisdom had been taught by the great founding teachers such as Buddha and Christ, after which it had gradually become lost or obscured. They felt a duty to rediscover the ancient wisdom and proclaim it to the world, hoping that this would lead to spiritual development and eventually transformation of the individual and society. Theosophical doctrine had a high moral tone and strongly emphasized respect for all life, compassion and belief in transcendent values. [3]

There was no definitive orthodoxy and each member of the society was free to interpret the teachings as he/she wished. Theosophy was tolerant of all religions and non-exclusive. The main body of doctrine was conveyed through the writings of the leading figures of the society and underwent changes depending on who was influential at the time. For example, after Olcott's death the presidency passed to Annie Besant, whose background included Fabianism and freethinking as well as Christianity and Hinduism, and the style and content of theosophical discourse changed considerably. Theosophy was from the start a synthesis of ideas from many different sources, eastern and western. [4] Nevertheless attempts were made to produce a coherent doctrine and the theosophical world-view was summarized in the following statement:

This tradition [theosophy] is founded on certain fundamental propositions:

1. The universe and all that exists within it are one interrelated and interdependent whole.
2. Reality is all pervasive but...it transcends all expressions. It reveals itself in the purposeful, ordered, and meaningful processes of nature as well as in the deepest recesses of the mind and spirit.
3. Recognition of the unique value of every living being expresses itself in reverence for life, compassion for all...and respect for all religious traditions. (*The Indian Theosophist*, Vol.83, no. 10 and 11, October-November 1986, p.280)

Apart from the exoteric teaching, there was also an esoteric section which was more occult in orientation and used terminology associated with Mahayana Buddhism. The basis of the esoteric teaching was that a hierarchy of masters and adepts, known as The Great White Brotherhood, guided the evolution of humanity and preserved the ancient wisdom tradition. An even more prestigious figure was the Lord Maitreya, the World Teacher, who had already incarnated twice as Krishna and Christ to instruct the world at a time of crisis. The doctrine was clearly influenced by the Mahayana concept of the Maitreya (the Buddha of the future) and the Christian concept of the Messiah. As early as 1889, Blavatsky had said that the real purpose of the society was to prepare humanity for another appearance of the World Teacher. This became a favourite theme in theosophical circles in the following years: Mrs Besant, president of the society from 1907 to 1933, in particular was convinced that the World Teacher's arrival was imminent and announced this view publicly for the first time in 1908 (Campbell, 1980:53-61; Lutyens, 1975:10). [5]

In the early 1900s, C.W. Leadbeater, a close friend of Mrs Besant, also claimed clairvoyant faculties and was the leading figure in the esoteric section. [6] Many theosophists apparently believed strongly in the existence of the 'masters' and in messages received telepathically from them by figures such as Leadbeater. In the esoteric section there was also a great deal of ritual, much of



which focused on Krishnamurti in his youth. Some of the activities of the esoteric section attracted considerable public criticism and ridicule (Nethercot, 1963:156-160).

Theosophy, then, was truly a cross-cultural synthesis. It contained ideas from the western occult tradition, from freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, Swedenborg and gnostic Christianity. In addition it adopted Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, particularly concerning karma and reincarnation, and Mahayana esoteric speculations. Moreover, the society flourished in the USA, Europe and India and ranked aristocrats and radicals, reformers and conservatives among its members. Nevertheless it was a vigorous and influential society, with some 45,000 members in forty countries at its peak in 1929 (Nethercot, 1963:410; Lutyens, 1975:46).

It is interesting to speculate how ideas from such a mix of cultures could be integrated and provide a meaningful framework for a religious organisation. If nothing else, the fact that theosophy was able to develop at all suggests the existence of fundamental areas of coincidence between occult traditions in Europe and India, and there is some evidence to suggest contact between Greek and Indian thinkers in Alexandria at the formative period of western occultism (Scharfstein, 1978:215-16). In fact, theosophy recapitulated a theme that was exceptionally popular in Renaissance Europe: the hermetic belief in a venerable *prisca theologia*, which is interpreted by Eliade as a reaction against a purely western, provincial conception of Christianity and an aspiration to a universal, transhistorical and primordial religion (Eliade, 1985:253). Theosophy was perhaps a similar reaction against provincial conceptions, stimulated by the broadening horizons of the nineteenth century.

This was the environment from which Krishnamurti emerged. Throughout his childhood he was surrounded by theosophists and undoubtedly absorbed much of their ideology. Until the end of his life he retained some elements of theosophical doctrine which

provide the link between his philosophy and the great world religions, and in his later thought it is also possible to observe some qualities from the early theosophical ambience, for example the international outlook and anti-institutionalism. But as Krishnamurti matured and began to observe the world for himself, to have contact with other writers and thinkers, and above all to undergo his personal experiences of liberation and enlightenment, he began to express doubts and reservations about theosophical doctrines and finally rejected most of them totally. To understand these developments we must discuss the extraordinary story of his life and the evolution of his teachings.

## 1.2 BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

In 1909 Mrs Besant, president of the Theosophical Society, was greatly excited to learn that her colleague C.W. Leadbeater had clairvoyantly identified a young Indian boy, Krishnamurti, as the vehicle for the incarnation of the World Teacher. A fascinating glimpse of the occult atmosphere of the period is given in Pupul Jayakar's biography of Krishnamurti (Jayakar, 1986:30-31) where Mrs Besant is described searching out two Tantric gurus in the back streets of Varanasi. They had, independently of Leadbeater, come to the conclusion that a young person named Krishnamurti, whose birth was predicted in certain occult texts, would have an illustrious future as a spiritual teacher. Two streams of occultism apparently coincided, and Mrs Besant and Leadbeater became convinced that the Lord Maitreya would use the body of Krishnamurti for his next incarnation. Krishnamurti himself, who was born in the small town of Madanapalle, South India, in 1895, had been taken to the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar by his father, who held a minor clerical post in the society. [7] Credit must be given to Leadbeater for having recognised the boy's potential, for at the time of his 'discovery' Krishnamurti was, as Mary Lutyens observes, 'not at all prepossessing':

He [Krishnamurti] was under-nourished, scrawny and dirty; his ribs showed through his skin and he had a persistent cough; his teeth were crooked...moreover his vacant expression gave him an almost moronic look. (Lutyens, 1975:21)

The boy's life was transformed dramatically. He was brought up in the theosophical headquarters, where he was taught English, groomed to conform to European manners and introduced to theosophical and occult ideas. Leadbeater and Besant specifically prepared him for the role of world-teacher, taking great pains to protect him from harm and providing him with a special diet. In order to prepare for the incarnation, an organisation called 'The Order of the Star in the East' was formed in 1911, with the young Krishnamurti as its Head (Lutyens, 1975:46). Krishnamurti himself, together with his brother Nitya, was taken to England where he was privately educated by tutors closely connected with the Theosophical Society. In theosophical circles it was widely held that Krishnamurti would be the vehicle for the World Teacher's incarnation although this was not formally announced until 1925 (Nethercot, 1963:135-174). [8]

From 1911 to 1922, Krishnamurti spent most of his time in England, with visits to Italy, France and India. He was introduced to many rich and influential families in London and Paris, where he moved in an aristocratic milieu, learning impeccable manners, good French and perfect English. He was made financially secure, being given £500 a year by a rich benefactor and an additional £125 a month by Mrs Besant. However he proved to be a disappointment to his sponsors: by all accounts he was a shy, dreamy young man who often had a vacant look on his face. He was slow at lessons and had a poor memory. He seemed indifferent to his studies and not at all enthusiastic about the Theosophical Society (Lutyens, 1975:47-140).

In 1919-20 he made several attempts to pass matriculation but never succeeded, although for a short time he followed courses at London University and the Sorbonne as an external student. Despite this lack of academic success he read serious literature and became

familiar with the work of Turgenev, Bergson, Nietzsche and other writers. Lutyens (Lutyens, 1975:120) states that the two books which impressed him most in 1920 were *The Idiot* and *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. He also read anthologies of Buddhist scriptures. The major intellectual influences on him during his youth were thus firstly theosophical doctrines, to which he was exposed continually from his earliest years, and European literature and philosophy.

By the early 1920s Krishnamurti was an elegant and well-travelled young man. Two qualities that he retained all his life were a great cosmopolitanism and an appreciation for beautiful surroundings, fine clothes and good architecture. In appearance and life-style, as well as in his ideas, he was markedly different from most Indian religious teachers of his time and did not conform in the least to the conventional image of an Indian holy man. He rejected Hinduism and, unlike Vivekananda or Aurobindo, never maintained that India was culturally or spiritually superior to other countries. He moved between east and west all his life and seemed equally at home with Indians or westerners. [9]

Until 1922 he showed few signs of spiritual greatness. At one time Leadbeater considered another boy as a possible vehicle for the World Teacher instead of, or as well as, Krishnamurti. Krishnamurti himself went through periods of doubt and disillusion. [10] But suddenly, in the summer of 1922, Krishnamurti had the first of a series of experiences which transformed him into a major independent teacher. It happened at Ojai, California, where he was staying in a beautiful valley for some months' holiday. [11] Part of his own account of the event is as follows:

There was such profound calmness both in the air and within myself, the calmness of the bottom of a deep unfathomable lake...The Presence of the mighty Beings was with me for some time and then They were gone. I was supremely happy for I had seen. Nothing could ever be the same. I have drunk at the clear and pure waters at the source of the fountain of life and my thirst was appeased...I have seen the Light. I have touched compassion which heals all sorrow and suffering; it is not for myself, but for the world. (Lutyens, 1975:159)

The mid-1920s saw Krishnamurti establishing himself as a free and independent teacher. He began to talk where and how he wished to groups of interested people instead of addressing only theosophical organisations. He criticised some of the theosophical doctrines and became increasingly sceptical of those who claimed clairvoyant powers. According to Nethercot (1963:372) he undertook speaking engagements for the society only because of his great affection for Mrs Besant. Rishi Valley, his first school, was founded in 1928 and a few years later he opened a school in Varanasi. He already had a passionate concern for the education of young people and encouraged those close to him, particularly in India, to involve themselves with education.

In the following months and years Krishnamurti experienced repeated ecstatic states, after which many observers regarded him as a transformed human being, confident, radiant and powerful. [12] By 1929 he was utterly assured of his own stature:

I say now, I say without conceit, with proper understanding, with fullness of mind and heart, that I am that full flame which is the glory of life, to which all human beings, individuals as well as the whole world, must come. (Lutyens, 1975:271)

A characteristic feature of his teaching was an insistence on the destructive nature of spiritual organisations. He had an abhorrence of ritual, dogma, hierarchy, uniforms, ceremonies and personality cults of any kind. In August 1929 he disbanded the Order of the Star, causing great distress to many devoted followers and signalling his final break with theosophy. His speech on that occasion embodied much of what he felt to be essential at the time: the statement about truth, quoted in the synopsis in 1.1, remained a hallmark of his approach throughout his life: .

I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect... Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organised... and I have now decided to disband the

Order, as I happen to be its Head. You can form other organisations and expect someone else. With that I am not concerned, nor with creating new cages, new decorations for those cages. My only concern is to set men absolutely, unconditionally free. (Lutyens, 1975:272)

After 1929, in pursuance of this concern, he lived the life of a peripatetic teacher, moving round the world on a circuit of talks, meetings and visits to his schools. By the mid-1930s he had evolved his own teachings, which were radically different from theosophy. At this point it may be helpful to see his new position.

He certainly felt, as did the theosophists, that there was an Absolute or transcendent reality, and like them he stressed the oneness of all life. The vital difference in Krishnamurti's teachings lies in his insistence that each listener must discover the truth behind these concepts for him/herself, otherwise they are meaningless. He argued that doctrinal statements may easily become a distraction, a form of escapism or illusion, and he actively discouraged any attempt to construct a mental image or world-view on the basis of what others said. It would be fundamentally wrong, according to Krishnamurti, to study religious literature and come to a conclusion such as: there is a spiritual absolute above and beyond the human world which may intercede in human affairs. Such a conclusion, from Krishnamurti's point of view, would be merely another belief, another spiritual metaphysic, another form of living in the past nourished by another's words.

Krishnamurti, then, did not explicitly teach a metaphysical world-view. It is true that he did refer to a transcendent dimension and one could, if one wished, construct some kind of ontology on the basis of his teaching. But this would be too formalistic. He first and foremost meant to show the limitations inherent in beliefs and ideologies and to suggest awareness and observation of the present as a more fruitful approach. His statements are not so much the assertion of a particular ontology as an expression of openness. Shackley, who has examined Krishnamurti's work from the standpoint

of analytical philosophy, shows how his position allows for transcendence but avoids dogmatism:

At the very least this possibility [of transcendence] must not be denied. Otherwise the mind encloses itself within a framework of known concepts and alienates itself from that element of the unknown which is indeed present in every present moment. This is a danger of strict conceptualisms like logical positivism. The opposite attitude of complete openness is a consequence of the central position in Krishnamurti's teaching not of concepts but of the unknown. (Shackley 1976:101)

Most of his talks centred on topics that were of immediate interest in daily life, for example psychological problems such as fear or jealousy. He insisted on numerous occasions that unless all such problems are faced and resolved, there is no possibility of understanding the divine; conversely, energy spent in metaphysical speculation is wasted. This, then, represents his major departure from theosophy: theosophists were given a metaphysical doctrine and encouraged to absorb it; Krishnamurti stressed that each individual must fully understand the complexities of his/her own life and behaviour, and only then would he/she be in a position to explore more profound questions.

With this fundamental change, Krishnamurti evolved the major themes of his later teachings, many aspects of which were in direct opposition to theosophical doctrine. For example, he dropped all connections with organisations and said they were an obstacle to self-understanding. He particularly criticized attempts to provide spiritual guidance. He had no interest in comparative religion and did not recognise a timeless wisdom at the heart of religious traditions. He questioned the importance of scriptures. He declined to comment on matters such as reincarnation or an afterlife and did not subscribe to a metaphysical world-view. The new approach caused considerable misunderstanding and resentment among some of his old followers (Lutyens, 1975:278). However he did retain fundamental religious values - compassion and a reverence for life - from his theosophical background which were to influence his

whole life's work and we shall see (3.2) that he was heavily influenced by theosophical educational ideas. [13]

By the mid-1930s, Krishnamurti's own approach had stabilised. Over the remaining fifty years of his life he was to modify vocabulary, emphasize different aspects of life and introduce new topics into his discourses, but these later developments were more a question of detail than of radical revision. Two writers, his biographer Lutyens (1983:167) and the Indian scholar Shringy (1977:xii) agree that Krishnamurti's teaching changed little, except in details of expression, after the 1930s. His own doctrine was clear, and his discussions and reading served mainly to elucidate minor points and to keep him in touch with developments in the intellectual world. The distance which separates Krishnamurti from the occult speculations of theosophy is obvious in the statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

In a typical year Krishnamurti would spend the winter in India, giving twenty or thirty public talks in the major cities. He would then spend spring in the USA, summer in Europe and autumn in England. He often gave eighty or more talks in a year, and would also conduct many hundreds of private interviews, participate in conferences, talk to students and teachers at his schools and do some writing and broadcasting. The only long exception to this heavy schedule, which he maintained until his death at the age of ninety-one, was during the Second World War, when he spent several quiet years in California.

By 1978 he had founded seven schools, with all of which he maintained close contact. Apart from the schools at Rishi Valley and Varanasi, there are three other Krishnamurti schools in India, in Madras, Bangalore and Bombay. Brockwood Park, near Winchester, Hampshire was founded in 1969 and the Oak Grove School in Ojai, California in 1975 (see 5.1 for further details). He stayed regularly at three of the schools, Rishi Valley and Rajghat in India and Brockwood Park in England. Many of his friends and associates



became teachers, sometimes at his request. He regarded the schools as centres for his work as religious teacher as well as being educational establishments in their own right, and towards the end of his life he encouraged the formation of study centres for adults on the grounds of the three schools where he stayed regularly. He invested much time and energy in his educational work, publishing books on education and holding regular meetings with staff and pupils. [14]

Krishnamurti never married, had children or led a family life although he had close relationships with several women who acted as his hosts, companions and friends. When he was not staying at his schools he lived in houses provided by friends or admirers. The money needed to pay his living and travel expenses came partly from the proceeds of his publications and partly from donations. He did not accumulate any personal property or wealth, although he wore expensive clothes and usually stayed in elegant accommodation. He found many helpers for his work and between 1968 and 1970 four Krishnamurti Foundations were formed in India, England, Latin America and the USA. These foundations administered funds, arranged public meetings, edited his books and helped with his work in education. Since his death they have continued with these activities. In a statement in 1973, published in the *Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin* (Special Issue, March 1986:10) Krishnamurti reiterated that the Foundations should exist for practical purposes only and have no religious or esoteric status:

The Foundations have no authority in the matter of the teachings...The Foundations have no authority to send out propagandists or interpreters of the teachings. As it has been necessary, I have often pointed out that I have no representative who will carry on with these teachings in my name now or at any time in the future.

Krishnamurti was a highly respected figure in India. According to Jayakar (1986:202) he was proclaimed as a realized human being by the pandits of Maharashtra in 1948 and by Varanasi pandits in the late 1970s. Thus despite his rejection of Hinduism, the guardians

of the Hindu religious tradition themselves recognised his stature. He was revered by Tibetan Buddhists. I was informed by Samdong Rinpoche, a close associate of the Dalai Lama, that some lamas regarded Krishnamurti as an incarnation of Maitreya and that the Dalai Lama himself held him in the highest regard. [15] Further, he was known to many of India's political leaders, and both Nehru and Indira Gandhi turned to him for advice and consolation. His death in February 1986 was commemorated by the issue of a postage stamp in India. His schools have operated in India since the 1920s and by the 1980s several thousand students had passed through them. His talks were free and open to all, an opportunity for people from all walks of life to hear his teachings at first hand. Krishnamurti is not a household name in India as are, for example, Sai Baba or Ramakrishna. But particularly in his native South, in Madras above all, he is certainly widely known among the educated sections of the population.

In the west he received little attention from religious or secular authorities, but was known to the public through his talks and books. Professor J. Needleman noted:

For the greater part of the twentieth century, Krishnamurti has traveled through Europe, America and Asia, speaking to millions of people. Still more millions have read his books, many of which are records of his talks. One may safely say that no philosopher, teacher or poet has attracted the respect of more people over such a period. (Needleman, 1970:152)

In academic circles Krishnamurti has been more widely accepted in the USA than in England. Many universities in the USA offer courses on his work. [16] Perhaps his greatest impact, apart from as educator and religious teacher in his own right, has been in the emergence of what is known as the holographic paradigm which suggests that contemporary science is still dominated by mechanistic and deterministic metaphors which should be superseded by a more integrated, organistic and interactive vision. The theoretical physicist Professor David Bohm and other scientists were interested in Krishnamurti's discussions of the nature of

consciousness and held discussions with him in England and the USA to further the dialogue (holistic theories are discussed in popular form in Capra (1974), Briggs and Peat (1984) and Wilber (1982); more specialised works include Bohm (1980) and Jantsch (1980)). [17]

Krishnamurti continued working until January 1986, although it was clear by then that he was seriously ill. He collapsed in Madras after a public talk and at his own request was flown immediately to California. He died there in February 1986, having spent his last month holding meetings with his closest associates. There are accounts of his death in the biographies by Lutyens (1988: 148-154) and Jayakar (1986: 497-501).

The facts about Krishnamurti's outward life are clearly established. He lived almost all his life in the public eye, and many letters and documents about him have been preserved. His inner life, however, remains a mystery. Mary Lutyens has described some of the inconsistencies in his character. He was always extremely well dressed and keenly alert, but at the same time appeared detached from his body. He had little time for casual conversation, yet spoke easily with scientists, statesmen, children or any other person who wished to converse seriously with him. At the same time, he had a weakness for anecdotes and jokes and would happily watch thrillers on television or read detective stories to amuse himself. He had a curious fondness for mechanical objects - well-made watches, cameras or cars - and used to play several sports well. He practised hatha yoga and eye exercises almost daily. He had a great delight in nature. He walked in the countryside throughout the year and his writings are full of descriptions of nature minutely observed. Traits which Lutyens stresses are his total lack of self-interest, his humility, modesty and self-effacement (Lutyens, 1975 and 1983:passim).

When he stayed in the west, he dressed in western clothes and rarely mentioned his Indian background. His teaching contained no Sanskrit terminology or reference to Indian scriptures and he clearly stated

that he had no interest in Hinduism or Indian nationalism. He also consistently declined to discuss his esoteric background or phenomena such as clairvoyance and healing. This led many westerners to view him as a teacher who was beyond the confines of any particular culture or religious tradition.

However, some of his associates and friends in India gave quite a different picture. [18] They regarded Krishnamurti as essentially Indian, despite his European refinement. When in India he dressed, sat and ate in traditional Indian style. His talks, and more particularly his dialogues with close friends, contained occasional references to Hindu philosophy. He had a special fondness for chanting scriptures in Sanskrit. I was told of occasions when he had participated in meetings with traditional sages and pandits, and that he had even organised a *puja* (religious ceremony) at his school in Varanasi after a dispute had arisen with local villagers. This surprised even his Indian friends, as he was consistently scathing in his criticism of such ceremonies. I was not able to ascertain whether he organised the ceremony to placate the villagers or because he believed in its intrinsic value. In either case it shows a side of Krishnamurti that was never apparent in the west.

He was particularly affectionate towards *sadhus* and *sannyasis* (people who have renounced the world to lead a religious life), and showed great respect towards figures such as Anandmai Ma, a woman who was believed to be a saint in Varanasi. A musician who often played for him in Varanasi told me that sometimes when she began chanting the Upanishads in Sanskrit, Krishnamurti would join in and recite hundreds of verses. According to her he claimed that he had never studied them, but 'just knew them'. In India I heard many stories of his powers of clairvoyance and healing, and some Indians also maintained that he sensed a special religious energy in India that was not present in the rest of the world. There is a tradition in India that certain places are sacred sites (*punya sthal*) with a special religious significance. These sites often become pilgrimage centres, temples or ashrams. I was told that Krishnamurti regarded

Rishi Valley and Rajghat, if not his other schools, as such places and believed that the religious transformation that he called for might start from them.

It seems that these different perceptions were caused by two factors. First, Krishnamurti himself behaved somewhat differently as he visited different countries. He spoke in a way that would be meaningful to his audience, trying to convey the same message in slightly different terms. He was probably less reserved about showing the esoteric side of his personality in India where it might be more acceptable than in the west. Secondly, his friends and associates appreciated him according to their backgrounds. Many of the Indians associated with his work had a long-standing interest in Hindu philosophy or theosophy and would perhaps be less sceptical about claims of psychic abilities than most westerners would be. A close associate of Krishnamurti's with whom I spoke in England doubted that he sensed anything more sacred in India than elsewhere.

Krishnamurti never undertook formal studies after failing his matriculation. He always maintained that he read very little. He disclaimed ever having read the Bhagavad Gita or the gospels and he never referred to any books or philosophers as authorities. Lutyens describes him as a man who 'has read very little (and that little forgotten) and who has no intellectual pretensions' (Lutyens 1983:192). This may be an exaggeration. Krishnamurti himself was always very vague about what he had read, and some interviewees gave me to understand that he had in fact studied more widely and seriously than Lutyens suggests. Moreover, he was interested to hear of developments in art, philosophy, religion and science, and held many conversations with specialists in different fields of study. I was told that he had at least a basic knowledge of Heidegger and Sartre, of current research in neuro-physiology, artificial intelligence, quantum physics and numerous other topics in the west. In India he certainly read and discussed Hindu and Buddhist texts, and occasionally surprised scholars by his references to obscure works. [19] To summarize, Krishnamurti moved

freely in every sense between India and the west, although he was appreciated differently in different places. He had a wide knowledge of both cultures, but his learning was non-systematic and he attached little importance to it.

In his teaching, Krishnamurti often stressed the importance of observing very carefully and with an open mind. One woman who knew Krishnamurti for many years told me that his real education was what he learned through his own senses:

The thing I found most extraordinary about Krishnamurti was the way he would sit in a room and simply observe everything that was there. He would be very quiet and you could feel that every sense was alive, looking at the colours, listening to sounds, observing people. I think it gave him tremendous vitality. In that sense his was a total education, because he took in everything first hand through his senses to an extraordinary degree. [20]

Krishnamurti and those close to him often stressed that his teachings were original, in the sense that they arose from his own experiences and observations, not from study of other teachers. Krishnamurti himself once remarked:

Schopenhauer, Lenin, Russel [sic] etc. had all read tremendously. Here there is the phenomenon of this chap who isn't trained, who has had no discipline...This person [Krishnamurti] hasn't thought out the teachings...It is like - what - what is the biblical term? - revelation. It happens all the time when I'm talking. (Lutyens, 1983:230)

Even after Krishnamurti's break with theosophy, many people believed him to be an avatar or world teacher despite his own disclaimers. In his later years, Krishnamurti neither confirmed nor denied that he was a, or the, World Teacher. In the 1920s he was less reticent:

More and more am I certain that I am the Teacher and my mind and consciousness is changed...My work and my life is settled. I have reached my goal...the fulfilment of many lives is now come. (Lutyens, 1975:246)

Whenever he taught in public, the personality traits, the gentleness and the humour seemed to recede. He became incisive, at times almost sharp, full of vitality, dignified, challenging. As early as 1925 a change was perceived to come over him when he spoke in public. In 1961, one of his talks struck Aldous Huxley as 'among the most impressive things I ever heard...such power, such intrinsic authority...' (Huxley, 1969:917-918). Lutyens, who was a close friend and almost uncritical admirer of Krishnamurti, suggests that during certain talks Krishnamurti is experiencing a special power, or benediction, which is somehow conveyed to the audience (1983:115).

One point on which almost all observers, Indian or western, agreed was that Krishnamurti possessed an extraordinary quality of energy and that he had a special presence. This was described variously as an overwhelming sense of love, of compassion, of intelligence, a burning quality. Krishnamurti was constantly creative and demanded great dedication from those who wished to work with him. Part of this creativity expressed itself as constant challenge and people who stayed close to him felt a pressure to examine their behaviour and, sometimes, to make radical changes in their lives.

I also interviewed a few people who had at one time been quite close to Krishnamurti but later decided not to become involved with him. The criticisms they voiced generally centred on two main points, firstly that he still regarded himself as world-teacher and tended to speak dismissively of other teachers and religious movements; and secondly that he showed little concern for social justice, having spent almost all his life in a sheltered environment with few material problems. These points will be considered in detail later in this thesis (especially in 2.4 and 4.4). But on the whole, Krishnamurti attracted little of the criticism that has been directed at some new religious groups and teachers. For example, there has never been any suggestion, as far as I know, that he ever used his powers or prestige for personal gain. In 1929 he dissolved

the group that had been built up around him and formed no sort of cult or popular organisation. People who listened to him or went for interviews were not put under any obligation.

Lastly, it is important to note that all through his life since 1922, and apparently almost daily, Krishnamurti underwent intense experiences which could be called mystical. It is not within the scope of this thesis to review the extensive literature concerning mystical experience nor to analyze this aspect of Krishnamurti's writing. Nevertheless the mystical element must be taken into account in any consideration of Krishnamurti's life since he was very deeply affected by his experiences, which can be satisfactorily described by the term 'mystical' as defined by Professor R. Ellwood in his comprehensive treatment of mysticism:

Mystical experience is experience in a religious context that is immediately or subsequently interpreted by the experiencer as encounter with ultimate divine reality in a direct nonrational way that engenders a deep sense of unity and of living during the experience on a level of being other than the ordinary. (Ellwood, 1980:29)

There are accounts of mystical experiences in Krishnamurti's early poetry where he frequently tells, in lyrical and ecstatic terms, of his union with 'the Beloved'. He still used much theosophical terminology in the early 1920s but despite the fact that his poems are of a somewhat inflated, vatic nature, the spontaneity, conviction and vigour are indicative of first-hand experience. [21]

Ecstatic states of consciousness apparently continued year after year, and there are occasional references to them in his talks and writings of the 1930s and 1940s. Much later, in 1961, Krishnamurti started a record of his inner life, which he kept in diary form for seven months. This was later published as *Krishnamurti's Notebook* (KN). As Mary Lutyens wrote in the Foreword: 'We have here what may be called the well-spring of Krishnamurti's teaching. The whole essence of his teaching is here, arising from its natural source'



(KN:6). On almost every page there are accounts of states of mind that Krishnamurti experienced as radically different to our everyday, empirical consciousness:

In the evening it was there, filling the room, a great sense of beauty, power and gentleness.

Woke up in the middle of the night and there was the experiencing of an incalculable expanding state of mind...The "feeling" of this state was stripped of all sentiment, of all emotion, but was very factual, very real.

The room became full with that benediction. Now what followed is almost impossible to put down in words...It was the centre of all creation...There was only seeing, the eyes that saw beyond time-space. There was impenetrable dignity and a peace that was the essence of all movement, all action. (KN:9,11,27)

There are hundreds of other passages in the same vein in Krishnamurti's writings. In February 1980 he dictated the following account, speaking of himself in the third person, of an encounter with 'ultimate divine reality':

All the time that [Krishnamurti] was in India until the end of January 1980 every night he would wake up with this sense of the absolute. It is not a state, a thing that is static, fixed, immovable. The whole universe is in it, measureless to man. When he returned to Ojai in February 1980, after the body had somewhat rested, there was the perception that there was nothing beyond this. This is the ultimate, the beginning and the ending and the absolute. There is only a sense of incredible vastness and immense beauty. (Lutyens 1983:238)

Two aspects that stand out in these accounts are Krishnamurti's sense of purgation, the feeling that his brain was cleansed of past experiences, and his intense sensitivity. He apparently felt that his experiences in meditation had affected his brain-cells and produced a totally new state of consciousness. He felt untouched by past emotions or thought patterns and often stressed the feeling of newness and freedom from the past. This spiritual purgation, which continued throughout Krishnamurti's life, gave rise to many

paranormal and psycho-physical phenomena, some of which are discussed by his biographers. His heightened awareness operated not only in states of meditation but also for example when he was out walking. The following gives an indication of his state of mind:

And there walking on that road, there was complete emptiness of the brain, and the mind was free of all experience...Time, the thing of thought, had stopped...The totality of the mind, in which is the brain with its thoughts and feelings, was empty...the otherness was the mind without time; it was the breath of innocence and immensity. (KN:164)

At these times he was apparently not in a state of withdrawal but was intensely aware of his surroundings. His writings contain many descriptions of his walks in different parts of the world:

The road was muddy, deep rutted, full of people; it was outside the town and slowly a suburb was being built, but now it was incredibly dirty, full of holes, dogs, goats, wandering cattle, buses, cycles, cars and more people...The sun was among the clouds behind the palm trees bursting with colour and vast shadows; the pools were ablaze and every bush and tree was amazed by the vastness of the sky. The goats were nibbling at their roots, women were washing their clothes at a tap, children went on playing; everywhere there was activity and nobody bothered to look at the sky or at those clouds, bearing colour; it was an evening that would soon disappear never to appear again and nobody seemed to care. (KN:208-9)

Krishnamurti the man remains a mystery. At this stage it is interesting to ponder some questions which will perhaps never be fully answered. What would Krishnamurti have become had he not been 'discovered' by Leadbeater? Did he really succeed in attaining an 'unconditioned' state, or was he rather the product of his environment, of the desperate longing for a new Messiah? It seems to me that the intensity of his spirituality, and in particular his uncompromising insistence on freedom, suggests an 'innate power of remarkable force. The Theosophical Society may have nourished and influenced Krishnamurti, but it neither created nor dominated him.

Naturally there are different assessments of Krishnamurti's stature. Some commentators have been sceptical about his achievements. The Buddhist scholar Lama Anagarika Govinda, for example, found that Krishnamurti had little to offer:

I think that Krishnamurti, who always speaks of the unconditioned, is one of the most conditioned persons in the world. He is so conditioned that he simply can't get out of his own thinking...he is still influenced by the experiences of his youth and early childhood; his tragedy is that he can't rid himself of them. (Govinda, 1986:66)

However, many thousands of people found his talks moving, illuminating, deeply meaningful. The following section discusses those who formed Krishnamurti's audiences and those who became closely involved with his life's work.

### 1.3 AUDIENCES AND ORGANISATIONS

Krishnamurti refused to build or allow any large social movement or organisation to develop around himself. Among those interested in his work we can distinguish between two groupings of people: the many thousands of people who attended his talks or read his books, and the few hundreds who became teachers at the Krishnamurti schools or worked in the foundations.

The former have no cohesion as a social body. Some of them receive bulletins from the Krishnamurti Foundations, visit the schools or have contact with other interested people, but these activities do not constitute a definable movement. There is little difference in this respect between those who are interested in Krishnamurti's work and people interested in, for example, the work of a western secular philosopher. Krishnamurti's books have been sold in many countries for more than fifty years, and it would be difficult to make any meaningful statement about the sociological composition of his readership.

As well as the written word, Krishnamurti presented his teaching to the public in the form of discourses. Typically he would give a series of talks - two, five or as many as a dozen - over a period of several days or weeks in a public hall or marquee. After the dissolution of the Order of the Star, the talks were open to anyone and usually free of charge. He spoke without notes, quietly, seated on a chair in the west or sitting cross-legged on a dais in India. He was a very experienced and fluent speaker and audiences almost invariably listened in engrossed silence. I have been unable to find any empirical studies concerning the audiences at his talks and doubt that any have been made. The following account is based on my own observations at some fifty talks in Europe and India.

In the west audiences were a mixture of all ages and nationalities, with perhaps a preponderance of males over females. There were representatives of the generation to which Krishnamurti himself belonged, some of whom had been attending his talks for sixty years, and also teenagers and even children. The meetings were thoroughly international, with contingents from France, Holland, Spain, England and elsewhere. The talks in Switzerland were usually translated into four languages. On the whole the audiences seemed well-educated, rather intellectual and middle-class. There was little evidence of counter-culture, use of narcotics or extravagant dress. Mary Lutyens briefly described an audience at Brockwood in 1971:

What struck one most about the audience was the lack of hippies. None of the throng there appeared to be part of the guru-drug culture. Young and old, they were clean, decently dressed people who hung on Krishnamurti's words with serious intentness. (Lutyens, 1983:178)

The use of drugs, including alcohol, was strictly forbidden at the talks. Krishnamurti often pointed out the injurious effects of drugs and ridiculed attempts to use them for religious experiences. The people who organised the talks - Krishnamurti Foundation members, often helped by their friends and teachers from Brockwood Park - established a certain ethos around Krishnamurti, favouring

conventional upper middle class standards of dress and appearance. There was a certain amount of resentment among young members of the audiences who felt they were excluded from the chance of meeting Krishnamurti personally unless they dressed and behaved in a very conventional manner.

The talks in Europe were usually attended by two or three thousand people. In India even larger numbers crowded to hear him. There too the audiences were a mixture of races and classes, with *sannyasis* and monks sitting beside westernized businessmen and students. On some occasions Krishnamurti was heckled by university students who felt that he was avoiding social issues such as poverty and oppression, but the meetings usually passed off without incident. Indian audiences were often overtly reverential towards Krishnamurti and sometimes he was surrounded and jostled by people trying to touch him or his clothes.

Both in India and the west many members of the audiences were evidently familiar with Krishnamurti's work and attended talks regularly. Others came perhaps out of curiosity or were attracted after having read his books. In the west, most members of the audience seemed oriented towards eastern philosophy and conversations I overheard often referred to Buddhism or Hinduism. Many people had apparently turned to Krishnamurti after failing to find satisfaction with other teachers or systems. At the meetings I met people who had previously been involved with, for example, Zen Buddhism or Gurdjieff groups. As we shall see in the next chapter, Krishnamurti's teaching demands a sceptical attitude towards religious or spiritual organisations and a high degree of independence on the part of the seeker. There is no practice to follow and no group to join for support or encouragement. Each person who turned to Krishnamurti was finally confronted with the teaching that truth must be found within, not mediated by organisations or practices. Those who retained an interest in his approach, then, tended to be people who had a high level of commitment to a personal spirituality outside traditional forms and

institutions. [22] Krishnamurti did not comment much on his audiences, although he seemed to feel that they were not sufficiently serious. On one occasion he said that he felt like someone singing to the deaf (Lutyens, 1983:169). His acute embarrassment when treated with excessive reverence was very apparent.

Of the many thousands who came to his talks only a small number became involved with his work in an organisational way. Those who wanted a closer personal contact with Krishnamurti and who had an interest in education could join one of the Krishnamurti schools. In the schools I visited for fieldwork, Brockwood and Bangalore, all the teachers I interviewed cited interest in Krishnamurti's work as the main reason for teaching at the schools: their principal motives in working at the schools were to deepen their understanding of his philosophy and to pursue what they perceived to be a meaningful vocation. At both schools wages are low and it seemed unlikely that financial gain played a significant role in attracting staff. It should be noted that there is also a number of teachers, primarily at Rajghat and Rishi Valley, who are not particularly interested in Krishnamurti as a religious teacher (Thapan, 1986b). These teachers work at the schools for a variety of reasons, principally because the schools are pleasant and interesting places at which to work: with high unemployment in India, teachers may be thankful to find employment in any institution. [23]

The common element among teachers is therefore, for the most part, a shared interest in Krishnamurti's teaching. Otherwise, it is again difficult to make any meaningful analysis. Teachers are of many different nationalities, social classes and age groups. Most of the schools demand that teachers have formal educational qualifications, but even this is not the case in every school. There is no commitment to any organisation other than customary contracts with the school as employer. Teachers do not form any kind of Krishnamurti group or organisation. They are free to leave the

schools when they wish and no pressure is put on them to stay in touch with the schools.

It was my impression that Krishnamurti was treated as a charismatic personality, in Weber's sense of the term, by many members of the Krishnamurti Foundations. People in various countries came forward and wished to be closely associated with Krishnamurti's daily affairs. They formed a *Gemeinde*, taking care of his personal needs and the details of administration. I have little doubt but that they recognised in Krishnamurti 'supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities...regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary' (Weber, 1947: 358-9). A few people I met who had tried to gain access to Krishnamurti complained that the people around him were exclusive and jealous, and that they refused to make appointments for outsiders to see Krishnamurti, except for rich or powerful people who could gain access relatively easily. Thapan also reported that the implicit authority of Foundation members tended to create fear among some teachers and pupils at Rishi Valley School: 'several teachers...are critical of the authoritarian role of Foundation Members whose power is viewed as deriving legitimacy from the ideology' (Thapan, 1986b:425).

However, there were several factors that limited the extent of the Foundations' activities. Krishnamurti was a teacher, not a leader. Since there was no movement connected with him, there was no scope for manipulation of followers. Moreover, Krishnamurti was always insistent that he had no need for interpreters or intermediaries; everyone should have direct access to his teaching in undiluted form. The talks were public and free, the books and tapes openly available. There was no esoteric teaching for those close to him. The satisfaction that people could gain from their close relationship with him was personal and emotional; there was no way in which they could exploit it to their advantage in terms of power except in the limited environment of the schools. Because of these factors, the abuses that are possible in a movement centred on a charismatic personality were minimal. My personal experience with

the Krishnamurti Foundations concerning this thesis is described in 5.2. Here I should briefly state that I was given free access to schools and archives and generally treated with consideration.

In any case, the numbers involved in the Foundations are so small as to be socially insignificant. The Krishnamurti Foundation Trust in England for example employed only one person full time in 1985. Its main functions are to prepare a bulletin which is sent to subscribers, to oversee the publication of Krishnamurti's works and to co-ordinate a small network of Krishnamurti Information Centres which show video tapes of Krishnamurti's talks to the public.

#### 1.4 LITERATURE SURVEY

##### 1.4.1 Publications by Krishnamurti

'Do you seriously think you can learn from books?' Krishnamurti asked a visitor in 1934 (Lutyens, 1983:32). He was sceptical about the value of the written word, preferring the immediacy of live speech, and according to Mary Lutyens he expressed little interest in the books published under his name (Lutyens, 1983:88). Despite this, he sanctioned the publication of many works, particularly after 1954. Details of those referred to in this thesis are included in the bibliography. The books have been successful commercially and sold many thousands of copies. Some have been translated into foreign languages, including Indian dialects, Korean, Chinese and Russian. They fall into three main categories: transcriptions of public talks, books written by Krishnamurti and reports of his dialogues and discussions.

Edited transcripts of Krishnamurti's talks were published from the 1920s onwards. In the preface to one volume Krishnamurti wrote:

This book of talks, like our previous publications, contains reports of spontaneous discourses about life and reality, given at different times, and is not



intended, therefore, to be read through consecutively or hurriedly as a novel or as a systematized philosophical treatise. These Talks were written down by me immediately after they were given, and later I carefully revised them for publication. (OT1947:2)

After 1948, Krishnamurti did not personally participate in editorial work, which he entrusted to friends. Some series of talks were published with only minor changes, mostly elimination of repetitions and correction of grammar; in others there was considerable rearrangement and selection of material.

Krishnamurti wrote constantly throughout his life and much of this writing has been published. It is mostly in the form of conversations between himself and the many individuals, unnamed, who came to him for advice and clarification of their problems. The general teaching of the public talks is applied to individual circumstances, and very often Krishnamurti elicited from his interlocutor the understanding that his/her particular problem is part of a broader picture, part of the human condition. There are some moving accounts of meetings with people in emotional distress.

Besides this, there are passages describing the natural world. Krishnamurti was a keen observer of landscapes, skies and rivers, plants and animals, and transcribed his observations in some detail, usually without comment. His books contain hundreds of such lyrical passages, sometimes only a few lines long, which often set the scene for dialogues or meditations that follow. Krishnamurti started to write a manuscript in this form, alternating descriptions of nature with discussions, in the 1950s and was encouraged to continue by Aldous Huxley. The result was the three volumes of *Commentaries on Living* which are in my opinion the most successful of Krishnamurti's books, expounding his philosophy and also providing insights into how he related to people and to the world around him.

A third element in his writing comprises accounts of his states of consciousness. These are the main source of material concerning his

mystical experiences, some of which was quoted above (1.2). This material is often linked with his personal, innermost reflections on themes developed in public talks.

Krishnamurti held hundreds of dialogues and discussions with students, teachers, scientists, philosophers, religious figures and others. Many of these were recorded on cassette, and/or published in book form after editing. A particular strength of these books is that they show Krishnamurti responding to direct questioning and being obliged to explain himself in detail. Many questioners refused to accept statements which Krishnamurti regarded as self-evidently true and this led him to reformulate some of his assertions. His conversations with Professor David Bohm in particular led Krishnamurti to make several changes in his terminology. Another point of interest in these books is that certain topics were raised which Krishnamurti did not normally discuss in his public talks. *The Awakening of Intelligence*, for example, includes a discussion with an Indian swami in which Krishnamurti gave his views on Vedanta, the Upanishads, gurus and other aspects of the Indian religious tradition.

Starting in 1961, it was decided to make a permanent record of Krishnamurti's talks by recording them. This was first done on audio, and after 1976 on video cassette. There are now several hundred cassettes available to the public, covering talks and discussions in various countries. They provide a fascinating record of the work of a religious teacher and also a gratifying example of modern technology being put to constructive use. Krishnamurti is available to a mass audience in a way that no great teacher of the past could have been. [24]

Another function of the tapes is to safeguard against distortions of the teachings. Krishnamurti felt it important that there should be no dispute about what he had said or what he really meant. Indeed, one of his *bêtes noires*, along with gurus and priests, were

interpreters, those who claimed to speak on his behalf. In 1970 he stated:

From the nineteen twenties I have been saying that there should be no interpreters of the teachings for they distort the teachings and it becomes a means of exploitation. No interpreters are necessary, for each person should observe directly his own activities, not according to any theory or authority...I have said, and I again repeat, that there are no representatives of Krishnamurti personally or of his teachings during or after his lifetime. I am very sorry that this has to be said again. (*Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin*, No.7, Summer 1970:6)

The tapes are an incontrovertible record of Krishnamurti's teachings in their original form.

#### 1.4.2 Krishnamurti's publications on education

Between 1953 and 1985 Krishnamurti published six books on education:

Education and the Significance of Life: 1953

Life Ahead: 1963

Krishnamurti on Education: 1974

Beginnings of Learning: 1975

Letters to the Schools Vol.1: 1983

Vol.2: 1985.

These books were my primary sources for Krishnamurti's educational theory. However, people who worked closely with Krishnamurti in the schools emphasized that the books should not be regarded as a definitive statement. Krishnamurti constantly reassessed his own conclusions and was often willing to experiment with new ideas. From the books one can gain a general understanding of his approach and intentions but they are not to be taken as formal expositions of a theory.

*Education and the Significance of Life* is the most systematic presentation of Krishnamurti's educational theory. It outlines his views on the aims of education, on the need for new schools, on the need for serious involvement by parents, on the responsibilities inherent in the teaching profession, and it also contains some of his sharpest criticisms of conventional educational practice. Among his books, this is the one where he concentrated most on general prescriptive statements about school structure, pedagogics and related topics. I have used many of the ideas presented in this book as the basis for my examination of Krishnamurti's educational theory in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis.

*Life Ahead* comprises edited transcripts of short talks and replies to questions from students and teachers. The book also contains a fifteen page introduction concerning education written by Krishnamurti.

*Krishnamurti on Education* was edited by members of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India and comprises talks to students and teachers at the Indian Krishnamurti schools. In the talks to students Krishnamurti discussed education; the religious mind and the scientific mind; knowledge and intelligence; freedom and order; sensitivity; fear; violence; image-making and behaviour. The talks to teachers discussed the meaning of right education; the long vision; action; the true denial; competition; fear; teaching and learning; the good mind; the negative approach; inward flowering. The book provides an excellent illustration of Krishnamurti's discourses in his schools.

*Beginnings of Learning* comprises for the most part discussions held with students and staff at Brockwood Park School in Hampshire. Students at Brockwood are older than pupils at the Indian schools and more able to participate in an active dialogue with Krishnamurti; the discussions convey the atmosphere of inquiry that was generated during Krishnamurti's visits to Brockwood. The book also contains some conversations with parents and teachers.

Finally the *Letters to the Schools* were written towards the end of Krishnamurti's life. I was told by a close associate of his that Krishnamurti wrote them with a great deal of care and attention and intended that they convey his most mature thoughts on education. They are mostly discursive philosophical meditations on topics related to education in the widest sense, for example the religious spirit of man and the development of the human psyche. There is a strong emphasis on the religious aspect of the schools.

In addition to these publications, there are several audio and video cassettes available of Krishnamurti's discussions with students and teachers at Brockwood and Rishi Valley. These include six discussions on education with teachers at Brockwood Park (1976), a dialogue with students and staff at Brockwood (1983) and talks to students at Rishi Valley (1985).

In the archives at Brockwood Park there is a large amount of unedited and unpublished material arising from Krishnamurti's visits. I was kindly given permission to examine the material, some of which is only on tape and some of which has been transcribed into typescript. Much of the material is repetitive, as Krishnamurti tended to discuss similar questions every year, and it is unlikely that the unpublished material would significantly change our understanding of his work in education.

#### 1.4.3 Secondary literature

A biography of Krishnamurti was written by Mary Lutyens, a woman who knew him personally almost all her life. *The Years of Awakening* deals with his life until c. 1930; *The Years of Fulfillment* with the period from 1930 to 1983; and *The Open Door* with his final years and death (Lutyens, 1975, 1983 and 1988). The biographer clearly admires Krishnamurti greatly and makes no attempt at a critical evaluation of his ideas; neither is there a breath of criticism or adverse comment about Krishnamurti personally. The biography is

well documented and researched but, apart from its lack of critical perspective, has one major weakness, namely that it is quite inadequate in describing Krishnamurti's work in India after 1930. However, a wealth of material on this part of his life is available in the major Indian biography, *Krishnamurti* by Pupul Jayakar (1986). There is a two volume bibliography of Krishnamurti's works which also includes references to books and articles about him (Weeraperuma 1974 and 1985).

Concerning Krishnamurti's background, Nethercot's *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (1963) is a sceptical and critical study of Mrs Besant and the Theosophical Society with much information on Krishnamurti's early life and the theosophical ambience. Further information on the Theosophical Society is to be found in Campbell's *Ancient Wisdom Revived* (1980). I also made use of a critical study of the concept of the avatar or world-teacher doctrine by Bassuk (1987), which includes a section on Krishnamurti, and of the sociological study of messianism by Desroche (1979). G. Ahern's study of Rudolf Steiner (1984) also contains some interesting observations about theosophy.

Books about Krishnamurti's philosophy include works by Fouere (1952), Dhopeswarkar (1970), Mehta (1973) and Holroyd (1980), which are interpretations of and comments on his ideas presented in a relatively popular form. A more academic approach is adopted by Shackley (1976) and Shringy (1977), the former in an unpublished doctoral thesis which focuses on the concepts of thought and energy in Krishnamurti's philosophy. Shringy's book is a systematic presentation of Krishnamurti's philosophy which contains a good analysis of the differences between his earlier and later thought.

In Chapters 2 to 4 I have made use of a range of material concerning religious philosophy, particularly Indian, and educational theory. I found two books on the Indian religious tradition particularly helpful: *The Hindu Quest for the Perfection of Man* by T.W. Organ (1970) and *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples* by H. Nakamura

(1964). The former discusses spirituality and particularly the quest for liberation in the broad context of Hindu culture. Nakamura's work is a thought-provoking although not systematic study of important motifs in Indian religious thinking. In Chapter 2 I also refer to a recent study by John Taber entitled *Transformative Philosophy: a study of Sankara, Fichte and Heidegger*, which elucidates features common to philosophers from different cultural backgrounds who, like Krishnamurti, were fundamentally concerned with the question of the transformation of consciousness.

Recently, two doctoral theses have focused on Krishnamurti schools. Thapan's *Education and ideology: the school as a socio-cultural system* (Thapan, 1985) was based on one year's fieldwork at Rishi Valley School. Thapan gives a detailed account, based on interviews, questionnaires and observation, of staff and student attitudes towards the school and Krishnamurti's ideas. In particular she discusses the tension between the demands for good examination results and high academic achievement on the one hand, and Krishnamurti's non-competitive and transcendent value-system on the other. Nalls's thesis *The Oak Grove School: An Alternative Approach to Education and its Effects upon the Creativity of its Students* (Nalls, 1987) examines the question of creativity in educational theory and in Krishnamurti's work. Ms. Nalls stayed at the Oak Grove School and conducted psychometric tests on pupils there to determine the impact of the school on children's creativity. Her research led her to conclude that the school had a strong positive effect on its pupils.

I have discovered only two books concerned with Krishnamurti's educational work. Brugger's *Living and Learning* (Brugger, 1985), from which I quote in Chapter Six, is a collection of interviews with teachers and pupils at Krishnamurti schools in India, providing interesting insights into their perspectives and ideas. Brugger presents this material without any editorial comment or discussion. *Things of the Mind* by B.B. Khare (Khare, 1985) contains an essay on Krishnamurti's educational ideas and reports of meetings between

Krishnamurti and students, teachers and educationalists in California in 1981.

Two studies were helpful for understanding the background to Krishnamurti's educational theory. W. Boyd and W. Rawson's *The Story of the New Education* (1965) provides details on the history of the New Education Movement in the 1920s and 1930s although the study is weak in the presentation and evaluation of ideas. A more interesting study of the English progressive school movement is by the social historian Robert Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools* (1969), which discusses both the ideology and the practice of the schools in a critical and at times amusing way, providing useful insights into the educational world of the 1920s. I consulted several works on educational philosophy and found especially helpful a recent publication by M. Grimmitt: *Religious Education and Human Development*. It is interesting that although Grimmitt's work is written from an academic and scholarly perspective, which Krishnamurti's books are not, there are several areas of coincidence between the two.

Part Two of the thesis is based for the most part on field-work rather than written sources. However I did consult some studies on educational psychology, of which the most useful was Hamachek's *Psychology in Teaching, Learning and Growth* (1979), a textbook which includes detailed reviews of the academic literature on most aspects of educational psychology.

There is no general account of Krishnamurti's work in education, nor is his work in education discussed in detail in the biographies; moreover, there is little reference to Krishnamurti's educational ideas in any of the general discussions of his philosophy. This thesis therefore covers an area which has not previously been approached in a systematic or critical manner. As explained in the Introduction, my first step is to examine Krishnamurti's overall world-view, in particular his view of human nature, and this provides the topic of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER TWO

### TEACHING FOR RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION

#### 2.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE TEACHINGS

In the first chapter we traced Krishnamurti's extraordinary career and noted some of the complex influences, mostly from theosophical sources, to which he was exposed in his formative years. As explained in the Introduction, we will now focus on the teachings of his mature years, which can not be understood merely as a reworking of theosophical ideas, although it is possible to identify some ideas which are characteristic of Indian religious thought and others which are more western. Krishnamurti's work can be considered in historical context but his synthesis of ideas deserves consideration in its own right.

The use of the term 'teachings', by which Krishnamurti and his associates usually referred to his work, is justified by the nature of his discourse, particularly in public talks. Although Krishnamurti made efforts to maintain a logical and coherent train of thought, the main emphasis of his talks was on the dynamic quality, the contact between teacher and audience. He was not an academic or formal philosopher and his work was primarily intended to fulfil his stated goal of liberating people. Consequently much of his work contains a strong rhetorical element. Its primary purpose is to stimulate a response in the audience, not to construct a conceptually consistent system. The topics are dealt with discursively, the approach is unsystematic. The language is often emotional rather than precise. There are abrupt transitions of thought, intuitive leaps from an observation to a conclusion. The

form of discourse is more that of religious teaching than of formal philosophy. [1]

Listening to a series of talks by Krishnamurti could be a moving experience, at least for listeners who were attracted and convinced by him. His words seemed to act as a stimulus to self-exploration and people would leave the meetings with new insights into their behaviour and a sense of renewed energy. Although Krishnamurti usually returned to the same topics, one also had the sense that his talks were specific to a time and place, directed at a particular audience or, in the case of education, to a situation in a school. In several years' study of Krishnamurti's work I have constantly been surprised by the dynamic quality of his talks. The arguments are repetitive but this is outweighed by Krishnamurti's conviction and personal charisma: his talks do hold intellectual interest but are primarily a personal, emotional experience. This quality of Krishnamurti's talks is also noted by C.S.J. White, writing in the *Encyclopedia of Religions*, who refers to 'Krishnamurti's charismatic, even mesmerizing style of lecturing' (White, 1987:381).

The powerful impact of the talks was not a matter of chance. Krishnamurti spent many years evolving his technique as a speaker, experimenting with new vocabulary and turns of phrase until the end of his life. In a letter written in 1932 he spoke of the difficulties he experienced:

I am trying to make it clear, trying to build a bridge for others to come across, not away from life but to have more abundantly of life...The more I think of what I have 'realised', the clearer I can put it and help to build a bridge, but that takes time and continual change of phrases, so as to give true meaning. You have no idea how difficult it is to express the inexpressible and what's expressed is not truth. (Letter to E. Lutyens, March 1932, quoted in Lutyens, 1975:281)

The method that Krishnamurti came to adopt in his talks was to put a sequence of probing, exploratory questions to the audience and exhort them to (silently) find an answer within themselves. He discussed the topic and expounded his views, then repeated the same or similar questions. There would then be an abrupt transition to another topic, which would be treated in the same way. The audience was constantly urged to participate (albeit silently) in these verbalised meditations. The intention was that this process of repeated exploration would lead listeners to an experiential grasp of the topic under discussion.

Krishnamurti spoke in simple modern English. He felt that specialised terms tend to have associations with a particular system of philosophy, psychology or other disciplines, and their use would inevitably raise questions of comparison and interpretation. Krishnamurti insisted on the need to avoid referring to systems and consequently his vocabulary is free of technical jargon (Dhopeshwarkar, 1970:10; Shringy, 1977:14). He expressed little interest in comparative studies of religions or philosophy and did not encourage attempts to compare his work with that of other thinkers. Moreover, he suggested that the most crucial questions of our time, for example the resolution of conflicts, are essentially to be understood in daily life, in everyday language, and that no technical expressions would be useful in this endeavour.

The overall atmosphere of the talks was rather austere and serious. There was no sensationalism or promise of spiritual reward, no organisation to join and no practice to follow. The audience was mostly involved in a repeated scrutiny of its own prejudices and of the human condition in general. Sometimes towards the end of a series of talks Krishnamurti became more lyrical and passionate when he spoke of love or religion. At these times the atmosphere of the talks became emotionally charged, although still restrained.

Repetition was a key factor in Krishnamurti's teachings. His message remained essentially the same for sixty years and each

series of talks covered more or less familiar ground. This was somewhat relieved by the gradual introduction of new topics and vocabulary, but the essentials of his teaching could certainly be grasped from a careful study of a few series of talks. Mary Lutyens raised an obvious question:

Why do the same people come back year after year to hear him speak, especially as he is not saying anything spectacularly different from what he has been saying for years at countless meetings all over the world?  
(Lutyens, 1983:167)

The answer is perhaps that those who look carefully find that their psychological states are multi-faceted and deep-rooted: they cannot be resolved at first sight. People who were interested in pursuing an introspective inquiry felt Krishnamurti's meditations and physical presence were in some way conducive to the process of self-discovery. They wanted to return to his talks time and again to be close to the teacher. Some people I interviewed spoke of a feeling of bliss, communion, understanding, light or insight generated by his talks. He seemed able to create a sense of clarity and psychological problems seemed to be clearly illumined and explained under his scrutiny, while his spontaneity brought a freshness to each talk. Shringy, for example, experienced his teachings as a form of meditation:

Krishnamurti's talk is not merely a lecture to be intellectually followed, relished, accepted or rejected and commented over in conversation, but a process of being in meditation, of self-discovery. (Shringy, 1977:13)

The greater part of the talks were concerned with an exploration and discussion of the state of the world and the human psyche. As many religious teachers have done throughout the ages, he warned against the dangerous decadence and corruption of the world. Especially towards the end of his life he warned that humanity was in a very serious crisis and that there might soon be major catastrophes. The outward signs of the crisis were violence, wars, famine, oppression, illiteracy, corruption, poverty and other problems of civilisation.

But Krishnamurti was adamant that these aspects of the crisis were manifestations of the corruption in human consciousness, and that they could never be resolved by political or social action alone. [2] The first step in a transformation of the situation would have to be a transformation of consciousness, which would first happen at the individual level. [3]

When discussing how humanity might resolve the predicament, his views were unusual and differentiate him from most other teachers. He dismissed all systems of worship, prayer, psycho-analysis and meditation practices as essentially part of cultural conditioning. He also warned against following those who claimed spiritual authority and against any kind of guru-disciple relationship. He suggested that all these traditional practices have merely made people dull and dependent, and that adherence to them could not be liberating.

Instead, he insisted that each individual must live a life based on deep inquiry. Each person should examine his/her own conditioning, his/her own behaviour, especially in personal relationships, being alert to the processes of fantasy and the demand for pleasure. Most of his talks were primarily concerned with a discussion of psychological states. It is in this area that Krishnamurti made many of his most penetrating and useful observations, discussing factors such as violence, greed, desire, anger, the destructive consequences of behaviour patterns.

Usually in the final talk of a series he would discuss religion, death and meditation. Here the religious background to his teaching was apparent and he would bear witness to the transcendent, to the existence of an absolute love and intelligence. The talks were not a secular activity of psychological exploration but 'an affirmation of his religious vision, which included the transformation of the whole of humanity:

It is not an individual movement and his salvation. It is the salvation, if you like to use that word, of the

whole of man's consciousness...can this consciousness undergo a radical change? That is the question. Not escape into the supposed divine, not escape. Because when we understand this change in consciousness the divine is there, you don't have to seek it. (AI:111)

In short, in each series of talks Krishnamurti gave what he considered to be a conceptually accurate account of the human condition and of the factors which keep human beings bound in this condition. He insisted that there is a liberated state, that an individual can immediately start to live a religious life, and that this liberation is the only answer to humanity's problems. [4] These topics also served as a pretext for a more profound communication. Whichever issue he considered, he constantly stressed the need for the right approach to it, the necessity for free, unprejudiced inquiry. More important than the conceptual framework is the generation of a sceptical, passionate, unbiased outlook, a holistic awareness. His talks were not meant to provide solutions to particular problems, but to teach an approach that can resolve any problem. [5]

A further consideration, which must remain speculative, is that Krishnamurti may have generated a powerful energy which affected his audiences. As described earlier (1.2), he frequently felt a sense of benediction or ecstasy, and it was perhaps this which was in some indefinable way communicated to the audiences. Many listeners, including myself, felt a clarity of perception when in his presence which is not felt at other times. Krishnamurti often stressed the importance of non-verbal communication and his talks may be viewed as a vehicle for this. He suggested that, although verbal explanations might be useful in a limited way, it is only love that can break through human conditioning. Perhaps his audiences responded in an important but indefinable way to the presence of a liberated man who acted as a catalyst for their understanding. [6]

The following four sections examine Krishnamurti's teaching on a number of key topics. An analytical approach is useful for the

present purpose, but it should be remembered that it will not convey the original impact of the teachings: Krishnamurti's personal presence and the spontaneous quality of the talks made them quite different from a conceptual reconstruction. Nevertheless his ideas are interesting in their own right and essential to an evaluation of his life's work.

## 2.2 FREEING THE CONDITIONED MIND

### 2.2.1 Conditioning

Krishnamurti characterized human consciousness and individual human beings as conditioned, not free. He used the term 'conditioned' to mean influenced, imposed upon, determined, bound. It describes a consciousness which has specific, mechanical modes of operation caused by pressures which are often unrecognized or misunderstood. Krishnamurti maintained that the human brain is to a large extent programmed like a computer and that most people view the world in a distorted way, spending their lives in solely mechanical procedures dictated by their particular programmes. As with other topics, he did not provide a fixed, once-for-all definition of the term, but rather encouraged listeners to come to an immediate, intuitive grasp of the conditioned nature of their own attitudes and beliefs.

He described conditioning as a self-perpetuating process handed down with modifications through the generations. He gave no clear answer as to how it arose in the first place, but speculated that the human psyche, evolving through adaptation and competition, had acquired deep-rooted traumas and fears, leading to a desperate urge to find security [7]:

Our brains are very old. They have evolved through countless experiences, accidents, death, and the continuity of the flowering of the brain has been going on for millenia. It has varieties of capacities, is ever active, moving, living in its own memories and anxieties, full of fear, anxiety and sorrow. This is the everlasting cycle it has lived - the passing

pleasures and incessant activity. In this long process it has been conditioning itself. (LS2:50)

Whatever its origins, Krishnamurti argued that people in contemporary society were totally dominated by various forms of conditioning. The most obvious forms he referred to as outer or superficial conditioning, which includes the belief-systems, ideologies and behaviour patterns of particular castes, classes, nationalities, political parties, religious movements and other groups.

All human beings are born into a particular culture and are influenced to some extent by its values, beliefs and practices. Further, Krishnamurti constantly pointed out, we have an apparently overpowering urge to identify with, or to be psychologically involved with, some kind of group. We agree to accept its belief systems and behaviour patterns. Even when a person reacts against one group he/she usually joins another. This kind of involvement, which Krishnamurti considered a form of tribalism, is a universal phenomenon which has resulted in a multitude of irreconcilable world-views. Krishnamurti explained many of the divisions and conflicts in contemporary society by referring to this kind of blind allegiance to groups and ideologies. Most people's world-views are not based on reason, moral conviction or carefully considered choice, but are merely the result of cultural conditioning.

In this context, Krishnamurti often pointed out particular examples when he spoke in different countries. In India he would mention superstitious practices, corruption and caste-prejudice; in the USA the demand for material possessions and sensory stimulation. He clearly and forcefully demanded that his listeners seriously examine their own attitudes and behaviour to discover to what extent they were blindly following established patterns:

It is fairly obvious how we are superficially conditioned by the culture, the society, the propaganda around us, and also by nationality, by a particular



religion, by education and through environmental influences...

Why do we accept the conditioning? Why has the mind allowed itself to be conditioned? What is the factor behind it all? Why do I, born in a certain country and culture, calling myself a Hindu, with all the superstition and tradition imposed by the family, the society, accept such conditioning? (IQ:63 -64)

In addition to this outer form of conditioning, Krishnamurti also discussed deeper and more subtle forms, including feelings about the nature of thought and the self. These feelings may not have such an immediately and obviously fragmentary impact on society as, for example, political divisions, but they are an intrinsic part of the overall conditioning of the mind. Krishnamurti seemed to feel that some people at least would be willing to lay aside the cruder forms of nationalistic or sectarian prejudice and thereby be able to approach the question of psychological transformation. But even these people might be unaware of the less obvious forms of conditioning which would then dominate their psyche. He regarded this deeper conditioning as the main obstacle to psychological revolution and therefore accorded it great importance in his talks. He felt it was particularly necessary to discuss the deeper conditioning because attempts to eradicate it - such as systems of meditation or psychoanalysis - were themselves culturally conditioned and inevitably ineffectual. [8] He argued that the only possibility of achieving freedom from conditioning was through a process of inquiry and ultimately a sudden transformation of consciousness (see 2.2.3 and 2.2.4).

On the whole Krishnamurti's criticism of sectarian attitudes is to be welcomed: prejudice, blind adherence to groups and dogmatic thinking are obviously destructive phenomena. The proposition that people are heavily conditioned can certainly stimulate a sense of self-inquiry and may be thought-provoking for listeners/readers who have never seriously considered their own background. However, Krishnamurti's discussion of conditioning lacks philosophical

subtlety and he did not seem aware that some of his propositions are open to serious doubt. He used the concept of conditioning as a catch-all, self-evident explanation for human behaviour, presumably having adopted the term from behaviourist psychology: although there are obviously fundamental differences between Krishnamurti and the behaviourists there are also some interesting parallels. The behaviourist psychologist B.F. Skinner's following statement, although using different language, could well be endorsed by Krishnamurti: 'a person is not an originating agent; he is a locus, a point at which many genetic and environmental conditions come together in a joint effect' (Skinner, 1974: 168). In his later years, Krishnamurti also made use of analogies with computers, restating the concept of conditioning with metaphors from technology. The implication remained the same: people are helpless robots.

However, the concept of conditioning as a general explanation for human behaviour has been subjected to detailed criticism, for example by the philosopher D.C. Dennett (1984:passim). Briefly, the concept seems based on too simple and mechanical a view of human nature. It is true that some human beings appear totally dominated by the culture in which they live, but it is also the case that people grow, change and develop. They engage in creative activities and often transcend the limits of the culture in which they were nurtured. Further, the use of the computer analogy is outdated and inappropriate: human beings have far more sophisticated and flexible responses than any computer so far developed. Krishnamurti's argument is in need of serious qualification to make it less simplistic and dogmatic.

Besides discussing the nature of conditioning, Krishnamurti often stressed the importance of observing its destructive consequences. First, it causes a distorted, prejudiced outlook. A person who is involved in a particular belief-system is unable to observe clearly and freely. He/she will inevitably be influenced by the values and tenets of the system. Naturally it would be particularly hard for a

person to see the short-comings of his/her own preferred outlook, particularly if he/she identifies with a group laying claim to revealed or absolute truth.

Secondly, when responses and actions are conditioned people respond to situations according to a familiar pattern. This pattern may be set by society, by reading or by other influences. For Krishnamurti a characteristic of the conditioned mind is that it is invariably rooted in the past, the old, the known, and therefore cannot respond fully to life which is always new, constantly changing and presenting fresh situations. This tends to lead to a mechanical and repetitive approach to life. Responses to problems become stereotyped, limited and temporary. In this context, Krishnamurti referred frequently to the example of politicians, who may react in a conditioned way to the very complex questions that face them. Their reactions are only partial solutions which tend to defer and modify problems rather than solve them (see 8.2).

Thirdly, the conditioning may be so extreme that it leads to hatred and violence. Conditioning accepts and strengthens the divisions between nationalities, races and sects. This produces such strong feelings that people are led to condone or perpetrate violence on members of a different group; the violence may also be approved and encouraged by religious or national authorities. Krishnamurti was a life-long pacifist, having lived through both world wars and the horrors of partition in India, and deplored all forms of organised violence.

Finally, Krishnamurti discussed the question of knowledge as a factor of conditioning. He drew a distinction between knowledge and intelligence, in earlier years using the terms understanding or wisdom for the latter. He used the term 'intelligence' to refer to an intuitive mode of understanding that transcends normal, everyday consciousness (see 2.2.4); knowledge he considered a form of memory, necessary for technical and practical purposes. It is the outcome of experience and experiment, stored either in the brain or in books

and computers. Krishnamurti admired some of the achievements of modern technology and valued the possibility of better material welfare. He acknowledged without hesitation the necessity of teaching technical subjects in his schools.

However, he did warn against an over-emphasis on knowledge. Technological skill is important, but should not be allowed to dominate society while the quality of human life deteriorates. Krishnamurti identified several problems associated with knowledge which he felt had to be faced by modern society. First, knowledge is closely related to the past, to memory, and may condition the brain to look for solutions to problems according to established patterns instead of allowing the mind to come to new insights. In this respect it has similarities with belief-systems. This may not be too detrimental in the technological field but it can be destructive in human relationships. Secondly, it might lead to arrogance or a sense of power, as some individuals, classes and countries are able to use knowledge to exploit others. Thirdly, knowledge may so dominate a culture that people are uninterested or unable to consider a holistic approach to life. Krishnamurti's critique of the over-emphasis on technical knowledge is considered further in 3.3.

Altogether, Krishnamurti's use of the term conditioning can perhaps best be understood as a modern restatement of an ancient religious theme: the unfree nature of human existence and the need for transcendence. The presentation of human existence as unfree, full of suffering and otherwise unsatisfactory is of course widespread in religious traditions, particularly so in India (Nakamura, 1964: 161) and certainly a paradigm for understanding the human condition with which Krishnamurti would have been familiar from his youth. His discussions of conditioning reveal many of his strengths and weaknesses as a thinker. He was not concerned with details of philosophical argument and showed little interest in precision of concepts or terminology. His statements about human nature can be criticised as too simplistic and one-dimensional. However, the main

thrust of his argument conveys a lesson that is surely of the greatest importance in contemporary society. He demanded of his audience that they confront their own prejudices and behaviour patterns in a critical spirit; every individual should seriously question his/her attitudes and not merely adopt received values. An important aspect of Krishnamurti's work was his ability to raise people's awareness, and, if attention is paid to its limitations, his treatment of the concept of conditioning can be a stimulus to self-observation.

### 2.2.2 Psychological observations

One of Krishnamurti's great strengths as a teacher was an ability to make his general observations focus down to the individual level. He had a very sharp perception of psychological states and great insight into feelings such as fear, desire, resentment and anger. Many of his most illuminating talks discussed such feelings and indicated how a person could learn about, and eventually transcend, psychological difficulties. He felt that a deep understanding of the psyche was a precondition for any religious inquiry and so devoted many of his talks to an exploration of these subjects. Such exploration was also an important theme in the interviews he conducted with thousands of individuals who came to him for advice, and through publications such as *Commentaries on Living* one can see Krishnamurti's acute insight into his visitors' problems.

According to Nakamura (1964:152), the dominant trend in Indian thought has been to encourage spiritual-introspective-subjective studies at the expense of material-external-objective ones. Experimental physical sciences failed to flourish in India until recently, while even in classical times much progress was made in humanistic and introspective fields such as linguistics and metaphysics. One area of study which developed a sophistication unknown in the west was reflective psychology, the analysis of states of mind after periods of contemplation and meditation, with

the intention of transcending passions and attaining serenity of mind. Krishnamurti certainly owed much to this tradition and again his work is in some ways a restatement of old ideas. However, I find that his observations on psychology do make a unique contribution: in particular his paradigm for understanding rigidity in thought and the breakdown in relationships seems useful. I believe that few people could study his thought without gaining new insights into human nature.

To avoid confusion, it should be stated that when discussing Krishnamurti's contribution to psychology, I am referring to introspective, reflective psychology. In the west, at least as far as academic studies are concerned, reflective psychology has been almost entirely supplanted by the rise of experimental psychology which strongly doubts the value of introspection. Psychology departments in most universities are typically interested only in factors that can be quantified and tested by empirical studies. Krishnamurti has nothing to offer in this area.

Nevertheless, in the west there is a strong current of interest in the introspective understanding of emotional states and the structure of the psyche. Although almost entirely ignored by academic psychologists, thinkers such as Jung, Fromm and the humanist psychologists are still widely studied. Millions of people are afflicted by depression and other psychological disturbances and it seems unlikely that experimental psychology could produce therapies that will obviate the need for self-understanding. Of course, the west also has a rich tradition of reflective psychology which includes figures of the stature of Socrates and Spinoza, and Krishnamurti's approach does not seem totally foreign to a western audience.

There are four areas where Krishnamurti frequently discussed the operation of conditioning in the individual and the psychological states that arose as a consequence: in nationalist prejudice (in the widest sense); in personal relationships; in the self-image; and in

ideologies and religions. It is obviously extremely important ground for a contemporary thinker to consider, as these four areas lead to an enormous amount of suffering and confusion in the world. Many major conflicts have nationalistic, sectarian and/or ideological aspects, while in personal life many people are involved with difficult relationships and uncertainties about themselves, leading to all sorts of phenomena from divorces and depression to drug abuse and violence.

As we saw above, Krishnamurti considered nationalism, in the sense of identification with any group, as one of the major causes of social conflict. In his analysis, a person tends to form emotionally charged images for or against certain groups of people, be they nations or football teams. This process is clearly encouraged by the propaganda of the totalitarian states. In pluralist societies too people are encouraged to adopt this way of thinking, which is inherently divisive, but also expected to stop short of violence except in times of war. There is little awareness that this way of thinking inevitably breeds hostility. [9]

Apart from such group images, Krishnamurti constantly pointed out the dangers of constructing images about individual people, especially intimate friends or family. Typically he would give the example of husband and wife. After repeated emotional encounters, a man may form an image about his wife, for example to the effect that she is thoughtless and uncaring. He will then treat her as such and expect her to respond in a thoughtless and uncaring way. At the same time the wife will have built up negative images about the husband, and the end result will probably be a perpetuation of the established relationship. Krishnamurti suggested that most people live in a world of images and that most human relationships are dominated by these images. He contrasted this with the possibility of approaching a person afresh each time, without the scars of the past, which would allow for freedom and creativity in the relationship. The corruption of relationship which is felt so

acutely at international levels exists right at the core of society in intimate personal affairs.

Perhaps the most tenacious image is that which each person has about him/herself. Particularly in modern western societies, conditioning has crystallised into a wide-spread attitude of self-interest, with each person fundamentally concerned about him/herself, his/her success and fulfilment. This striving for personal advantage, according to Krishnamurti, forms the basic fabric of society:

If one is observant, one can see that our whole activity is self-centred. We are thinking about ourselves endlessly: about our health, that we must meditate, that we must change; we want a better job, with more money, a better relationship. "I want to attain enlightenment" "I must achieve something in this life"- "me" and "my life", my worries, my problems. This eternal preoccupation with oneself is going on all the time; we are devoted to ourselves. (AI:332)

Marriage and other close relationships are corrupted by self interest. Two partners may struggle for dominance, either overtly, or by underhand means while preserving a superficial harmony. Despite a certain degree of affection, each is conditioned to view any situation from a selfish standpoint and some degree of conflict is inevitable. Education is also affected. From an early age children are praised for success in competitions and later for good examination results. They are not usually encouraged to consider the well-being of all their class-mates, of the whole school or of the world at large. At the same time, many teachers are primarily concerned with their own careers and salaries, which inevitably leads to some indifference towards the children under their care.

Krishnamurti did not so much express moral judgement against this as try to show how self-interest pervades every aspect of society, and how it inevitably leads to indifference towards others, if not open conflict. Marriages may become increasingly tense as each partner feels his/her own interests suffering while their partner's flourish. Business and politics are dominated by groups in constant



competition and even idealist reformist movements eventually succumb to the corrupting influences of the rise to power.

The doctrine that selfishness lies at the root of evil is accepted by many schools of Buddhism and Hinduism. For example *The Gospel of Buddha*, a book which Krishnamurti studied in his youth, states:

Self begets selfishness. There is no evil but what flows from self. There is no wrong but what is done by the assertion of the self. Self is the beginning of all hatred...of oppression and bloodshed...Self entices with pleasures...but its fading beauty kindles the flames of desires that never can be satisfied. (Carus, 1981:5)

Once again, Krishnamurti's views may be traced back to traditional ideas, but he presented them in a forceful way that seemed meaningful to contemporary audiences. As with conditioning, the most important aspect of his discussion of self was its penetrating quality - as a member of the audience, one did not feel one was acquiring further information or a technical analysis of selfhood; rather one felt uncomfortable as if having one's hidden motives exposed, and shamed into revising one's priorities.

One of the most controversial aspects of Krishnamurti's teaching was his sweeping dismissal of all ideologies and organized religions, which he saw as 'the frozen thought of man' (LG:10), structures of ideas and images rooted in the past. According to him, one of humanity's great errors was to hope that these ideological structures could improve the quality of life. He argued that in fact they were factors of confusion, fascinating and deceptive, and often warned against the many illusions and traps of self-deceit occasioned by religious and ideological images: 'thought is crooked because it can invent anything and see things that are not there. It can perform the most extraordinary tricks, and therefore it cannot be depended on' (FK:102).

Finally on this point, Krishnamurti pointed out that it is a common reaction in our culture to turn to other people to resolve problems for us. For him this is a fundamental mistake: in turning to an external authority we abdicate our responsibility. We hope that we will be helped by the ideas of philosophers, priests or psychologists, but in fact this leads only to dependency on other people's ideas:

Ideas have become far more important to us than action - ideas so cleverly expressed in books by the intellectuals in every field. The more cunning, the more subtle those ideas are, the more we worship them and the books that contain them. We are those books, we are those ideas, so heavily conditioned are we by them. (FK:103)

Krishnamurti contrasted this with his own position by questioning the importance of the whole edifice of ideas, the validity of all thought structures. As we shall see in the next two sections, he felt it was only when the mind was free from all confusion, no longer caught in the malfunctioning of thought, that it might be open to a new and totally different dimension which he termed intelligence.

### 2.2.3 Inquiry

Krishnamurti upheld the necessity of free investigation at all levels, the urgent importance of questioning every belief. Freedom, for Krishnamurti, starts from deep and patient inquiry that takes nothing for granted. This inquiry should not be limited to certain topics but include all aspects of living: it should be a fundamental attitude towards all ideas and behaviour. It is noteworthy that Krishnamurti particularly urged listeners to treat his own teaching in the same way, to examine it critically, not to accept it because of his own prestige or persuasiveness.

Two aspects of this inquiry are particularly important. First one must understand the extent to which one's own thinking and behaviour are conditioned by one's social, genetic and cultural background. All forms of religious belief are to be doubted, even if the believer feels his beliefs to have been validated by religious experiences. Krishnamurti frequently pointed out that part of the activity of consciousness is to project images and then experience them as realities, be it in everyday life or in religious practices. He considered such experiences misleading and confusing, even if they produced temporary comfort, euphoria or paranormal phenomena. Likewise he felt that all ideological, political and philosophical systems should be deeply questioned. In this context he often used words such as inquire, explore, investigate, observe, and contrasted them with what he perceived to be the attitude of many religious traditions: accept, obey, follow.

Krishnamurti was particularly scathing when discussing the attitudes of some Christian or Marxist sects which demand faith in unverifiable dogma. He often pointed out their history of intolerance and consequent persecution of those who refused to obey. He was equally critical of Indian schools that based themselves on scriptural authority but occasionally spoke favourably of the more sceptical approach of Buddhist or Upanishadic philosophies which enjoin each disciple to find out the truth for himself. [10]

In this respect he shared the view of an important minority in Indian religious thought. Most schools of philosophy in India have accepted the words of scripture as absolute authority and there has been a strong tendency towards blind acceptance of the doctrines expounded in revered texts (Nakamura, 1964: 128). However, there has also been a strong minority of freethinkers and teachers who insisted on the importance of the individual search for truth. There are examples of this attitude in *The Gospel of Buddha*, and also in thinkers of the Vedanta school: for example the *hetu-vidya* school of logic considered the sacred texts and the sayings of great sages as unreliable sources of knowledge (Nakamura, 1964:211). It

seems that Krishnamurti was influenced by this tradition, and also by western scepticism after his exposure to thinkers such as Russell and Nietzsche. It was perhaps the combination of these two streams of critical thinking enabled him to cast off the doctrines of his youth.

This advocacy of freedom at all levels of inquiry is undoubtedly an important characteristic of Krishnamurti's approach. In my personal experience, it seemed like a breath of fresh air among spiritual teachings and it came as a sense of relief to find a religious teacher who took nothing as unchallengeable. For Krishnamurti, everything was open to question. He did not accept the authority of any scriptures, the words of any teachers or the doctrines of any organisation. I met several people at Krishnamurti's meetings who had previously had a difficult struggle to find psychological independence from a particular religious movement. They felt that contact with Krishnamurti had been of great benefit: deep critical inquiry, even the rejection of long-standing beliefs, was legitimate. One could be critical, sceptical of traditions, unwilling to accept saviours, and yet pursue a religious inquiry. This did not mean abandoning spirituality but rather a deepening sense of honesty. At times the process could be rather disturbing, as people lost a cherished belief, but the overall effect was liberating. The sceptical outlook was an important factor in Krishnamurti's attraction for many people.

This fundamental orientation seems to me a considerable achievement on Krishnamurti's part. In the environment in which he grew up, every sort of superstition was current. Some theosophists believed in spirit masters and clairvoyant experiences, others pursued investigations in occult chemistry, others were concerned about black magic and possession by dark forces. On the more philosophical side, some believed in reincarnation, others in karma, some in Christianity, others in Hinduism (Nethercot, 1963:passim). Reading theosophical literature one is struck by the credulity, the lack of critical awareness. It would have been extremely easy for

Krishnamurti to fall into the role which was prepared for him and had he co-operated there is no doubt that thousands of people would have been delighted to accept him as a new saviour.

It was perhaps precisely the fanciful ideas of some theosophists that made Krishnamurti acutely aware of the dangers of too credulous or uncritical an outlook. His contention was that inquiry could make a person aware of the conditioned, divisive and limiting nature of fixed modes of thinking. Such an awareness would lead to a demand for freedom. Typically he would outline a critique of belief-systems in general, and then ask listeners if they could find out for themselves whether or not it was possible to be free of conditioning:

One can see how political and religious beliefs, national and various other types of belief, do separate people, do create conflict, confusion and antagonism - which is an obvious fact; and yet we are unwilling to give them up...Is it possible to live in this world without a belief - not change beliefs, not substitute one belief for another, but be entirely free from all beliefs, so that one meets life anew each minute?  
(PKR:34-35)

As well as being sceptical of belief systems, one must constantly observe one's interactions with other people: 'relationship, surely, is the mirror in which you discover yourself' (PKR:76). Human relationships occupy a special place in Krishnamurti's philosophy. One cannot come to a deep understanding of the mind by observing it in isolation, sitting in a corner as it were. On the contrary, one should be involved in intimate, natural human relationships. Krishnamurti tended to dismiss formalised or rigidly controlled relationships such as guru/disciple or abbot/monk. One can best understand the human psyche not by mysterious practices as a hermit but by observing how one lives in daily life in relationship to others:

I exist only in relationship to people, things and ideas, and in studying my relationship to outward things and people, as well as to inward things, I begin to understand myself. Every other form of

understanding is merely an abstraction and I cannot study myself in abstraction; I am not an abstract entity; therefore I have to study myself in actuality - as I am, not as I wish to be. (FK:22)

Krishnamurti pointed out that this observation did not imply a process of acquiring information about oneself, which would produce an accumulation of knowledge or a series of self-images; nor did he mean that one should lead a self-indulgent, introspective existence. Rather, one should live with an intense awareness from moment to moment: 'the understanding of oneself is not a result, a culmination; it is seeing oneself from moment to moment in the mirror of relationship' (PKR:27).

More generally, Krishnamurti stressed the necessity of observing everything in one's life, subjecting it to a penetrating examination: emotional reactions, thoughts and images, diet and exercise, family life. Krishnamurti's approach involves scrutiny of concepts and ideas because life includes thinking, but it also includes scrutiny of areas of life which are considered outside the parameters of conceptual philosophy. As well as his insistence on the possibility of transformation and the awakening to the sacred, we can identify two ways in which Krishnamurti differs from the mainstream of western philosophy: an emphasis on life as a whole rather than intellectual concerns and an emphasis on awareness rather than thought.

Krishnamurti often discussed the vital importance of awareness and observation. As soon as thinking takes place, the purity of observation is lost and all sorts of conditioned responses take place: like and dislike, identification and rejection. Krishnamurti maintained that awareness, on the contrary, does not depend on thought. It is new from moment to moment, like 'life itself. Awareness is free from prejudice, undistorted, independent: 'choiceless awareness is non-political; it does not belong to any 'ism'; it is not the product of thought' (SPKR:64). Krishnamurti

suggested that the solution of human problems may lie, not in the complexity of thought but in the simplicity of awareness:

After all, if you want to understand something, you have to be in a passive mood, don't you? You cannot keep on thinking about it, speculating about it or questioning it. You have to be sensitive enough to receive the content of it. It is like being a sensitive photographic plate. If I want to understand you I have to be passively aware: then you begin to tell me your story. (PKR:68-69)

Awareness, then, is passive, sensitive, non-judgemental, non-accumulative and not based on the past. It allows clear perception and can lead to holistic and orderly action.

Krishnamurti suggested that inquiry through such awareness would lead to order and sensitivity in daily life, for example sensitivity towards the natural world, care about health, diet and exercise, the avoidance of conflict in relationships. This natural order would be significantly different from an imposed order. He felt that all daily routines, all programmes set by an outside authority to establish rules about living, were extremely destructive: 'the practice, the method, the system in our daily life make for a matter of routine, a repetitive action and so a mechanical mind' (LS1:16). The order produced by observation, by contrast, is natural, free and spontaneous.

Krishnamurti never predicted where awareness might lead, or what sort of life might result, as any such prediction would be unnecessary and a distraction to present awareness. However, he did suggest in general terms that a life lived on this basis would be peaceful, harmonious and creative:

If we can understand ourselves as we are from moment to moment without the process of accumulation, then we shall see how there comes a tranquillity that is not a product of the mind, a tranquillity that is neither imagined nor cultivated; and only in that state of tranquillity can there be creativeness. (PKR:28)

Awareness as a theme has not attracted much attention from western thinkers, but it is discussed in some detail by Adam Curle in his *Mystics and Militants* (Curle, 1972). Curle's discussion provides an interesting contrast to Krishnamurti. He distinguishes between several kinds of awareness and sketches the effects on people's lives and behaviour of the various modes. To simplify his argument, we may say that people with a low level of awareness have what Curle calls 'a strong belonging-identity': they fabricate a sense of identity or self-hood only by reference to the particular group to which they belong, or to their own possessions; in Krishnamurti's terms, they are heavily conditioned. Such people are likely to be aggressive when their sense of belonging is threatened and represent a conservative or reactionary force in society.

[In states of low awareness] people have little understanding of their motives, their actions, or the sources of their feelings...To be unaware also means to live on the surface, to ignore what lies below the top level of consciousness...But, of course, to deny awareness of the inner life does not make it go away. It means, paradoxically, that we are the more likely to be dominated by it. (Curle, 1972:14)

At higher levels of awareness, people become more objective about themselves, more balanced and less prejudiced. Emotions interfere less with perceptions. 'People are met in their own right rather than as potential threats or supports to another individual's tender psyche' (Curle, 1972:18). At still higher levels of awareness, called self-conscious and supraliminal by Curle, there may be religious or mystical experiences.

In his discussion on how higher states of awareness may be achieved, Curle has some suggestions that are reminiscent of Krishnamurti:

However we set about raising the level of our awareness, there is one essential thing: *we must at all times try to remember who we are.* This is the fundamental exercise in awareness. We must look at ourselves, feel ourselves as we act in various ways, or talk, or move, or even think...we must, in a sense, locate ourselves in the universe. (Curle, 1972: 100)



Curle's argument in broad terms is very similar to Krishnamurti's. Both point out the shortcomings of what Curle calls belonging-identity. Both see the possibility of higher levels of awareness, and both find that methods to achieve it are of only limited use, Curle urging caution and Krishnamurti rejecting them altogether.

However, their underlying perspective differs. Curle's background is in development, psychology and peace studies, although he also has a knowledge of oriental philosophies and religions. He seems to hope that many of those who achieve higher levels of awareness will become involved in social and political movements working for a more equal peaceful society. Krishnamurti on the other hand was firmly established in a religious vision of the world and despite the rational elements in his work was essentially concerned with a transcendence to see whether humanity can undergo a radical transformation which leads to communion with the Absolute. It is interesting that until this point, our discussion of Krishnamurti's teachings could be conducted in terms quite acceptable to secular, non-religious thinkers. The focus on reflective psychology, the description of human nature and the insistence on sceptical inquiry and awareness all find echoes in the writings of non-religious psychologists and philosophers. But we now turn to an area where Krishnamurti clearly differs from secular thinkers.

#### 2 2 4 Religion

A fundamental feature of Krishnamurti's teaching was the assertion that there can be an immediate, total revolution in the psyche. He referred to this many times, terming it variously mutation of the brain, psychological revolution, regeneration of consciousness, transformation and radical change. It is a change from within, free and spontaneous. Such a transformation would entail a different mode of functioning of the brain, a totally new way of life. Krishnamurti never spelt out details of what would happen after the transformation, but indicated that a transformed person would live a

life without conflict, full of freedom, love and a sense of the divine.

The transformation, he suggested, would occur first at the individual level - by implication, probably among those who were involved with his teachings and schools. Then the impact of these individuals' transformation would be felt at the level of the collective human consciousness. His vision of transformation includes both the individual and society. He regarded it as far more significant than political or social revolutions which, in his view, merely impose a modified social structure on a population of conditioned individuals. No matter how utopian in conception, such structures quickly fall prey to the self-seeking and corruption of the untransformed mind. The transformation of consciousness would lead to the regeneration of society.

Transformation in Krishnamurti's teaching involves two main factors: freedom from conditioning and contact with a transcendent dimension. He would ask his audiences if they could be free from all conditioning instantly. This was a call for direct insight into the totality of the self, human consciousness, conditioning and conflict. As in other areas, Krishnamurti usually proceeded by raising questions rather than by detailing answers:

How is one to examine it [consciousness], how is one to expose the whole content of it? Is it to be done bit by bit, slowly, gradually? - or is it to be exposed totally and understood instantly, and thereby the whole analytical process comes to an end? (AI:60)

According to Krishnamurti, insight into the human condition could lead to some sort of relationship with a transcendent dimension, an Absolute. Krishnamurti usually qualified his statements on this by saying that the Absolute, which he sometimes referred to as 'the other', was essentially ineffable. He preferred to refer to it in negative terms: the timeless, the unknown, the immeasurable. Despite the radical distinction between human consciousness and 'the

other', there can nevertheless be some relationship between the two. 'The other' can be a living factor in human affairs and in this context Krishnamurti introduced the term 'intelligence' to refer to the action of the sacred in the world. [111]

It was a rhetorical or literary technique of Krishnamurti to take a word in common usage - for example learning, seeing or intelligence - and to give it a more profound or extended meaning which still retained a connection with the ordinary sense of the term. The intelligence of which he spoke is not entirely devoid of connection with scientific or artistic insight or intelligence, for example the ability to perceive order and beauty. But intelligence is not to be confused with intellect or knowledge; it is a faculty of understanding in a completely different dimension from everyday consciousness. It is non-personal and atemporal. It perceives truth and reality, accurately and completely. It is free from illusion. It is secure in itself and makes no demands. It is not separate from love and freedom. While conditioned responses are inevitably fragmentary and inadequate, the action of intelligence is always holistic. Krishnamurti seemed to feel that his talks served to facilitate the awakening of this intelligence, which would then serve as the bridge between the known and the unknown.

Krishnamurti made no attempt to prove or logically demonstrate the existence of this intelligence. His statements are based on his own experience and have an axiomatic rather than philosophical quality:

Insight is supreme intelligence, and this intelligence employs thought as a tool. Insight is intelligence with its beauty and love. They are really inseparable; they are actually one. This is the whole which is most sacred. (LS1:49)

The very nature of intelligence is sensitivity, and this sensitivity is love. Without this intelligence there can be no compassion. (LS1:90)

Krishnamurti suggested that factors which might contribute to the awakening of intelligence were awareness and order in daily life,

including harmony between mind and body, and insight into the factors of conditioning. He also emphasized that mental states such as desire, hope and volition, or effort of any kind, could not bring about this awakening. On the contrary, intelligence, if it comes, will do so naturally and of its own accord; there is nothing a person can do to invite it or pursue it. Intelligence is non-predictable and acausal.

Krishnamurti was particularly insistent that his teaching was different from that of organised religions. It is important to make the distinction clear because he described his own teachings as 'essentially religious' (TKC:6) and regarded his schools as 'centres for learning a way of life which [is based on]...the sacredness of a religious life' (LS1:84); on the other hand he was always critical of organised religions and religious traditions. [12]

It is the experiencing of reality that is religion and it does not lie through any organised belief, through any church, through any knowledge either Eastern or Western. Religion is the capacity of experiencing directly that which is immeasurable, that which cannot be put into words. (OT1950:44)

His main objections to organized religions were that they are divisive, hypocritical, exploitative, authoritarian and have no contact with the divine: 'calling yourself a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a Christian, accepting certain traditions, dogmas, beliefs - has all this got anything to do with religion? Obviously not' (LA:98). This criticism was repeated on many occasions: religions are a social imposition of belief-systems which condition and perhaps comfort the mind. They are particularly damaging because people are deceived by the rituals, ceremonies and hierarchies and make no effort to inquire further.

This is an area where Krishnamurti's observations seem simplistic and at times close to outright prejudice. It is certainly true to say that some religious organisations have been divisive, exploitative and responsible for atrocities. Nevertheless there is

also a great deal of evidence to suggest that religious movements have contributed to social justice, personal integration and a sense of meaningfulness in life. One can point to the atrocities of the Inquisition, but also to educational and charitable work, philosophies and ideals that have improved the welfare of millions of people all over the world. Does Krishnamurti's one-dimensional approach lower one's opinion of him? This question will be addressed in the final section of this chapter (2.4).

Krishnamurti sharply disassociated himself from formal religions in part because of their structures and their role as authorities, but he also differed from much religious speculation in his discussion of the sacred. Many religions tend to place the divine in some sphere away from everyday life - in heaven, saviours, visions or prayers - and to treat the divine as an agency outside the human mind. They also make extensive use of symbolism and imagery to discuss the divine.

Krishnamurti, on the other hand, emphasized both the immanence of the divine and its transcendence and ineffability. He rejected the use of symbolic language or art as a means of communication on religious matters and insisted on the need for personal experience not mediated by religious specialists or institutions. Many of his writings contain gentle transitions from descriptions of landscapes, skies, plants, animals and humans to a sense of divine presence. Religion is not to be sought in some unearthly realm, still less in churches or temples:

It is important not to divide life into the worldly and the non-worldly. It is important not to make the distinction between the worldly and the so-called religious...Without the beauty of the sky and the single tree on the hill, without that woman going by and that man riding the horse, life wouldn't be possible. We are concerned with the totality of life not a particular part of it which is considered religious in opposition to the rest. (SPKR:202)

The divine is not perceived as something outside or separate from the human mind. Rather, the transformed mind itself is sacred:

Can the mind transform itself? I know there are moments when it perceives reality, unbidden, unasked. At that moment the mind is the real. When the I is no longer struggling, consciously or unconsciously, no longer trying to become something, when the I is totally unaware of itself, at that moment, that state of worship, that state of reality is there. And so, the mind at that moment is the real, is God. (OT1953:29)

It would require a major study to elucidate the relationship between the immanent and the transcendent in Krishnamurti's work. Professor Weber suggests that:

Both [Shankara and Krishnamurti] teach that truth cannot be found in the world of nature, but only in the reality that lies behind or beyond nature. The transcendent, not the immanent face of reality is what interests them...This holds despite Krishnamurti's teaching that reality can be found *in the daily*, if we know how to look for it. Both he and Shankara represent a form of mysticism that is interested in nothing but ultimate union. (Weber, 1986: 225)

Given Krishnamurti's insistence on discovering the sacred in the world, this evaluation seems somewhat one-sided. But it is certain that Krishnamurti had a very strong sense of union, or communion, with an absolute that is eternal and which transcends the universe. It is the direct experience of this which for him is true religion. In other parts of Krishnamurti's work we found similarities with western ideas but here the resonance with Indian spiritual traditions is much stronger. A feature of certain schools of Indian religious thought that differs radically from the western tradition is that even the gods are regarded as being of no great significance compared to the Absolute. Vedanta and Buddhism, for example, tend to be impersonal and to proceed by negating all lower levels of awareness until the seeker finally reaches liberation, *moksha* or enlightenment, the ultimate goal of Indian religious endeavour (Organ, 1970:132-153; Nakamura, 1964:55). In his early talks, Krishnamurti was explicit in his call for transcendence:

If you would understand what I mean by the freedom of life, you must establish for yourself the goal, which is liberation from life itself. (EW III: 118)

Towards the end of his life he spoke of religion in terms of space, silence and detachment from thought, and emphasized the importance of negation. For example the reports of his public talks in 1977 bear titles such as: 'Out of negation comes the positive called love' and 'In negation the positive is born' (WL:150, 167). Krishnamurti was concerned above all with a mode of consciousness that transcends the ordinary, daily, empirical mind and leads to a sense of the divine:

That which is holy, which is sacred, which is truth, can only be when there is complete silence, when the brain itself has put thought in its right place. Out of that immense silence there is that which is sacred. Silence demands space, space in the whole structure of consciousness. (WL:145)

In our examination of Krishnamurti's work we have seen western and Indian strands of thought woven together. He came from a background of complex influences, travelled far more widely than any traditional Indian thinker and on the other hand was intimately familiar with Indian thinking in a way that few westerners have ever been. Moreover, his thought cannot be explained away by reference to influences: he was undoubtedly a powerful personality in his own right and achieved his own synthesis of ideas after many years of reflection, discussion and meditation. I therefore would have serious reservations about locating him in either the Indian or any western tradition and at first sight there seems to be no obvious context in which to examine his work. However in a recent study, *Transformative Philosophy: a study of Sankara, Fichte and Heidegger*, John Taber has argued that the intent to transform, to generate a new type of consciousness, has been an important current in the philosophical thought of various cultures. In the following section I will suggest that what Taber calls 'transformative philosophy' is a useful context in which to consider Krishnamurti's work.

### 2.3 TRANSFORMATIVE PHILOSOPHY

Taber argues that for some philosophers, 'philosophy has been not so much a quest for new ideas as a search for higher states of consciousness' (Taber, 1983:1). Taking Plato as his starting point, he indicates what this sort of philosophy entails:

He [Plato] exhorts us in his Republic to turn our faces towards the Good which shines like the sun in resplendent self-evidence. But this can be done only by tearing ourselves loose from the shackles that bind us in darkness, that is, by overcoming delusion. Thus Plato does not - indeed, he cannot - demonstrate the truth for us. He cannot deliver it to us in the form of a finished logical proof, but he does detail a program for cultivation of the spirit which, if followed, will enable one eventually to see the truth, not excogitate it...Fichte and Sankara are philosophers of this same breed...they are "transformative philosophers" as I shall call them, philosophers intent on effecting a total transformation in consciousness, the basic relationship between the knower and the things he knows. (Taber, 1983:1) [13]

Transformative philosophers are not primarily concerned with formal analysis or metaphysical constructs, but with awakening or liberating human beings. They have a practical, soteriological outlook. Taber suggests that a transformative philosophy will have at least some of the following constituents:

- 1) experience - a higher level of consciousness which is a precondition for the intelligibility of the system;
- 2) praxis - a method for cultivating this higher consciousness;
- 3) knowledge - a body of doctrine which constitutes the main topic of the system and articulates the experiential component; &
- 4) transformation - a dramatic and thorough rebirth resulting from this insight. (ibid:95)



The transcendent state of consciousness is experienced by these philosophers as something beyond and far more meaningful than empirical consciousness. They speak, not of new interpretations or new phenomena, nor of new concepts or new ways of proving them, but of another mode of consciousness, a state of mind completely different from the habitual. This claim tends to undermine a basic assumption of the mainstream of western philosophy, that our usual state of consciousness is the only possible, reasonable one. But as Taber says: 'there seem to be no formal grounds for judging other modes of experience or consciousness impossible' (ibid:102). Testimonies to the existence of a different mode of consciousness cannot be dismissed as a priori false or meaningless.

Taber discusses in particular Sankara, Fichte and Heidegger, and refers also to Plato. Other thinkers who come to mind as examples of this kind of philosophy are the Romantics and the Transcendentalists: their concern is with a new sensitivity and awareness rather than with conceptual accuracy. Taber does not refer to Krishnamurti, but it is clear that Krishnamurti also was concerned primarily with a form of consciousness which he felt was new and more meaningful. His accounts of his inner life testify to a way of seeing and living that are radically different to that of most human beings and his teaching was an attempt to help others discover that state for themselves.

Transformative philosophers often provide a programme or practice to lead the follower to this higher state of consciousness. Sankara recommended moral and spiritual purification, or yoga, as a supplement to his philosophy. Plato and Fichte wrote about the need for special education. As we have seen, Krishnamurti was consistently critical of attempts to lay down formal procedures, rules or methods for self-improvement. He frequently asserted, for example, that traditional Buddhist and Hindu methods of meditation were too mechanical and repetitive. But he did suggest that certain activities such as self-observation were necessary, stressing that

all such activities must be undertaken individually and freely, with no reference to any expert or authority, including himself. Of course he also argued for a new type of education which might allow children and teachers to undergo transformation. Thus in this respect also Krishnamurti shows similarities with the other thinkers.

Taber identifies two further important characteristics of this kind of philosophy. First:

A transformative philosophy does not amount to a Weltanschauung that one can casually entertain as a matter of experiment or amusement, as one tries on a hat. Nor is it meant for our cultural edification. (ibid:99)

Taber is pointing to a distinction between two approaches to philosophy: that which is essentially uncommitted and theoretical, displaying a detachment which is thought to be the hallmark of scientific and academic integrity; and that which demands full participation. The same distinction has been noted by Conze, the well-known scholar of Buddhism:

In Europe we have become accustomed to an almost complete gap between the theory of philosophers and their practice, between their views on the nature of the universe and their mode of life...It just would not do to "refute" a philosopher by pointing out that he is insufferably rude to his wife, envies his more fortunate colleagues and gets flustered when contradicted. (Conze, 1951:20)

In other words, some philosophers might feel that they can make valid and useful contributions to philosophy even though their own lives are in a disorderly state. Others see philosophy rather as a way of life, a means to spiritual growth or personal cultivation. [14]

Finally, the transformative philosopher's 'directions and assertions have the force of self-evident truth' (ibid:102); he/she typically claims to explain the whole of life, to be able to account for any

fact, to 'expose the whole gamut of being from the first cause to the last effect' (ibid); but he/she may pay little attention to justifying his/her assertions. Issues of epistemology and verification may play a very small part in his/her system (ibid:126). These observations certainly apply to Krishnamurti. He often pointed out that he did not regard his teaching as an abstract, intellectual construction, and he was not particularly concerned with conceptual precision; his only interest was that people actually changed their way of life. He stated this clearly as early as 1929:

I am not concerned with the invention of new theories, new philosophies, new systems, or with new combinations of these - but entirely with ideas, thoughts and feelings that can be lived, that must be lived.  
(EW, II:167)

Finally, Krishnamurti had utter confidence in the truth of what he said and attached little importance to substantiating or justifying his statements. He made no attempt to produce empirical evidence to support his assertions nor did he refute objections to his ideas. His attitude was straightforward: he had found absolute Truth, and those who cared to listen to him were welcome to do so; if they investigated deeply they would find that what he had to say was true.

Having traced some of the main themes of Krishnamurti's work we can now summarize by returning to the synopsis of his teaching from which we started our discussion (1.1). The purpose of the teaching is stated at the end of the synopsis and confirms the importance which Krishnamurti accorded to transformation: 'insight without any shadow of the past...brings about a deep radical change in the mind'. The transformation is expressed in terms which are characteristic of Indian religious thought:

Total negation is the essence of the positive. When there is negation of all those things which are not love...then love is, with its compassion and intelligence.

As always, Krishnamurti rejects the role of priests, dogmas and rituals, reiterating his statement from 1929: 'truth is a pathless land'. There is no set path or method to attain the transformation, but a stress on observation:

In observation one begins to discover the lack of freedom. Freedom is found in the choiceless awareness of our daily existence.

In particular it is necessary to understand the process of image-formation and the psychological roots of conflict:

Man has built in himself images as a fence of security ... these manifest as symbols, ideas, beliefs. The burden of these dominates man's thinking, relationships and daily life. These are the causes of our problems for they divide man from man in every relationship.

Although we have had to pass over many minor details, the main themes of Krishnamurti's philosophy are thus reasonably clearly defined. But finally what assessment can be made of this unique teacher? How seriously should we take the claims made about him? Is his teaching a new revelation or a reworking of old platitudes?

#### 2.4 KRISHNAMURTI AS RELIGIOUS TEACHER

About Krishnamurti's own intense experience of ecstatic states of consciousness there can be little doubt. His writings over a period of more than sixty years contain accounts of his mystical experiences and ecstasies, whether termed 'union with the Beloved' as in the 1920s or 'the benediction' or 'the Absolute' as in later years. Testimonies of those close to him all concur on the extraordinary quality of energy that he had, and this was confirmed by everyone I spoke to who had worked with him.

He was not a solitary mystic, however, but spent the whole of his life in a very active teaching mission. It may be that this sense of mission was inculcated into him at an early age but he did not

accept the role of teacher lightly. In fact while he was involved with the theosophists and the Order of the Star he was generally very reluctant to talk in public, and it was only after his break with those organisations that he fully adopted his role as peripatetic teacher. He saw his work in education as an extension of that role: he wanted to bring his message to people of all ages and in different countries. Together with his intense spiritual experiences, this zeal to communicate was a fundamental characteristic of his life. There will probably remain a mystery as to what exactly took place during his public talks, conversations and interviews, but it is certain that tens of thousands of people found a deeper self-knowledge through their contact with him. Needleman suggests:

Something in [Krishnamurti's] speech, his presence, his line of thought, call it what one will, *helps* the act of self-observation...That is really all one could say; one cannot and perhaps one need not be sure if it is Krishnamurti's language, the silent presence of so many others in my situation, or something else...in this sense one obviously cannot deny that he is a teacher. (Needleman, 1970:156)

One interviewee in a school told me:

His statements seemed to reverberate somehow. People seemed to hear a few phrases and would remember them for a long time. They seemed to resonate with a deep inward meaning and sooner or later people actually saw very clearly that they had to do something in their own lives, make some creative changes.

As to the content of his teaching, little of what he had to say was new. He himself admitted that everything worth saying had already been said, by the Buddha or by somebody else. He introduced no new concepts and added little to formal knowledge. However, he made a great contribution in restating the ancient wisdom in a manner appropriate to the modern world, and in speaking as one to whom these were living truths, not theories. [15]

Although he added little to the body of knowledge, one of his great strengths was to provide a coherent overall vision of the human condition. His talks covered a range of topics which seemed to encompass all that is most essential in life. His audiences were helped to look at the state of the world, their own relationships, their states of mind, their background and environment, and also questions such as death, love, meditation and religion. Krishnamurti's talks had an integrating effect and provided an ordering of priorities. One had the feeling that he never lost sight of the whole picture of human and spiritual life, and this sense of wholeness was communicated to the audience. Politics, psychology, philosophy, metaphysics and religion were all discussed, but the focus on detail never obscured the wider vision.

Within this overall perspective, three of his main concerns were relationships, values and inquiry. He made one aware of many of the pitfalls and difficulties inherent in close relationships, between husband and wife for example, and showed how human relationships are of vital importance in one's daily life. His teaching was conducive to a very serious examination of one's daily routine, relationships, habits and mental states. He was never sensational or escapist, never promised any reward and always insisted on honest self-assessment.

He did not adhere to any particular school of psychology and it would require a separate study to fully elucidate the sources of his ideas. In the course of his life he had contact with Indian religious thinking, theosophy, western philosophy and scientific thinking, psycho-analysis and psycho-therapy, all of which contributed to the formulation of his own thought. Further, he conducted many thousands of personal interviews and had ample opportunity to make his own observations. I was told by several interviewees who seemed to me reliable sources that he had an uncanny knack of knowing exactly what problem was troubling the individuals who sought his help. His teachings on psychology are presumably based on his reading to some extent, but more on his own

observations and his very acute intuition. As with his philosophy in general, he was deeply concerned with the individuals he met rather than with establishing a conceptual system.

His teachings are given greater weight because of his own example. His words seemed to ring true particularly because, from all accounts, his own daily behaviour conformed to his teachings. For example, I was often told that he brought a freshness and spontaneity to his own relationships, and never seemed to allow the memory of past disagreements or difficulties to overshadow the present situation. He was also highly creative, evolving his teachings, meeting hundreds of people every year, working in his schools and giving public talks.

Another strength in his teaching was his sense of values and morality. He deplored the exploitation of human beings and of nature, constantly showing up the corruption and decadence of certain aspects of modern society. He felt that everybody should feel responsible, not just for their own lives and professions, but for the whole state of humanity. This often led him into interesting discussions with various specialists and scholars who came to see him. They would tend to focus discussions around their own particular area of interest, but he always insisted that their first and unavoidable responsibility was to the state of the world as a whole. Other values he repeatedly stressed were the urgency of resolving conflicts, the need for integrity, honesty, sensitivity and harmony.

A further point he insisted on time and again was that each individual must find the truth within, for him or herself. He felt that turning to an authority for help or guidance inevitably meant an abdication of personal responsibility and led to dependency. This is of course a doctrine of some schools of Buddhism and Hinduism. However, there is a strong tendency in both these religions to pay lip-service to the idea but in fact to cultivate a reverential and non-critical attitude towards certain individuals,

scriptures or organisations. Krishnamurti was one of very few teachers who consistently and absolutely denied the importance of all texts, practices, intermediaries and organisations. He always insisted that one should look at each situation afresh and without prejudice: life, which is ever-changing, can never be understood if one is attempting to define it according to any kind of theory.

I believe the above points indicate why Krishnamurti should be taken seriously as an outstanding religious teacher. He discussed the essential and perennial concerns of religion in a highly creative way, bearing witness to a transcendent intelligence, attempting to awaken others and effect a religious transformation of society. At the same time he taught respect for nature and concern for human values and provided many illuminating insights into human nature.

However, there are also several areas where Krishnamurti's teachings are difficult or unsatisfactory. First, there remained a mystique around him until the end of his life. Although he repudiated all authority, he never actually denied that he was a world teacher and indeed behaved as though he were one, travelling incessantly around the world, surrounded and assisted by devoted helpers. He never made his position on the world teacher question totally clear. When he was asked about it, he usually declined to comment, often suggesting that the questioner should drop the question and turn to something more relevant to his daily life. Many of those around him clearly thought that he was some sort of world teacher, so although he himself did not expound it as a doctrine, he nevertheless gave it his tacit consent.

This would perhaps not be too serious a fault, but it did lead to some unfortunate consequences. Krishnamurti, and more particularly some of those close to him or in the schools, tended to have an exclusive and dismissive attitude towards other teachers, religions, philosophers and psychologists. When discussing religious thought, for example, Krishnamurti occasionally termed it 'all that nonsense' or used similar disparaging phrases. He claimed that the study of



books of religious thinkers or philosophers was useless, but at the same time encouraged the publication of his own works.

The German Buddhist Lama Govinda criticized Krishnamurti for this, feeling that it reflected an arrogant trait of character:

He is impatient of the slightest contradiction or the slightest question which doesn't fit into his system...I believe Krishnamurti would certainly profit from the study of other people's thoughts. He would certainly understand them better. To my mind it's a kind of self-aggrandizement to say, "I've been influenced by nobody; I'm all and only my own". (Govinda, 1986:66-67)

In the case of Krishnamurti himself, I found that this attitude was not too damaging. He was a man who was obviously totally confident of his own realization, and he tried any means to open other people's eyes to what he had seen. He felt strongly that religions were fundamentally a means of exploitation, generating dependency and confusion, and he was prepared to use strong language to make his point. I was told by several interviewees that in private conversation he sometimes spoke warmly and appreciatively of religious teachings, particularly Buddhism.

However, some of those who admired him manifested behaviour patterns typical of the adherents of any sectarian leader. There was a strong sense of who was acceptable and who was not. People who had disagreed with Krishnamurti were shunned and disparaging remarks were made about other teachers or writers. One person who had moved for some years in the circles around Krishnamurti told me:

In a sense it was worse than with other gurus. At least with them people are honest in a way. They think and say openly that a certain guru is enlightened, a great rishi or whatever. With Krishnamurti there was always the absurd pretence that he was not a guru, that he was somehow qualitatively different from any other religious teacher.

Another example of this behaviour was to exaggerate Krishnamurti's originality. Several people who admired him maintained that he was totally unacquainted with religious literature, as for example: 'it may seem strange, but it is a fact that he [Krishnamurti] was completely unfamiliar with the scriptures of the world - Hindu, Buddhist, Christian or of any other religion' (Mehta, 1986:251). A similar statement appeared in an unattributed article in the Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin: 'Krishnamurti evolved his unique teaching from his own being, for he had read no religious or philosophical literature' (*Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin*, no. 53, Autumn and Winter 1987:9). This view is clearly unfounded: even in his biography there are references to his reading religious literature, Buddhist and Christian (Lutyens, 1975:120, 149).

I found that these attitudes existed to a limited extent in the schools. Most teachers were quite prepared to discuss Krishnamurti as a fallible human being, to recognise that his teachings might have weaknesses and could be critically examined and seen in historical context. However, a few people suggested that such an approach was misleading. They felt that Krishnamurti was a qualitatively superior kind of person and should not be discussed in an analytical way. They suggested his teaching is of such great significance that it must be heard and digested without analysing it or making any comparisons or assessments. On a few occasions when I suggested that some of his ideas had already been discussed by other thinkers, I was met with defensiveness bordering on hostility.

To me this seemed a limiting way to approach the subject. Clearly a few people who have felt the power of Krishnamurti's personal charisma might accept him as the only important religious teacher and be prepared to use his works as a guide and pointer for their lives. But if his work is to reach a wider audience it will inevitably be subjected to a more critical appraisal. It would be a pity if a non-critical and sectarian ethos developed in the schools, particularly since Krishnamurti's own work was so firmly anti-sectarian. To make exaggerated claims on his behalf and to

disparage others is unfortunate; he was sufficiently extraordinary without the need for exaggeration, and such attitudes can only be off-putting to outsiders. It is not entirely Krishnamurti's fault that such attitudes arose, but some of the responsibility must be laid at his door.

A related difficulty is that Krishnamurti shows weaknesses if judged from the perspective of formal philosophy. For example, he was quite idiosyncratic in his use of words, some of which are difficult to explicate. He often exaggerated and commonly used generalisations without sufficient qualifications. He tended to make statements about the brain and the mind, for example, without any apparent basis in neurophysiology. He paid little attention to epistemology and many of his statements were assertive rather than reasoned. Other weaknesses were his use of metaphors taken from technology (e.g. 'the brain is a computer') and his adoption of concepts from various schools of thought (e.g. his use of the concept of conditioning from behaviourist psychology) without careful attention to their limitations. Much of his work is designed to elicit a response from the audience by the use of emotive language, images, rhetorical devices and repetition.

These factors mean that Krishnamurti's impact depends on an appeal to emotion and intuition as well as reason and argument, and hence his work is open to the criticisms raised by Popper against what he calls 'oracular philosophy'. In *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Popper identifies a tradition of philosophical thought which he (quoting Schopenhauer) calls 'oracular'. The hall-mark of this approach is that the argument proceeds by 'making its pronouncements from the tripod of the oracle' (Popper, 1945:299). Typically, the proponent claims a superior faculty of insight:

What I shall call 'pseudo-rationalism' is the intellectual intuitionism of Plato. It is the immodest belief in one's superior intellectual gifts, the claim to be initiated, to know with certainty, and with authority...According to Plato, reason (or 'intellectual

intuition') is shared only by the gods, and by very few men. (Popper, 1945:227)

Also typical of this kind of pseudo-rationalism is the attitude of the Romantics and of philosophers such as Fichte and Hegel, with whom: 'a new kind of dogmatism becomes fashionable in philosophy...It confronts us with its dictum. And we can take it or leave it.' (ibid:21). Popper also notes a statement by Schopenhauer that such philosophers 'do not attempt to teach, but to bewitch the reader' (ibid). From the discussion so far, it will be apparent that Krishnamurti is to some extent open to these criticisms. Although unassuming and modest as a person, there is no doubt that he had a deep belief in his own insights, in the truth of his own teachings. His discourses at times seemed like oracular pronouncements rather than reasoned arguments and, as noted, could have a 'bewitching' or mesmerizing quality.

However he himself was aware of the distortions which can be caused by believing one has achieved 'insights' or 'intuitions', especially when stimulated by contact with a powerful personality. Part Three of *The Wholeness of Life* consists of discussions with Krishnamurti on precisely this point, and he warns in the strongest possible terms against the dangers of self-deception. As so often, Krishnamurti insists that truth must be found for each individual by and for him/herself, that 'insights' must be constantly reassessed, treated sceptically, looked at afresh (WL:221ff). Above all, his teachings deal for the most part with everyday life, not with abstractions, and so each reader or listener could test the validity of the ideas on the most demanding testing ground: his or her own life. Krishnamurti at times sounds dogmatic or 'oracular', but this is balanced by his demands for self-critical, down-to-earth living.

Finally I will raise a question that will be discussed in more detail later (4.4): is Krishnamurti's teaching élitist and socially irresponsible? The sociologist Parekh, for example, suggests it is:

Krishnamurti's teaching seems to me to suffer from the central limitation of the Indian spiritual tradition. The tradition talked about love and compassion, but rarely displayed it beyond the small circle of close associates...Krishnamurti was no exception. The inhuman conditions under which millions of Indians lived never dominated his consciousness...a spirituality that opens up all the senses to the beauty of a flower but dulls them to the desperate cry of the poor...leaves a good deal to be desired...I never got over the feeling that his teaching lacked moral passion and depth. (Parekh, 1987:54)

A similar point was made by a teacher at a Krishnamurti school whom I interviewed in India. I remarked that Krishnamurti had often commented on the beauty of Rishi Valley. 'He only saw the nature', he replied. 'The valley is full of peasants on subsistence level, and their condition is getting worse every year. It is a very narrow conception of beauty.'

There is a value judgement that a student of Krishnamurti's work will have to make: in a world of great inequality and poverty, is one justified in pursuing an inquiry of the type proposed by Krishnamurti? Or is the concept of transformation merely an excuse for self-indulgence and social irresponsibility? In a world that is full of material deprivation, do we have the right to search for religious values and insights which are not of obvious practical use to society? Krishnamurti himself was well aware of the criticism. He is quoted by his Indian biographer as saying:

Whenever I come to India, people ask me why I am not concerned with poverty, corruption. I ask, why don't we tackle these problems from a different angle?...Religion is the source of life, not reform. I am not against reforms, they are necessary. But religion is different. (Jayakar, 1986: 220-21)

One of the ways in which he attempted to resolve the problems of poverty and corruption was by advocating a new form of education which is examined in the next two chapters: he hoped this would bring about individual and social change, realising his vision of transformation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### KRISHNAMURTI'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

#### 3.1 SCOPE OF KRISHNAMURTI'S EDUCATIONAL WORK

For thousands of years philosophers and religious movements have seen education not only as transmission of technical or practical knowledge but as a means of communicating values. In the west one can point to the examples of Plato and the Society of Jesus, in India to the work of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Sai Baba movement, in China to the inculcation of Confucianism. Of course, any school reflects the values and attitudes of its teachers and ultimately its cultural environment, but some schools are more specifically concerned with the transmission of a particular philosophy of life as well as providing a conventional education.

How does one feel about these undertakings? First, one naturally inclines to be wary of indoctrination. [1] If the world-view is presented to pupils in such a way that they cannot subject it to rational criticism, the school represents a threat to their personal integrity and future development as a mature adult. Secondly, there is the possibility of eccentricity. A school founded on a particular philosophy may stand outside the mainstream of education and create a sectarian and isolated ethos, becoming blind to outside developments and changes.

However, there may also be advantages in educational pluralism and individual innovation. Independent schools, provided they avoid the dangers of indoctrination and isolation, can be a healthy phenomenon. They may provide a testing ground for new ideas, an

area for creativity and change. Teachers may not be expected to adhere rigidly to national guidelines but be more free to experiment. Students may be exposed to exciting ideas, expected to challenge convention. Such schools may provide a source of new ideas for the world of education as a whole: an obvious example would be the work of Maria Montessori, whose ideas at first seemed so revolutionary but later influenced education, particularly at kindergarten level, in almost every western country.

As we consider Krishnamurti's educational activities it will become clear that he was primarily concerned with the transmission of values and a philosophy of life rather than with academic studies, and this provides us with an opportunity to see both the creative aspects and the potential hazards of this kind of education. Before examining the details of his work, however, it may be helpful to view his overall achievement in broad outline and the three main strands of his educational work are therefore discussed in this first section.

First, Krishnamurti's work in education was essentially concerned with bringing about the radical transformation in consciousness which was such an important theme in his teaching (see 2.2.4 and 3.4.1). This is the perspective in which his educational work should be considered. He did touch on some areas which are of general concern to educators but for the most part his educational theory and practice were centred around the concept of individual transformation as a religious awakening and as the starting-point for a transformation of society.

When Krishnamurti visited his schools he was often impatient with questions of school structure, size, examinations and other practical matters. [2] On the other hand he was intensely interested in the psychological state of both teachers and children. In his meetings with the staff and students he would usually raise the same topics as in his public talks: questions of relationships, psychological states, conditioning, meditation and religion. He

made concessions to the children's age by using simpler analogies and language, but insisted that they face the same range of questions as adults.

The schools were thus another forum for his teaching. Just as he organised public talks, interviews, broadcasts and publications to reach the public, so he founded schools with the intention of reaching young people. In this respect there is a significant difference between Krishnamurti's educational work and that of most other educators. He was above all a religious teacher and his work in the schools was primarily a way by which he could convey his teaching. Moreover, he hoped that his schools would become centres where students, teachers and visitors would continue with a spiritual inquiry on their own account, in his absences and after his death. [3] The emphasis on religion and transformation sharply differentiates Krishnamurti's work from that of mainstream educational thought.

The second strand of Krishnamurti's educational work was closer to conventional concerns. Although it was not his main interest, in some of his writings and talks with teachers he discussed school organisation, the aims of education and various other educational topics. As shown in the previous chapter, Krishnamurti was not a systematic thinker and made no attempt to construct a formal philosophy. Similarly, he did not produce a comprehensive educational theory. His books on education are not textbooks or theoretical studies but contain discussions and meditations, written in a discursive and informal language, about education in the context of his vision of human life.

Krishnamurti's approach has some advantages. His books are easy to read, non-technical and often thought-provoking. More importantly, one has the impression that he was always in touch with his religious vision, reminding readers that any activity must be undertaken with an awareness of the spiritual dimension of life. Reading Krishnamurti there is never any danger of becoming absorbed



in technicalities at the expense of a broader vision. As with his other works, one comes across phrases that suddenly seem to reverberate, to carry a deeper meaning. However, his lack of interest in academic methodology or the systematic presentation of his ideas makes his writing one-sided: he tends to make generalisations without qualification or supportive evidence and seems unaware of, or totally unimpressed by, any educational work other than his own. Consequently his writing lacks perspective and appears simplistic.

It should also be pointed out that many of his observations about education merely reflect a current of thought to which he was exposed in his youth, namely the idealist 'child-centred' movement that gained some popularity after the First World War (see 3.2). It is necessary to make this point because Krishnamurti sometimes gave the impression, by his style and use of language, that he was presenting totally new ideas. This could perhaps lead to a false evaluation of his contribution to educational theory. As I suggested with regard to his teaching, there is no need to make exaggerated claims on Krishnamurti's behalf.

Apart from weaknesses of style and argument, there are many areas of educational theory which Krishnamurti did not address at all, at least not in published material. He had very little to say about curricular questions, teaching methods or developmental psychology, all of which are important topics for most educational theorists. With regard to curriculum, the impression I gained from interviews in the schools was that Krishnamurti was not particularly interested in which academic subjects were taught. This was in part due, no doubt, to the many pressing demands on his time and the relatively short duration of his visits to the schools. However, I think it also reflected an important trait of Krishnamurti's personality, namely a complete dedication to his central concerns to the exclusion of almost everything else. Professor Weber has noted the similarities in this respect between Krishnamurti and the scientist Stephen Hawking:

For Hawking the key to the puzzle of our being is time, for Krishnamurti it is timelessness. Each is vehement and passionate in this stand, each pursues it to the exclusion of everything else, has spent a lifetime of dedication in its service, each has total integrity, a one-track mind, purity of focus, high intelligence, love for one thing. Both are creators, not followers. (Weber, 1986:227)

I agree with Professor Weber's characterization of Krishnamurti as a single-minded, almost exclusive thinker. This casts some light on his approach to educational theory. He regarded questions such as curriculum not with disdain but rather with the attitude that they were not his business. He was happy to leave practical and technical questions to the teachers concerned while he focused on his own role as spiritual teacher. [4]

Krishnamurti's failure to discuss teaching methods probably stems in part from the same cause. He was not concerned with techniques for transmitting knowledge of academic disciplines and made no attempt to become involved with the question. His lack of interest in methods is also consistent with a fundamental tenet of his teaching. In his talks and writings about meditation and religion he frequently emphasized that there are no methods one can adopt to attain insight or to awaken intelligence, nor to establish healthy relationships between human beings (see 2.2). In education the essential factor in Krishnamurti's view was the relationship between teacher and pupil, which it was likewise impossible to create by following a method. If the relationship was truthful and creative, then there would be meaningful communication; if not, then no methods could be effective. It would be meaningless, from Krishnamurti's standpoint, to develop a system of pedagogics unless relationships were entirely satisfactory.

The lack of a theory of child psychology is another notable lacuna in Krishnamurti's work. There is nothing corresponding to the observations of Piaget or other developmental psychologists to be found in Krishnamurti's work. This is not only because Krishnamurti

did not have a scientific background: other educationalists working on an intuitive, non-formal basis proposed ideas about stages of cognitive development and appropriate educational activities. For example Rudolf Steiner, the founder of the Anthroposophical movement which now operates some four hundred schools worldwide, gave precise indications of children's developmental tasks at different ages and planned a curriculum accordingly (Harwood, 1958: passim).

An immediate consequence of this shortcoming could be seen in Krishnamurti's talks with younger children. I heard him speak to children in India and also interviewed children who had heard him. It was my strong impression that at least until around the age of twelve they had very little idea of what he was talking about: this is hardly surprising since, according to most views of developmental psychology, children would normally be incapable of introspective and analytical/conceptual thinking until their early teens at the earliest (Hamachek, 1979:159).

The ex-students, students and teachers from Krishnamurti schools I interviewed held differing views on this point. Some felt that his talks with young children were frankly a waste of time. One interviewee who had seen Krishnamurti often in the 1930s felt that he still had a subconscious need to be treated as a great religious figure despite his rejection of the world teacher doctrine, and that he enjoyed playing the role of spiritual father in the schools. Others, however, felt that Krishnamurti had a special kind of energy which was inherently good, and that it was beneficial for the children to be in his presence, whether they understood his words or not. This view was presumably influenced by the Indian concept of *darshan* [5], the idea that exposure to the presence of a holy man is spiritually beneficial. To most westerners (and many Indians) this may seem unreasonable but it is true that Krishnamurti was immensely attractive to some young children. They would happily sit on his lap and talk with him, and he would obviously enjoy their company. I had little doubt but that they sensed in him the kind of energy that attracted so many adults also to his talks.

Despite his evident attractiveness to children, however, Krishnamurti gave little guidance with respect to younger children except for a few general statements to the effect that they should be loved, well cared for, treated individually and allowed considerable freedom. In this respect he seems to have made no advance on the child-centred theories current in the 1920s. He was not a parent and his relationship with young children was sporadic. His main contributions to education, in particular his concern with psychological maturity and transformation, were of relevance primarily to the education of older students.

The third strand in Krishnamurti's educational work was his practical involvement in founding and helping to run the seven Krishnamurti schools (see 5.1 for details about the schools). Krishnamurti was not only interested in disseminating ideas about education. He was deeply involved personally with his own schools and his ideas were meant to be implemented, not merely raised as a contribution for debate. Besides holding talks with pupils and making general observations about education, Krishnamurti frequently held discussions with teachers and administrators about the development of his schools and helped to determine their atmosphere and activities.

A characteristic of Krishnamurti's work in this respect was that he did not try to guide the schools in every detail. His role was principally to provide inspiration and an overall perspective, in particular ensuring the central importance of religious inquiry in the schools. He emphasized fundamental questions more than immediate or detailed matters, and his discussions were meant as suggestions for the teachers to take to heart and ponder, not as rigid policy statements. Krishnamurti apparently hoped that if teachers and parents fully understood the broader issues which he raised they would be able to work out the necessary methods for themselves. A consequence of this approach is that the Krishnamurti schools are not uniform in their approach to education. They share a common perspective and background philosophy but are free to

create their own structures and activities. There are no standard procedures, pedagogics or curricula as there are in, for example, the schools affiliated to the Steiner movement. However, one should not underestimate Krishnamurti's practical skills: with no government assistance he managed to found and maintain seven successful schools which depended largely on the enthusiasm he was able to generate.

To return to the theme of transformation, Krishnamurti did not maintain that his personal presence was necessary, or sufficient, to bring it about. On the contrary, he often insisted that teachers, students or other interested persons would have to co-operate in religious inquiry independently of his own involvement. Of course many of those who attended his public talks may have done so individually, but in the schools there is the possibility to do this as a community, with encouragement from like-minded companions and in a supportive environment. Krishnamurti had high hopes of the people who chose to work in his schools and seems to have regarded them as an exceptional group among whom the transformation might first occur. In one of his letters to the schools Krishnamurti wrote:

In every civilisation there have been a few who were concerned and desirous of bringing about good human beings...who would be concerned with the whole of human life, who would be gentle, unaggressive and so would be truly religious entities...Can we as a small group...discover what is a religious life and thus prepare the soil for the flowering of goodness?  
(LS2:61-2)

His letters confirm that he saw his schools as centres where learning of the kind he thought most important - learning about human nature, relationships and religious questions - would take place. Although this kind of learning can take place outside the school environment, at any age and not necessarily with any reference to Krishnamurti, he hoped that his schools would provide a good environment for it:

A school is a place of learning and so it is sacred. The temples, churches and mosques are not sacred for they have stopped learning. They believe; they have faith and that denies entirely the great art of learning, whereas a school like those to which this letter is sent, must be entirely devoted to learning, not only about the world around us, but essentially about what we human beings are, why we behave the way we do, and the complexity of thought. (LS2:11)

To summarize, Krishnamurti's work in education had various facets. First and foremost he was an educator or teacher himself, both to the public and in the more intimate atmosphere of his own schools. Secondly, he wrote several books on education which indicate how he envisaged integrating his religious teaching with the demands of school life. Thirdly, he founded seven schools which continue to flourish after his death: although he did not determine all the details of their work they represent the practical application of his ideas. As a first step to understanding this wide-ranging work we will examine the environment in which Krishnamurti evolved his approach to education.

### 3.2 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1.2 I described how Krishnamurti established himself as an independent teacher, which involved a radical break from his theosophical background. A similar development can be seen in his educational activities. Until the early 1930s Krishnamurti's educational work was deeply involved with theosophy, which provided both the practical and ideological framework of his youthful efforts. After the 1930s he gradually established himself as an educator in his own right, but his later work still retained many elements of theosophical education, now integrated into the framework of his new teachings. His mature work in education can only be understood in the context of his teachings as a whole, but it is also important to understand its historical background, which is discussed in this section.

In India, many religious organisations were active in education at the beginning of this century. Some of the more famous undertakings included Tagore's Santiniketan, Aurobindo's school in Pondicherry and the Ramakrishna Mission's many colleges in different parts of India. Santiniketan, founded in West Bengal in 1901, anticipated Krishnamurti's work in many respects, Tagore himself having been closely associated with theosophy: teachers and pupils lived together as one big family and 'the whole spirit of the school was religious, but...anything that savoured of dogma was excluded' (Boyd and Rawson, 1965:29-30). Tagore's statement of the aim of education sounds strikingly similar to one of Krishnamurti's dicta: 'the object of education is the freedom of mind which can only be achieved through the path of freedom' (quoted in Organ, 1970:152). The establishment of schools in the name of religious figures has continued until now in India. These schools generally have a dual intention: to promulgate the teachings of a particular teacher or sect and to provide a general education to their pupils. [5]

The Theosophical Society was among the organisations most active in Indian education, particularly under the leadership of Annie Besant whose most important project was the Central Hindu College, founded in 1898 in Varanasi. Besides providing general education, there was a clear ideological interest behind the scheme, the purpose being to educate a new generation of Hindu boys to uphold their own culture in the face of the encroachment of western values. In the Central Hindu College there was an intense moral and spiritual fervour which Besant hoped would be an example to Hindu youth all over India. At its height in the 1920s the Theosophical Education Trust was responsible for thirty-seven schools in India and one in England (Nethercot, 1963:69, 236).

Krishnamurti, then, grew up in an environment where education was not primarily a monolithic structure run by the state and where many schools were founded for religious purposes. He himself was schooled in a variety of ways - at a local school, by private tutors provided by the Theosophical Society, as an external university

student - spending his youth in the ambience of the Theosophical Society, which had its own educational network. The prospect of founding independent schools was perhaps not as daunting in those circumstances as it would be now in a modern industrialised society with a well established state school system.

Krishnamurti was involved with theosophical education from his youth, education already being one of his 'deepest and most abiding loves' by the early 1920s (Lutyens 1975:179). Examples of the close connection between Krishnamurti and theosophical education are to be found in the report from a congress of the Order of the Star in 1925, where several theosophical leaders spoke warmly of Krishnamurti's work in education, members of the society being encouraged by accounts, typical of theosophical discourse at this period, of his glorious past incarnations. One leading theosophist, Bishop Arundale, stated:

Our beloved Head, Krishnaji...has been the centre of a great University in lives gone by, and you are probably aware how he is working to establish a University at his own birth-place in South India, Madanapalle.  
(Arundale, 1925: 318)

At the same congress, two other theosophical leaders, Mrs Besant and the Reverend O. Köllerstrom, spoke about education and the society continued to give practical assistance to Krishnamurti's efforts. In 1926, before Krishnamurti's break with theosophy, a special trust was formed by Mrs Besant and others to raise money for the founding of schools in Krishnamurti's name. The trust first bought 300 acres of land in rural South India, near Krishnamurti's birthplace. Krishnamurti personally chose the site, Rishi Valley, and helped to found a new school which is still flourishing there, although his hopes of creating a university in the area never materialised. At the same time, members of the Theosophical Society in Varanasi began to search for land on which to build a school. Krishnamurti was offered various sites which he found unsuitable, insisting that his school must be built on the banks of the Ganges. After many delays



some land was purchased from the British military authorities and Rajghat school was founded in 1934.

Until the 1950s, many of the teachers at these two schools had very close connections with the Theosophical Society. Krishnamurti visited the schools on his trips to India and spoke to the staff and students, but his impact and involvement were very limited. Many students and staff went through the schools hardly aware of Krishnamurti's existence, and the general ethos and ideology were provided by theosophy. [7] It was only on his return to India after the Second World War that Krishnamurti began to take a more active role in the schools, differentiating his teaching from theosophy and trying to find teachers who understood his intentions. After the 1950s the break between the Krishnamurti schools and the Theosophical Society was more sharply defined and the schools became specifically concerned with Krishnamurti's teaching.

There was, then, an intimate historical connection between Krishnamurti's educational work and the Theosophical Society. The link is also observable in their educational thought, many components of Krishnamurti's educational theory having been part of theosophical educational discourse in the 1920s. Moreover, there are many similarities between theosophical educational theories and various other streams of progressive educational thought. Krishnamurti's educational theory was far from an original conception; rather, it was rooted in the environment in which he grew up.

The nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the growth of an idealist educational ideology which was developed by thinkers such as Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori and Steiner. In *The Origins and Growth of Modern Education*, Lawrence summarises the main ideals of this stream of thought:

The aim of education is a spiritual one, the development of the whole man; attention must therefore be paid not only to the development of intellect, but

to the education of the feelings, the judgement and the creative powers; its purpose is the formation of character, not the development of the brain alone; knowledge is not enough; true education must distinguish between knowledge and understanding, wisdom and instruction; ...each child must be educated according to his individual abilities;...education should be a natural growth, without coercion, forcing or punishment; the right relationship between teacher and children is of fundamental importance. (Lawrence, 1970:15)

Many educators of this movement advocated a non-formal and non-dogmatic spirituality. This attitude is apparent, for example, in the work of Froebel: 'education consists in leading man...to a pure and unsullied, conscious and free representation of the inner law of Divine Unity' (Froebel, 1905:2). The tradition of viewing education as preparation for spiritual development can be traced back at least to Plato, who urged that by education: 'the mind as a whole must be turned away from the world of change until its eye can bear to look straight at reality, and at the brightest of realities which is what we call the Good' (Plato, 1955:283). [8]

The movement began to expand rapidly after 1918. The catastrophe of the First World War 'produced the greatest educational ferment of modern times' (Skidelsky, 1969:141) and provided a stimulus for the development of what became known as 'New Education'. Many teachers were led to question the values of conventional education, which they felt had contributed to the horrors of the war by inculcating nationalism and blind obedience.

It [the First World War] had administered a profound shock to those who had been brought up on the comfortable Victorian assumptions of unending progress. The reconstruction of institutions...was not enough: nothing less than the reconstruction of humanity itself was required to prevent further catastrophes. (Skidelsky, 1969:141)

The climate was ripe for educational experiments. In 1921 the New Education Fellowship (N.E.F.) was formed as an umbrella organisation for various idealist educational movements. There was a close bond

between the N.E.F. and theosophy: the N.E.F. founder, Beatrice Ensor, had first formed within the Theosophical Society a group of progressive teachers who 'would take as the basis of their work faith in the spiritual powers latent in every child' (Boyd and Rawson, 1965:67). Mrs Ensor became Managing Director of the Theosophical Educational Trust which organised the first meetings of the N.E.F. Between 1921 and 1939 the N.E.F. held dozens of conferences which attracted delegates from all over the world (including India) and provided a forum for the exchange of ideas and information (Boyd and Rawson, 1965:57-112).

The ideology of the movement was derived from two main sources, theosophy and what was known as the New Psychology. Theosophy provided the background of non-denominational spirituality and notions of liberation of the true self and human perfectibility. New Psychology was the name given to the ideas of a number of psychologists who were influenced by Freud and more particularly by Jung. Skidelsky summarizes this current of psychological thought as follows:

Every child was possessed of a libido or life-force thrusting towards achievement and perfectibility. However, this thrust was deflected from its true aim by pressures exerted by the unconscious... 'Making the unconscious conscious' - the catchword of the New Education - consisted in removing the repressive forces of the old education, and instead channelling or guiding the libido, gently and with love, understanding and patience, into its authentic modes of expression, thus enabling man for the first time in his history to realize his full potentials. (Skidelsky, 1969:144-45)

One of the leading educationalists of the progressive stream was Madame Montessori, who had been in contact with theosophy since about 1907. Many Indian theosophists trained with Montessori and she herself visited Adyar. Her biographer noted:

Montessori and the Theosophists had always found each other's thinking congenial. The core of Theosophy was... a gradual unfolding of innate powers... leading to the liberation of the true self and to ultimate wisdom. There was some affinity between [this belief]

and Montessori's view of education as a process of liberating the spirit of the child. (Kramer, 1976:342)

From the conjunction of theosophical world-view and progressive educational ideas several strands of thought emerged which influenced the young Krishnamurti. Arundale, in the speech quoted above, put forward many ideas that Krishnamurti was to expound in later life :

The religious spirit will enter into every subject, into mathematics, into science, into logic...into everything of the curriculum...and I should just like to lay special stress on the science of the emotions, because the lack of education in these sciences is one of the gravest defects in education throughout the world. We are obsessed today by the intellect, and have become too largely its slaves instead of its masters. (Arundale, 1925:20)

Other ideas in the speech, all of which were echoed in Krishnamurti's later works, were the equality of staff and students; 'a spirit of dignified and beautiful simplicity'; 'a great renaissance of spiritual refinement'; 'an embodiment of internationalism' (ibid). Basic tenets of theosophical educational theory were that education should be a vehicle for individual and social liberation; it should be based on love, not fear; it should pay attention to spiritual and emotional development, rather than intellectual; each child should be considered individually, not treated according to a rigid system. All these ideas, which were typical of N.E.F. thinking of the time, were important themes of Krishnamurti's educational work throughout his life. As another example, Mrs Besant's following remark anticipates one of Krishnamurti's lifelong themes, the need for freedom and individual attention:

What you need first of all to do is to study the child and find out what qualities he has, what capacities he has, and what powers he has, and you can only do that by giving him a very large amount of freedom, by not forcing him into a groove with children who you think are like him, whereas they are most unlike. Hence you want individual education. (Telang, undated:4)

The similarity with the following extract from Krishnamurti's major work on education, *Education and the Significance of Life*, published in 1953, is evident:

The right kind of education is not possible *en masse*. To study each child requires patience, alertness and intelligence. To observe the child's tendencies, his aptitudes...and not merely regard him as belonging to a certain category...calls for skill, intense interest and, above all, a sense of affection. (ESL:94)

Similarly, one can compare the catchword of the New Education quoted above - 'making the unconscious conscious' - with the following extract from a work written by Krishnamurti as late as 1963:

In seeking to bring about a total development of the human being, we must obviously take into consideration the unconscious mind as well as the conscious. Merely to educate the conscious mind without understanding the unconscious brings self-contradiction into human lives, with all its frustrations and miseries. (LA:22)

We can thus note the existence of a well-established current of idealist educational thought which was influential in the theosophical milieu of Krishnamurti's youth, and as we examine his own educational ideas we will find many similarities with the theories of progressive idealist education. In fact, as Lawrence notes, many of these ideals have a long history and were far from new even in the nineteenth century (Lawrence 1970:15) We shall see that Krishnamurti shared some of the shortcomings inherent in the progressive outlook, in particular a tendency to idealize the individual and to ignore social questions which perhaps had its roots in the thought of Rousseau and later Romantics.

However, these similarities should not blind us to the particular characteristics and originality of Krishnamurti's work. It is true that other educators were interested in helping children to grow to free and mature individuals and also emphasized a non-dogmatic spirituality, but it would be an over-simplification to suggest that Krishnamurti merely adopted an existing body of ideas. I have

suggested that Krishnamurti's extraordinary background and personality allowed him to evolve a spiritual teaching which synthesizes elements of western and eastern thought and which seems in many ways suitable for the sceptical and sophisticated modern psyche. Krishnamurti's contribution to education was to integrate his religious teaching in the overall context of a liberal education.

### 3.3 CRITIQUE OF CONVENTIONAL EDUCATION

Krishnamurti often expressed the view that contemporary systems of education were a failure. His criticisms are best developed in *Education and the Significance of Life*, but many comments are to be found in other works, especially in his numerous talks with parents, students and teachers; there is no significant development of his views which remained almost the same from the 1930s onwards. The critique he makes is closely related to his teaching as a whole and must be seen in conjunction with his vision of human nature.

We have seen that, for Krishnamurti, humanity is entering upon a very grave crisis. One of the great hopes of the last century was that the provision of mass education would lead to a happier and more peaceful society but Krishnamurti took the opposite view. For him, conventional education was not a bright spot on a dark landscape but rather a reflection and perpetuation of society's confusion. Professor Bohm summarized his position by suggesting: 'Krishnamurti would say that it seems that the comprehensive school is leading nowhere, except to make things more of the same, if not worse' (Bohm 1986:11). In fact in this respect Krishnamurti's views are supported by many social scientists. Wilcox, in a wide-ranging review of educational research, notes that while teachers and parents typically believe schools to be instruments of reform and change, most research indicates that a more realistic assessment of their function would be to regard them as institutions to consolidate class differences. Several studies conclude that

schools tend to prepare pupils for life in an industrial economy by inculcating attitudes appropriate to different levels of work hierarchy, and that schooling makes little impact on social mobility or student futures (Wilcox, 1982:463).

In Krishnamurti's view, several factors have led to this state of affairs. First, most parents and teachers actually do not care very much what happens to their children. Most people are beset with their own various problems, trapped in their own misery: fundamentally they just want as little disturbance and responsibility as possible. They are happy as long as the state supervises their children for most of the day. Some will make sure that their children achieve good examination results and employment prospects but very few are willing to dedicate time and energy on helping the child to psychological maturity.

Krishnamurti repeated this observation on many occasions. It may seem a harsh judgement, and many parents might reply that they do indeed feel very upset at problems such as drugs and violence in schools. Krishnamurti's point is that an emotional response such as anxiety is merely a weak reaction. A truly caring person would ensure that children could grow up in a safe and loving environment:

Give of your time to see that you change the environment, the culture; see that there are the right kinds of schools and Universities. Don't leave it to the government. The Government is as thoughtless as you are, as indifferent, as callous. (BL:232)

Conventional education, for Krishnamurti, reflects a pervasive selfishness in society, a lack of true care for children.

Secondly, governments, religious institutions and industry all have a vested interest in producing obedient, unquestioning, but efficient human beings. Conformity and mechanical, repetitive attitudes are encouraged. Creativity is stifled in the interests of mediocrity and material success, because an education that encouraged freedom would be a threat to various power groups:

To make its citizens efficient for war, to prepare them to perform their duties effectively, the government must obviously control and dominate them. They must be educated to act as machines, to be ruthlessly efficient...governments, whether of the left or of the right, are unconcerned as long as we are efficient machines for turning out merchandise and bullets (ESL:82)

Krishnamurti observed that young people seem to have the energy and the inclination to rebel against tradition, to react against the corruption and violence of their elders. He saw this as potentially a healthy phenomenon. The problem is that their revolt is short-lived and limited, expressing itself only in forms of political or social protest. A good education might help young people to understand the need for more fundamental change, a total transformation of the psyche; conventional education is concerned with stifling discontent.

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. (ESL:11).

Thirdly, the teaching methods and the atmosphere in schools are based on reward and punishment. Fear of failure and desire for success are inculcated, competition and ambition are praised. Krishnamurti strongly disagreed with the idea that a system of reward and punishment could contribute to creativity or psychological maturity (see 4.3).

Fourth, Krishnamurti felt that there is an over-emphasis on technique, the intellect and efficiency in most forms of education. In most schools, academic achievement is rewarded and deemed to be the criterion of success. On the other hand, little attention is paid to other aspects of the individual. According to Krishnamurti, emotional and spiritual openness have no place in modern education and the result is psychological imbalance.



Krishnamurti did not deny the usefulness of practical and technical subjects, but he did see it as a fundamental mistake to place them at the centre of education. For him, the very institutions which claim to educate are in fact doing the opposite: by over-emphasising the intellect they are preventing the awakening of true intelligence:

What we now call education is a matter of accumulating knowledge and information from books, which anyone can do who can read. Such education offers a subtle form of escape from ourselves and, like all escapes, it inevitably creates further misery. (ESL:17)

The above ideas were developed in public talks and in books written for the general public. When Krishnamurti spoke to children, he presented much the same arguments, although the style was more direct, the language simpler, sometimes humorous:

You see we have been educated in a most absurd way...A lot of information is poured into our heads and we develop a very small part of the brain which will help us to earn a livelihood. The rest of the brain is neglected. It is like the cultivation of a corner in a vast field and the rest of the field stays overgrown with weeds thistles and thorns...Neither your teachers nor your parents are concerned with the greatness of the field with all its content. But they are intensely, insanely concerned with the corner. (BL:260)

All these criticisms are directed against the mainstream of education, but Krishnamurti did not express any approval of alternative systems of education either. His main contention was that all such systems are based on a structure of ideas, a blueprint, projected ideals - the educational equivalent of political utopias. Krishnamurti frequently pointed out the defect of utopias, namely that they will attempt to fit human beings into a new mould: 'ideals have no place in education for they prevent the comprehension of the present' (ESL:22). Furthermore, Krishnamurti felt that schools should deal with the very root of human problems, conditioning and self-centredness, and that other schools, whatever their merits, were not concerned with this.

In this critique we can see many of the characteristics of Krishnamurti's work in general. For example, he is concerned to make his points in a forceful way and to this end his language is rhetorical and assertive. On the positive side, it is often stimulating and thought-provoking to read Krishnamurti's observations. Above all, he refuses to be side-tracked into smaller questions but always <sup>e</sup>keeps basic human questions at the centre of the argument. When he does discuss more detailed questions, it is with a sense of a well-founded overall perspective.

Further, he insists on the importance of human values such as affection, respect for others, honesty and creativity. These values are constantly threatened by other demands - for efficiency and success for example - and Krishnamurti tries to establish a sense of priorities. He often comments on corruption and violence in society, pointing out how society's values are reflected in education. His comments may serve as a corrective to those who would prefer to ignore the problems which can afflict children in schools.

On the negative side, Krishnamurti's arbitrary judgements and assertions are disturbing. Krishnamurti never investigated particular schools or educational policies in a formal way, and he made no comment on any differences between the educational ideas of Europe, India or the USA. Instead, he referred to all education in these continents as 'conventional' or 'modern': preparing young people to fit into an insane society, while ignoring the fundamental questions of conditioning and religion. He treated all schools (except his own) as essentially the same, although he was presumably well aware of differing national characteristics. The approach is recognisably the same as his sweeping dismissal of all systems of religion and philosophy.

One could give several reasons for disagreeing with his assessment of the situation. For example, it is arguable that in most countries, despite its shortcomings, state education has been of

great benefit to the majority of the population and that there are many worthwhile aspects of state or alternative schools which should be retained, not dismissed out of hand. Krishnamurti presented only simplistic arguments to justify his own views. He made little attempt to prove the validity of his assertions and made sweeping generalisations without qualifications. A negative consequence of this style of argument might be to encourage readers to be narrow-minded, sectarian, or unwilling to learn from other schools or educationalists. As discussed in 2.4 there could be a danger in taking every word of Krishnamurti as truth and in regarding him as an infallible authority. At best his argument provides little encouragement for those who might wish to make a balanced judgement on the basis of available evidence.

From my conversations with teachers at the Krishnamurti schools it transpired that in private conversation Krishnamurti was often less dogmatic and dismissive than he appeared in print. For example, I heard that when one Indian teacher was due to visit the USA to further her studies, Krishnamurti took her to one side and told her to read various books on educational theory and to study the subject carefully. Similarly, when he stayed at Rishi Valley he showed great interest in a nearby village school. Again, when discussing a certain staff member at one of his schools he remarked that she must have a good mind since she read classics at Cambridge. Moreover, as will be seen in Chapters 6 and 7 the Krishnamurti schools do not reject all aspects of state education: for example they participate in examination systems and prepare their students for university.

Perhaps the best attitude to adopt when reading Krishnamurti's criticisms is to bear in mind that he was writing in order to make an impact, to shake people out of what he considered their apathy. Above all, his critique is a statement of values: industrial society is corrupt, selfish and inherently violent; radical change is essential. In the urgency of conveying this message Krishnamurti paid little attention to careful argument. It seems that this interpretation of his work is the most satisfactory because in

practice, when dealing with teachers at his own schools, he was much less dismissive than in his writings. It may be that when he was talking with people who to some extent shared his views he did not feel the need to be so one-sided.

It was seen in the previous section that many of his educational ideas were similar to those of other educationalists in the 1920s. His critique also was based on ideas current in that environment. For example, his criticism of the over-emphasis on the intellect is a common theme among idealist educators. It appeared in the speech quoted earlier by Bishop Arundale and the idea can be traced as far back as Seneca, later being taken up by Montaigne, Pestalozzi and Wyse among many others (Lawrence 1970:38,70,191,257). Skidelsky considers anti-intellectualism one of the hallmarks of the New Education, quoting as typical a remark by a headmaster that academic learning consists in 'laying thin veneers of information on the surface of the mind' (Skidelsky, 1969:28). Similarly, the argument that education essentially serves the interest of powerful interest groups and the state is a commonplace of radical criticism that has been held by Marxist and anarchist thinkers among others until the present (e.g. Illich, 1971; Reimer, 1971).

Interesting parallels with Krishnamurti's work can be found in Bertrand Russell's *Education and the Social Order*, first published in 1932 when Russell was on the borders of the New Education movement. Russell's arguments are more carefully presented (and more humorous) than Krishnamurti's, but very similar in content. For example Russell also suggests that religious organisations and governments want to turn individuals into 'convenient tools' (Russell, 1977:32); 'education in the modern world tends to be a reactionary force' (ibid:15); compulsion in education destroys originality and intellectual interest (ibid:23); wisdom should be cultivated as well as technique (ibid:56); a sceptical attitude towards religious doctrines should be nurtured (ibid:65ff.); there should be harmony of intelligence, emotion and will (ibid:151).

In general terms, then, Krishnamurti added nothing new to the radical critique of education, most of the ideas which he expressed having been commonplace in the New Education movement. Once again we are led to the conclusion that he made few contributions as a formal or original thinker, although some people found his presentation and restatement of existing ideas moving and thought-provoking.

### 3.4 EDUCATIONAL AIMS

Much of Krishnamurti's educational writing, for example the chapter on 'The right kind of education' (ESL:17ff), is concerned with a fundamental question: what are the aims of education? Besides passages explicitly concerned with objectives, his works also include discussions of the wider implications of education in the context of his transformative religious vision. From these passages we can gain an understanding of Krishnamurti's overall intentions. Krishnamurti's statements were meant for general consideration and as a contribution to educational theory, but they also had a more specific intention: many were written or spoken directly for the benefit of students and teachers in the Krishnamurti schools. They were therefore not only general statements of educational aims but also a clarification of the purpose of the Krishnamurti schools in particular.

The educational philosopher John White notes that the discussion of educational aims in a broad sense has been sadly lacking from educational debate in Britain for the last twenty years at least. There has been a marked tendency to concentrate on smaller issues in isolation, 'fashioning separate stones...without having any overall conception of how the house should look' (White, 1982:ix). It would be 'more sensible ... to begin from general aims and work down into particularities from there' (ibid). For this reason alone it is interesting to consider Krishnamurti's work, since he had an overall

perspective and was concerned to explain his educational aims in detail.

In the first instance he was concerned with the transformation of consciousness, in his educational work as in his public talks. Professor David Bohm, a close associate of Krishnamurti, considers this 'the ultimate aim of all Krishnamurti's work, including education' (Bohm, 1986:6). An educational conference of the Krishnamurti schools, held in Rishi Valley in 1985, noted that as early as 1928 Krishnamurti had described Rishi Valley as a place 'for the enlightenment of Man' (*Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin*, no.50, Spring and Summer 1986:13). This is the same as the sentiment expressed in a letter in 1983: 'Surely it is our function as educators to bring about a quality of mind that is fundamentally religious' (LS2:61).

Secondly, Krishnamurti was always concerned with values, including respect for all life, which extended to unconditional non-violence and vegetarianism; a sense of responsibility, not only for one's family or neighbours, but for the whole of humanity; compassion; and a deep commitment to religious inquiry. His concern for these values is apparent in almost any passage of his books on education, and one welcomes his explicit statements. All systems of education convey values, but they may be tacit and implicit; moreover, as educational researchers have pointed out, there may well be contradictions between the stated values and those which are actually conveyed in practice. [9] It is important that these values be clearly stated so that parents and other interested parties are able to make a reasoned judgement on the system without being misled by unarticulated priorities or hidden agendas. Also, if the values are clearly stated it may be easier to identify discrepancies between ideals and actualities. In the case of Krishnamurti's educational work there was overt commitment to a value-system although from what has been said so far it will be understood that he did not advocate unquestioning acceptance of any particular system of morality or religious beliefs; on the contrary,

he felt that values would only be meaningful if the individual came to them after careful investigation.

Krishnamurti's overall aim, then, was to work towards the transformation of human consciousness in a religious perspective. I have identified six main themes which run through his discussions of educational aims:

1. Transformation and intelligence
2. The spirit of inquiry
3. Inward flowering
4. Understanding relationship
5. Academic excellence
6. Regeneration of society.

#### 3.4.1 Transformation and intelligence

In 2.2.4 I outlined Krishnamurti's teachings on the nature of intelligence and transformation. Since intelligence is unpredictable and acausal, there is nothing a person can do to hasten the awakening, which can only happen spontaneously and uninvited. Krishnamurti could only give an assurance that a transcendent and benevolent intelligence may come into operation and his statements are essentially in the nature of a personal testimony. Nevertheless he firmly held that the awakening was the only solution to humanity's crisis and therefore the fundamental aim of education (LS1:16).

At this point it will be helpful to consider the attitude with which we should approach this question. Many writers and teachers demand belief in their statements, and this has been a requirement for the study of supposedly revelatory texts in many religions, but Krishnamurti primarily demanded *exploration*. His statements are to be taken not as definitions or theories, but as proposals for further examination. Consequently he could propose that we

seriously consider even such an optimistic and far-reaching concept as the transformation of human nature.

The advantage of such an approach has <sup>been</sup> brought out very clearly by Professor David Bohm. If our horizons are very limited, then we shall certainly only discover what is very limited. But if our proposals are wide-ranging and we consider them in an exploratory fashion, we may come across something of great significance:

We could say that at the ground of everything is creative intelligence. That is the proposal. We can't say we've proved or disproved it. This is a proposal to be explored, and I suggest that it is a better proposal than the notion that there is no creative intelligence. If we assume that there is no creative intelligence we are going to block ourselves, we are surely going to fulfil that assumption, make ourselves mechanical. Therefore as a proper strategy, at the very least let us begin by proposing the possibility of a creative intelligence and see if we can explore that. (Bohm 1987b:12)

It is with this attitude that we should approach Krishnamurti's statements. It is right to be sceptical about metaphysical statements, but to be consistent one should also be sceptical about other assumptions, for example the notion that human nature is fixed and unchangeable, that no transformation is possible. Such a notion would in fact probably become self-fulfilling, as Bohm points out:

One of the dangers in a lot of the academic approaches [is] that they contain tacit assumptions that people are not very aware of that tend to be self-fulfilling. People find their assumptions verified and therefore they say that must be the truth. Now, I think we need an attitude of exploration here, of not having fixed assumptions but being ready to explore. So I think this would be the first requirement in any view of education of the nature which Krishnamurti had in mind. (Bohm 1986:6)

Education based on Krishnamurti's work, then, will start out with the basic premise that human nature may have the potential to transform. Any individual may realise a sacred dimension to life and there may be a social transformation based on a religious



regeneration. However, to avoid the dangers of sectarianism it would be important to keep a very open mind on this question. There must be no suggestion that Krishnamurti's teachings on transformation are infallible and no indoctrination.

With this proviso, it seems that this premise could lead to a creative and ultimately religious form of education. The assumption that human beings are essentially blocked at the present level of development is not necessarily well-founded. It is true that at present there are no discernible signs of a radical change in human nature and given the many disasters of recent history it could be argued that human beings are irredeemably degenerate. However, it seems to me that education based on this assumption would be utterly pessimistic and probably tend to reinforce existing blockages; perhaps, in order to operate with a certain amount of enthusiasm educators should at least not reject the possibility of changing human nature.

On the other hand, in an increasingly secular and multi-cultural society such as Britain there is little future for the confessional type of religious education which aims to inculcate the beliefs of a particular religion. As for India, recent events have shown the desperate need for less of the religious sectarianism which has caused so much bloodshed. Krishnamurti's proposals form an interesting contrast both to a pessimistic acceptance of the status quo and to sectarian dogmatism. He refused to indoctrinate, but also insisted that the question of transcendence should be seriously considered.

The main practical implications, which will be examined in more detail later, is that a school should provide the psychological and physical environment where intelligence might awaken. It should be a place where there is an intense atmosphere of free inquiry through dialogue and reflection, and where there is serious consideration given to religious questions. The school community should function harmoniously, with order but not rigidity. There must be no fear of

punishment or seeking of reward and no obsession with academic work. There must be an atmosphere of affection and healthy relationships. There should be no imposition of ideology. On the physical side, the school should be peaceful and well maintained, if possible in a beautiful situation in the countryside.

In practice, transformation is a question which is much discussed by the teachers at the Krishnamurti schools, whose attitudes will be examined in Chapters 6 and 7. The proposal is taken seriously, and the schools attempt to encourage their students and teachers in activities which are felt to be conducive to the possibility, for example through the culture classes in Bangalore and the emphasis on sensitivity in relationship at Brockwood. However, none of the teachers or students have undergone a transformation, and all are dependent on Krishnamurti's teachings for any information or belief about the topic. Although Krishnamurti was quite clear and adamant that the transformation was possible, no teacher could possibly speak with any authority on the matter. [10] The Principal of Brockwood Park wrote that this was one of the central dilemmas of the school: 'how can we approach doing something that we don't know how to do?' (*Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin*, no.50, Spring and Summer 1986:19).

#### 3.4.2 The spirit of inquiry

Krishnamurti taught that transformation could only be approached by constant questioning, a careful inquiry into the factors of conditioning (see 2.2.1 and 2.2.3). It was an important theme of his public talks, and also a characteristic of his approach to education: young people at his schools should be taught above all to question, not to accept. Bohm, who refers to this as 'arousing a spirit of inquiry', suggests it is one of the main factors in Krishnamurti's educational work (Bohm, 1986:7).

This aim is shared by many educationalists. To introduce a sense of scepticism to young people and to insist on the importance of independent thinking is widely recognised by contemporary educational philosophy as an important aim of education. It is a recurring theme in, for example, Schofield's *The Philosophy of Education* (1972). The author quotes with approval an aim proposed by O'Connor:

We are reminded by the aim of 'making people critical' of a specific need. The individual in our society is subjected to so much propaganda, indoctrination and persuasion that it is in his own interest to make him critical. It is also in the interest of society. (Schofield, 1972:101)

Krishnamurti explicitly cited the investigation of conditioning as an educational aim. It occurs in his writings several times, for example: 'education must not only be efficient in academic disciplines but must also explore the conditioning of human conduct' (LS2:24). In an unpublished statement entitled 'The Intent of the Krishnamurti Schools' he also stated it as the aim of his schools in particular:

In this school [i.e. a Krishnamurti school] it is the responsibility of the teacher to sustain with the student a careful exploration into the implications of conditioning and thus end it.

In his practical educational work it was an area to which Krishnamurti returned time and again. Discussions with students form an important part of his educational publications and were a central feature of Krishnamurti's visits to the schools. The discussions very often centred on a particular mode of thought or behaviour and how students could investigate it. Krishnamurti directly confronted students with examples of their conditioning - for example, inherited religious beliefs - and asked them to question their validity. With younger students this took the form of a talk, with exhortations to the audience to think things through for themselves. With older students, as is shown in the collection of discussions published in *Beginnings of Learning*, he strongly

encouraged debate or dialogue. The frequency and intensity with which Krishnamurti conducted these discussions is an indication of the importance which he accorded such inquiry (see 4.2).

Although the aim of encouraging a critical outlook is shared by many thinkers, Krishnamurti's teachings differ in two respects from the mainstream of contemporary western thought. First, he felt that inquiry should extend to such elusive areas as feelings about the nature of the self and thought; and secondly, he not only insisted on inquiry into conditioning but also maintained that a person could thus end his conditioning and be free.

Krishnamurti was concerned with developing a critical outlook on ideologies and on the accepted values of society. He particularly urged young people to understand what he considered the corruption of society and the pressures that would make them conform to its demands. However, he also argued the need to explore psychological states and feelings; for example he felt it necessary for young people to inquire into the nature of thought and the self, to undertake a process of introspection and self-examination. David Bohm characterised Krishnamurti's approach in this area by suggesting that he exposed deep-rooted forms of conditioning that would ordinarily be ignored:

There must be a spirit of inquiry which questions the conditioning...if you begin to look into your thoughts at first you will see chaos: feelings, thoughts...going into it you'll find anger, fear, hate, rage, pleasure...it all centres finally around what we call the self...so getting familiar with that is the first point. (Bohm 1986:9)

In a letter to the schools Krishnamurti explained how the inquiry into conditioning not only implies a critical attitude in general terms but involves a process of self-examination at a deep level:

To find the cause [of conditioning] we must go together and enquire into the nature and structure of a human being...there is the whole psychological field - the inward responses, inward hurts, the fears, the contradictions, the drive of desire, the passing pleasures and the weight of sorrow...We are concerned, are we not, with the exploration of our inward nature which is very complex. (LS2:26)

Such insistence on introspection leading to self-knowledge is characteristic of Krishnamurti and reflects traditions of Indian religious philosophy - Buddhism and Vedanta - with which he was familiar. It is an example of the synthesis that he created that he could integrate such demands with a school life in contemporary society.

Up to this point, the inquiry into conditioning could be accommodated within a secular framework although the emphasis on self-observation is not common in western traditions. But Krishnamurti asserted that it is the responsibility of teachers and students not only to explore conditioning, but also to end it. He maintained that the inquiry could lead not only to increased understanding, but also to transcendence. According to Krishnamurti it is possible for a human being to be totally free of his/her conditioning and to lead an unconditioned existence. The implications of this standpoint go beyond the framework of secular aims. In effect, we are led back to the same point as in the consideration of intelligence and transformation: we have Krishnamurti's assurance that a radical change in consciousness is possible. The assertion that conditioning can be ended is a restatement of the same assurance.

For those who are in sympathy with the aim of awakening a spirit of inquiry there may remain a doubt, namely, are students in Krishnamurti schools encouraged to treat Krishnamurti's own work with less scepticism than other peoples? Previously (2.4) I raised the point that people who implicitly believed in the work of Krishnamurti might evolve some kind of sectarian attitude, if not organisation, which would be as destructive as the sectarianism that

Krishnamurti criticized. Sectarianism and isolation seem to me the greatest dangers in advocating the work of a single figure as a guide to education. They may, as one writer put it, 'lead down the path of futile eccentricity' (Gray, 1985:vi). The admirers of an outstanding personality may lose sight of an overall perspective and become infatuated with the achievements and ideas of a single individual. I believe that this is a point which would have to be carefully monitored in any system of education centred around the ideas of an outstanding personality.

The only safeguard against distorted judgement is that those involved with Krishnamurti's schools must be willing to examine questions afresh, in the light of new information or insights. They must be aware of a broad perspective of ideas, and possible limitations in their own approach. If they are not, then the approach could easily become sectarian and of limited value. The key question is whether the critical spirit is cherished in the Krishnamurti schools for its own intrinsic value and allowed to probe his teachings as well as those of others.

### 3.4.3 Inward flowering

Many cultures have had a tradition of education for the whole human being: classical Athens and Renaissance Europe, ancient China and Victorian England, the French lycée and the German Gymnasium were all influenced by this ideal. The traditional concept of holistic education often included the teaching of a wide range of subjects, both academic and non-academic, physical education, and the cultivation of moral and spiritual qualities. It is often associated with the idea of drawing out latent capacities of the student instead of merely instructing him/her. The Krishnamurti schools subscribe to this idea and attempt to offer a wide range of courses and activities. They also aim to develop the spiritual and emotional qualities of their students.

Krishnamurti himself discussed the question at length and related it to his own ideas of personal development. The topic is stressed in the *Letters to the Schools* where he often refers to the 'flowering of the whole personality' or 'flowering in goodness'. In the first of the letters to the schools (LS1:7) Krishnamurti stated that 'flowering' would be a central theme of all the letters, although expressed in various different ways; and he explicitly stated it as an educational objective:

[The Krishnamurti schools] are to be concerned with the cultivation of the total human being. These centres of education must help the student and the educator to flower naturally. The flowering is really very important, otherwise the education becomes merely a mechanical process orientated to a career, to some kind of profession...This flowering is the total unfoldment and cultivation of our minds, our hearts and our physical well-being. That is, to live in complete harmony in which there is no opposition or contradiction between them. The flowering of the mind can only take place when there is clear perception, objective, non-personal, unburdened by any kind of imposition upon it. (LS1:7-8)

The harmony of mind, heart and body, which Krishnamurti also cited as a precondition for the awakening of intelligence, is an old idea which can be traced back to Plato. The metaphor of flowering (with the school as garden and the teacher as gardener) also has a long history in educational thought (Lawrence, 1970:102), and the concept of full development of inner faculties was a commonplace of the New Education: 'the aim of education is to draw out all the faculties of the boy on every side of his nature...and to strengthen him physically, emotionally and spiritually' (Telang, undated: 4). Krishnamurti was thus adopting an established educational concept to which he had certainly been exposed in his youth.

However, Krishnamurti had a far sharper and more realistic attitude towards psychological development than did many of those associated with the New Education. In his analyses of the human condition there are no platitudes about children's innocence. Rather, he gave practical guidance about coming to terms with the difficulties to

which we all seem prone. He maintained that there was only one satisfactory way to deal with psychological states such as anger, fear, jealousy or the demand for pleasure. One should not suppress the state, sublimate it, deny it or adopt any particular attitude towards it. All such attitudes imply a duality between a controller, or observer, and a state which he is trying to observe or control. Krishnamurti advocated a different approach whereby one allows these states to expose themselves without interference. Then one could begin to understand all the implications of the state, rather than achieving the limited goal of suppressing it. In a talk with teachers in India, he clearly indicated that this process should be a part of education:

If you allow jealousy to flower, then it shows you everything it actually is - which is envy, attachment. So in allowing jealousy to blossom, it has shown you all its colours and it has revealed to you what is behind jealousy, which you will never discover if you do not allow it to blossom. (KE:106)

This approach is treated as valid for all mental states:

Jealousy, in flowering, reveals its complexity. And in understanding the complexity, in watching the complexity, it reveals some other factor, and let that blossom, so that everything is blossoming, nothing is denied, nothing is suppressed, nothing is controlled. It is a tremendous education is it not?...You have listened to what I have to say this morning: "Let everything flower". (ibid)

When Krishnamurti made statements such as 'we are concerned with the total development of each human being, helping him to realize his own highest and fullest capacity' (LA:9), he was not referring to a wide range of accomplishments, but rather to a mature understanding of the psyche. The result should not be self-absorption, but the opposite:

In the total development of the human being through right education, the quality of love must be nourished and sustained from the very beginning...The emphasis on the quality of love frees the mind from its absorption in its ambition, greed and acquisitiveness. (LA:15)



Just as the ultimate aim of the inquiry proposed by Krishnamurti was transcendence, the ultimate goal of such unfoldment would be a radical change, the ending of the self:

Each flowering is a destruction of itself, and therefore there is no "you" at the end of it who is observing the destruction. In that is real creation. (KE:104)

#### 3.4.4 Understanding relationships

Krishnamurti often stated his conviction that all life is related and that human beings exist only in relationships - with other people and also with nature, ideas and property. There is no such thing as a separate human being and one can never understand oneself as a separate entity. For him it is particularly urgent to understand and establish good relationships since the widespread conflict in the world is rooted in a pervasive failure of human relationships which are essentially based on self-interest and fear.

Consequently, Krishnamurti stressed the understanding of relationships as another central aim of his schools. He hoped that students and staff could discover and overcome the various obstacles to relationship and cooperation: national and social prejudices, self-interest, possessiveness. This could lead not only to some sort of individual fulfillment, but to the creation of a harmonious community: 'the flowering of goodness in all our relationships' (LS1:11). Relationship might then be based on affection, which would be a real foundation for creativity and cooperation. This cooperation is not seen as primarily useful for technical or practical purposes, but as the means to self-understanding:

[The educator's] main concern must be with the radical revolution in the psyche, in the you and the me. And here comes the importance of co-operation between the two who are studying, learning and acting together. It is not the spirit of a team, or the spirit of a family, or the identification with a group or nation. It is free enquiry into ourselves without the barrier of the one who knows and the one who doesn't. (LS1-100)

Krishnamurti's position gives rise to two questions. First, should questions of emotional and psychological well-being in relationship have an important role in education? Secondly, did Krishnamurti's observations contribute significantly to the understanding of personal relationships?

The first question implies a value judgement on the relative importance that should be accorded to the establishment of harmonious relationships between people and to the understanding of the emotional and psychological factors involved. Krishnamurti's argument was that society as a whole, including the educational system, placed far too much emphasis on technological skills and far too little on the understanding of the human psyche. Many of his talks pointed out the enormous advances that have been made in technology and contrasted them with the destructive use to which much of that technology has been put. On the other hand, he argued that factors such as fear, violence, ambition and destructiveness are generally not treated with great seriousness and little effort is made to discover their causes and to change them.

Krishnamurti suggested that it is in fact an urgent necessity to confront these questions. The present level of technology is quite adequate to ensure a reasonable standard of living for humanity. The most serious problems of the contemporary world are created mainly because human beings are divided into hostile camps, because there is little sense of co-operation and solidarity. Even in affluent societies many people are unhappy and unfulfilled because of emotional and psychological stresses which cannot be resolved by the application of technology.

Krishnamurti also spoke of the importance of a respectful and sensitive attitude towards the natural world and towards objects. This was partly to teach children to care for and protect their environment, to develop sensitivity to ecological questions, but also because Krishnamurti emphasized the need for communion with nature as an aspect of the religious life. In a conversation with a

teacher in India he suggested that it would be unbalanced and confusing to demand of a child a process of introspection and inner awareness without encouraging him/her to pay careful attention to the world outside. There is need for the outward movement of perception and sensitivity 'otherwise you will be helping the child ...to become self-conscious, self-assertive, arrogant and with an authoritarian outlook' (KE:81).

Krishnamurti's argument is similar to that proposed by many thinkers in the field of philosophy, psychology and social criticism. One could find ideas similar to those proposed by Krishnamurti in the work of radical thinkers in various fields: Erich Fromm in psycho-analysis, Marcuse in neo-Marxism, Naess in ecology, Illich in social criticism. The common factor is a call for the reinstatement of human, psychological and emotional questions as a central concern and a reappraisal of society's obsession with material comfort.

Krishnamurti, then, called for a change in priorities. He proposed that much more time and energy be spent on understanding the human psyche and creating healthier relationships between people, which would have an immediate effect on the individual and eventually on society as a whole. In the context of education this would not mean an abandonment of science or technical skills but at least a recognition of the central importance in human life of emotional and spiritual health. Questions of relationship may be particularly confusing for adolescents who are starting to experience their own independent relationships and help from sensitive adults might be of great importance to them. One of Krishnamurti's contributions was to highlight this question and its implications for education.

As to the usefulness of Krishnamurti's observations, I suggested above that one of Krishnamurti's great strengths was his insight into feelings such as desire, fear, pleasure, resentment and anger, and how these factors affect personal relationships. This aspect of his work impressed many of his listeners and readers. In the course of my conversations with teachers and students at the Krishnamurti

schools and with others who have been involved with his work, a point they often stressed was the sense of illumination and understanding generated by Krishnamurti's discussions on how people function in their daily life. As already stated in 2.2.2, Krishnamurti's observations on psychology are of little interest to psychologists in the British academic world. It is difficult to see how objective testing could be applied to them, although if there were sufficient interest the psychological health of people who had studied his ideas could be monitored. [11] It remains to be seen if future generations will eventually make a positive evaluation of Krishnamurti's explanations of human behaviour. From my own experience and testimonies of other interested people I suggest that this is an area where he had much to offer and which would well repay further study.

#### 3.4.5 Academic excellence

Krishnamurti felt that academic studies should have a place in his schools and encouraged teachers to create a varied and interesting curriculum. But he never discussed the question in detail, limiting himself to remarking that the schools should provide an 'excellent' academic education as well as being places for religious enquiry (LS1:7). He was not opposed to scientific or artistic studies and agreed that they had an important role in human culture and education, although he certainly felt that the importance of academic studies was in general exaggerated at the expense of spiritual values. In practice, the Krishnamurti schools make serious efforts to maintain high academic standards.

It should be noted that although Krishnamurti demanded high academic standards he consistently opposed the examination system. His demand for academic excellence does not imply that he advocated teaching according to conventional syllabuses nor that students' performances should be assessed by examination. However, the Krishnamurti schools have to attract students and most parents

insist on the need for their children to sit public examinations. The schools have been obliged to fulfil their obligations towards parents by preparing students for examinations while at the same time attempting to implement the aims proposed by Krishnamurti. This has led to a number of creative experiments in the field of curriculum and working methods. The Director of the Oak Grove School in 1987 reaffirmed his commitment to academic success and claimed that Krishnamurti's approach actually helped students to attain that goal:

We hold ... that the observations and insights into learning that Krishnamurti has pointed out enable our students to achieve academic excellence with greater ease and efficiency than with even the most demanding of conventional approaches. (*Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin*, no.50, Spring and Summer 1986:17)

The importance of academic standards is also recognised at Brockwood and many efforts have been made there to extend the range and interest of course-work (see 7.2). However, the principal of the school stressed that success in this field is definitely not to be achieved at the expense of abandoning any of the school's priorities: 'a good academic education that pushed the 'awakening of intelligence' into second place would be an abandonment of all that Krishnamurti started the schools for, and yet a good education does and must go on' (*Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin*, no.50, Spring and Summer 1986:19).

It is striking that academic achievement, which is widely regarded as the main criterion for judging a school or a student, was seen by Krishnamurti as only an incidental aspect of education. This viewpoint is in fact typical of many of the educators associated with the New Education. Skidelsky (1969:23-33) gives an account of the range of opinions held on this topic, from A.S. Neill who had an essentially negative and anti-intellectual approach to Badley, the founder of Bedales, who promoted a tradition of sound learning and an intellectual ethos. Krishnamurti stood somewhere in the centre of the range. He certainly did not have the cavalier and

irresponsible attitude which has been imputed to certain idealist educators, but neither did he lay emphasis on the importance of academic study. Once again his approach was determined by his values: academic study is necessary but should not take precedence over more important aspects of life.

#### 3.4.6 Regeneration of society

Krishnamurti's educational work was limited in terms of the numbers of students and teachers directly involved. He founded only a handful of schools, some of which are themselves very small: at any one time there would be approximately one thousand students and one hundred and fifty staff in the seven Krishnamurti schools. But Krishnamurti maintained that he was concerned with a transformation of the whole of society, not merely with that of a few individuals. In his public talks, Krishnamurti was primarily concerned with human consciousness as a whole: the individual is important as the focal point of society's consciousness, and a change in the individual is particularly significant because it signals the possibility for a change in the collective consciousness. [12] The corollary in the field of education was that Krishnamurti saw his schools not only as institutions for the benefit of those who attended them but as vehicles for social change. He was not interested in minor reforms and in one of his talks to students in India specifically called for the creation of a new culture based on religion:

We have come to a point in history where we have to create a new culture, a totally different kind of existence, not based on consumerism and industrialisation, but a culture based on a real quality of religion. Now, how does one bring about, through education, a mind that is entirely different?  
(KE:14)

In this social context, he referred to his schools as centres of order, intelligence or religion, standing outside the mainstream of a corrupt and degenerating society. In 1979 he returned to the same formulation, the enlightenment of man, as he had used in 1928:

When the world around us is so utterly destructive and without meaning, these schools, these centres, must become places of light and wisdom...As this is urgent, excuses have no meaning. Either the centres are like a rock round which the waters of destruction flow, or they go with the current of decay. These places exist for the enlightenment of man. (LS1:84)

The consideration of Krishnamurti's philosophy has already explained the background to his educational aims, namely that he was concerned with a transformation of consciousness, without which any social reform or even revolution would be meaningless; a new social order would inevitably be corrupted by the old consciousness and any improvement would only be temporary; the transformation could only start among a few individuals who were seriously concerned with religious inquiry and would spread out from there; and the regeneration of society must start from a new religious consciousness which his schools aim to nurture. Krishnamurti's ultimate aims in education thus extend to the transformation and enlightenment of humanity as a whole; they stem from a religious vision of human perfectibility and universal salvation which has its roots in Christianity, Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism, as transmitted through the Theosophical Society.

Is this transformative teaching a serious answer to the problems that human beings face in modern society or is it escapist ideology? Does Krishnamurti's essentially individualistic educational philosophy reflect a weakness in his sociological understanding? Before addressing these questions, we will need to examine in greater detail Krishnamurti's view of the problems faced by young people in contemporary society.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### GUIDE-LINES FOR A NEW EDUCATION

#### 4.1 MATURITY AND VALUES

Despite different emphases and interpretations there is one question about which researchers and writers from a number of disciplines are in substantial agreement: contemporary society in most countries is undergoing a very fast process of change. Among other factors this involves a loss of traditional values, new physical environments, fragmentation of communities, a restructuring of the economy and people's working lives and far-reaching changes in social institutions such as the family (Milson, 1972; Chinoy, 1967).

Concerning the loss of traditional values there is again substantial agreement about contemporary trends. Western democracies are generally agreed to be pluralistic and secular, with no clearly defined or absolute value-system. Rather, a great number of institutions and social organisations offer different value systems, each individual being free to adopt some and reject others. This situation is sometimes termed 'anomie', which 'refers to an erosion of accepted values...[which] can reveal marked contrasts between the experience of living in one generation and another' (Milson, 1972:30). The sociologist Chinoy points out some of the consequences of the flux in values:

Anomie...gives rise to extensive personal breakdown - suicide and mental illness - and to various forms of deviant behaviour such as crime, delinquency, bohemianism, and other eccentricities. (Chinoy, 1967:364)



Problems in society are caused not only by social and economic deprivation but by a widespread uncertainty about values or meanings:

The role of the official bodies, and especially churches and states, in providing and effectively purveying 'nomoi' (meanings) to the population is greatly reduced because they lose their monopoly in conditions of pluralist competition... This happens when the individual in his multiple and fragmented role exists partly inside and partly at a tangent to so many institutions and associations that no one of them addresses itself to 'meaning' throughout the whole range of life experience, but only to snatches and fragments. (Martin and Pluck, 1977:49)

This discussion could be extended by reference to the work of many other writers since it has been a common theme in the literature, philosophy and psychology of this century. [1] However, there is sufficient agreement concerning the situation for us to proceed to consider some of the implications for education, and in particular for adolescents.

The freedom of a pluralist society can be a two-edged sword. On the one hand it allows for an openness, individuality and creativity that would be difficult to achieve in a tradition-bound society. Young people are exposed to a wide variety of meanings and values, none of which can reasonably claim to be authoritative, and are free to choose between them. There is increased social mobility, a greater choice of life-styles.

There are, however, dangers in the situation. In a recent study entitled *Religious Education and Human Development*, M. Grimmitt points out that we may harbour 'an unrealistic expectation that individuals possess the necessary capacity for taking responsibility for personal meaning-making' (Grimmitt, 1987:115). We may assume that we can simply leave young people to make up their own minds when confronted by the conflicting claims of different ideologies, religions or commercial interests. This may be an unfortunate error. Adolescents in particular are exposed to a very wide variety

of social pressures, and they may well lack the intellectual and emotional stability to preserve a sense of their own identity and to make reasoned choices. Among the empirical research on this question is the work of Henriksson in Sweden, who examined the very high level of pressure on young people to become uncritical consumers:

Children and adolescents are formed by commercial youth culture which has become an ever increasing source of values...The principal training of young people [takes place] within their own peer group, and parents and other adults must have abandoned, more or less, their attempts at influence...Themes which recur frequently in the products of commercial youth culture are sexual prejudices, sex and eroticism, violence, fear and excitement. Commercial youth culture continually prescribes consumption as an antidote to the difficulties of everyday life...The system encourages waste of economic and human resources. Thus commercialism's 'negative effects' deal not just with youth leisure, but have long-term consequences for young people's future and for the kind of society and view of humanity they will take over. (Henriksson, 1983: 61-2)

Other researchers have noted the difficulty adolescents in Britain have of establishing a 'personal value system' (Kitwood, 1980:167) and 'a total absence of any drive to intellectual consistency either in the belief pattern itself or between belief and behaviour' (Martin and Pluck, 1977:22). At its extreme the lack of human values among delinquent youth is expressed in activities such as drug-abuse and violence.

Professor W. D. Wall, an educational psychologist, has written extensively on this issue in his *Constructive Education for Adolescents*, a wide-ranging examination of education, commissioned by UNESCO 'in the light of the pressing contemporary... need for the majority of men and women to digest and control rapid social change' (Wall, 1977:vii). He suggests that an important element in the problem is the uncertainty many young people feel about themselves, and argues that the central quest of adolescence should be for more adequate social roles and identities:

The internal foundation of any genuinely adult maturity is the acquisition of a series of identities or selves unified by a general concept of who one is and by what standards one is prepared to live. (Wall, 1977:39)

According to Wall, education should provide the opportunity for young people to consider questions such as 'Who am I?', 'Where am I going?', 'What shall I be?' and 'What is important to me?'. His hope is that maturing individuals, guided by sensitive teachers, could find an inner security through self-knowledge. This goal, however, is rarely reached, one reason being the lack of adult guidance. Education may be reasonably efficient in other areas but fail to provide adequate support for young people who are confused by the complexity of the world around them. Adolescents are often left to find their own values with insufficient help:

In the absence of an effective shaping process - especially in times when the young are offered a multiplicity of choices - it is not surprising that we witness such mindless conformity to what may appear to be highly stereotyped roles. (Wall, 1977:231)

Wall fully recognises the need for effective education in technical and artistic subjects. There is no question of abandoning academic standards but he believes it is also important to nurture the growth of the personality, to help the young person develop a mature sense of self. His ideal is the growth of an autonomous, self-aware personality:

Fully self-aware persons - (ie, those who are personally autonomous) - are transparent to themselves and find their identity in this self-knowledge...Their security is internal and based on self understanding and acceptance, not external and dependent upon adopting and being adopted by a group of any kind. (Wall, 1977:230)

To return to Krishnamurti, it appears that his assessment of the problems facing young people in contemporary society coincides to a large extent with these recent observations by sociologists and educationalists. There are great differences in their terminology and in the presentation of their ideas but the underlying argument

is similar. Krishnamurti also pointed to the pervasive loss of values, the conditioning of the personality by random pressures, the need to evolve a critical consciousness and a deeper understanding of the self (see 2.2). Many of his educational objectives relate explicitly to this process (see 3.4). On the practical level also there are striking similarities between some of Krishnamurti's ideas and proposals made by other educationalists. For example, Wall argues that a school should:

Make pupils aware that behaviour has emotional causes which may lie outside conscious control...[A school should] welcome emotion and non-linear ways of thinking and feeling, giving status to literature, to sensitivity in human relationships and encouraging and training empathy with others. We shall encourage the growth of a *robust* introspection, the attempt to face, value and objectively judge, impulses, desires and needs in oneself and, charitably, in others. (Wall, 1977:230)

Grimmitt also argues the need for reflection about the nature of the self and concludes that young people should be helped to evolve a critical consciousness:

The process of becoming 'self-aware' (which culminates in 'self-knowledge') involves our becoming *conscious* of those beliefs and values which have shaped us as a person, and more particularly, have formed our identity...[We should] appraise them and exercise a conscious choice between them and between other beliefs and values which may be available to us...we reflect on, re-evaluate and re-interpret our 'self' and thus become actively involved in its shaping and development. (Grimmitt, 1987:157-8).

He notes that most British schools are not concerned with this aspect of education:

Schools on the whole still provide very little opportunity within either the formal or informal curriculum for young people to engage in reflection on...the self...Instead many schools still continue to embrace the notion that such concerns are at worst trendy and at best peripheral, and that the development of the human being is best served by pursuit of cognitive goals. (Grimmitt, 1987:97)

In this context, Krishnamurti has valuable contributions to make. In sixty years as a teacher, with both children and adults, he raised just these questions: the nature of the self, the understanding of emotional impulses, maturity of the personality. As an heir of the Indian spiritual tradition he was intimately familiar with the processes of self-observation and introspective inquiry. In addition, as we examine the content of his conversations with students and teachers we will see that he covered many topics which naturally give rise to questions of belief and value.

In this respect he anticipated contemporary ideas. For example, Grimmitt puts forward a range of topics which young people ought to discuss and reflect on: peace, evil, violence, anxiety, compassion, meaning, suffering, family conflicts, reconciliations, accidents, death, scandals, rivalries, poverty, crime, religious wars (Grimmitt, 1987:276). Pupils should not only be aware of the facts about these aspects of life but should discuss the questions of belief and value which are implicit in them. In this way they can be helped to develop a more mature sense of judgement and a greater personal autonomy, perhaps being less susceptible to the pressures of peer groups and commercialism.

The goal of personal autonomy is shared by people from a variety of backgrounds. For example, it can be discussed from a purely secular, psychologically oriented viewpoint (see Erikson, 1950; Havighurst, 1972). [2] However, Krishnamurti obviously differs from most thinkers in the fields of sociology and developmental psychology in a central respect. For him, the process of inquiry and maturity inevitably involves approaching the ultimate questions of religion: the meaning of life and death, the possibility of transcendence and communion with the Absolute. His philosophy in this respect questions certain basic assumptions and values of contemporary society that may be accepted by secular thinkers.

One such assumption is examined by David Hay in his *Exploring Inner Space* (Hay, 1982:210-11), and in more detail in the article *Suspicion of the Spiritual: Teaching Religion in a World of Secular Experience* (Hay, 1985:140-47). Following the work of the French philosopher Ricoeur, Hay suggests that the prevailing ideology of western society is secular to the extent that religion has become an almost taboo subject. Modern consciousness is dominated by metaphors derived from anti-religious thinkers such as Freud and Marx, together with a mechanistic, materialist stance derived from nineteenth century science. The consequence is a generalised denial of religious language and experience, and an uncritical acceptance of the sceptical attitudes which Ricoeur characterized as the 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. [3]

Krishnamurti questions these assumptions. Although he sharply criticised traditional religions, he was equally critical of modern ideologies including those derived from Marx and Freud. His critique of religious organisations was not a denial of the transcendent dimension to human existence; on the contrary, he criticised institutionalised religions precisely because in his view they had betrayed the vision of transcendence by their corruption and self-interest. We can immediately discern a difference between this view and more secular attitudes. As Hay argues convincingly in his article (Hay, 1985:141) most schools operate strictly within the 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. Religious teaching may be studied, but always within the context of a prevailing environment of secularity. This commonly leads to a lack of experiential understanding:

If my consciously available experience of reality is mediated via secular metaphors, it is very difficult for me to enter into religion apart from an imperialist foray to see how the natives live. I may be humane, sympathetic, even concerned that such cultures should survive, but within me is an experiential *apartheid* which detaches me from the possibility of genuine understanding. (Hay 1985:142)

A school based on Krishnamurti's work, on the contrary, would offer an environment where religious experience is allowed and even encouraged, not only in particular classes but in the life of the community as a whole. Teachers would create an atmosphere which Hay regards as essential for religious education:

The religious education teacher has the important task of providing an environment in which there is permissiveness with regard to religion...the positive creation of a climate in which the class members give themselves and others permission for the unhindered examination of the religious areas of human experience. (Hay 1985:144)

The areas of religion, education, religious education and the relationships pertaining between them are very complex. Specifically, there has been considerable difficulty in Britain adapting to the change from a Christian society to a multi-cultural and secular one, and there is little consensus about the place of religion in education. Widespread indifference to traditional beliefs, scepticism towards religious institutions and an absence of church commitment on the part of young people have been noted by several researchers (Martin and Pluck 1977; Kitwood 1980). The Christian churches have lost their cultural hegemony and to a great extent their influence on young people; ethnic minorities - Hindus or Muslims - have experienced an erosion of their cultural and religious traditions. Yet despite the sense of loss it seems neither practicable nor desirable to advocate a return to denominational schooling. The processes of secularisation and cultural diversity are too far developed.

However, some aspects of the situation may be more positive. In a pluralistic society it is easier to see that religious values and insights are not necessarily linked to traditional belief structures, cultural and ethnic activities, revelatory texts or particular deities. There is a recognition that valid religious insights may be available outside the traditional structures. Moreover, as ethnic minorities continue to make an impact on the educational scene in Britain, one may hope that the richness and

diversity of their religious experiences will be welcomed by our society.

An example of openness to an alternative concept of religion is provided by a Christian educationalist, J.W.D. Smith, who is willing to admit the religious dimension to Heidegger's thought:

Heidegger would not equate Being with God in the traditional sense of that word but his thought is clearly moving in the religious dimension. His analysis of human existence discloses the centrality and significance of death in human experience...Awareness of death gives depth to human experience. It awakens man to the dimension of mystery. This is the religious dimension to human life. (Smith, 1969:50-1)

Other writers, for example Phenix and Paffard, have shown that religious questions can be raised with young people without resorting to traditional Christianity. Phenix has attempted to create a curriculum that includes non-sectarian religious teaching in the context of holistic meaning:

Religion is concerned with ultimate meanings, that is, meanings...considered from the standpoint of such boundary concepts as the Whole, the Comprehensive and the Transcendent. (Phenix, 1964:7)

Paffard has studied the impact of transcendental experiences on young people in particular. He notes the reluctance of some Christian writers to admit the validity of spiritual experiences outside the Christian tradition (Paffard, 1973:28), but describes how many young people report mystical experiences and insights without particular notions or beliefs about holiness or deity (ibid:passim).

Krishnamurti's approach to religion is well suited to this social climate. He too was sceptical and indifferent towards traditional religions and religious institutions; but he was concerned with ultimate meanings and with personal experience of the sacred. He



wanted to show, in practice as well as theory, that religious questions can be meaningful to young people and that it is possible to establish schools in which religion is an integral part of daily life, reflected in lessons, relationships, leisure activities and other areas. Krishnamurti would have concurred with the sentiment expressed by J.W.D. Smith that education and religion should essentially confront the same question:

Modern use of the term *religious education* reveals the crux of our educational problem. It suggests a false dichotomy. Religion and education both involve the whole man...When John Milton wrote his *Tractate on Education* in the seventeenth century he defined the aim of education in religious terms. 'The end then of education,' he wrote, 'is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright.' (Smith, 1969:64)

The rapid changes in society and pervasive anxieties about values mean that educators should be concerned with questions relating to the nature of the self and personal identity. The problems facing the modern world are not only material but psychological, making it necessary to confront these questions in educational institutions. It would be an inadequate response to society's complex problems merely to teach for technical competence. It also appears that for many people in contemporary society ultimate questions of meaning can only be considered in the context of non-formalised and non-traditional spirituality. In many ways our society is in ruins, and repair will have to include a re-examination of religious questions.

#### 4.2 TEACHING THE ART OF INQUIRY

Krishnamurti had a remarkable ability to make people reflect, to examine their own lives and beliefs, and an important part of his activity as educator was the discussions he held with teachers and students. Since his talks usually covered similar ground, an exhaustive analysis of his output is unnecessary: if one compiles

the topics to which he returned most frequently, one can deduce the areas where he felt exploration and consideration was most important for young people. A list of the major issues raised in three books of Krishnamurti's talks with students - *Life Ahead*, *Krishnamurti on Education* and *Beginnings of Learning* - is given in the Appendix to illustrate the range of Krishnamurti's work in this field.

The talks to pupils in India published in *Krishnamurti on Education* give a good indication of the style and content of these discourses to pupils in the schools. First he often discussed the state of society, the pressures for conformity and the role of education. Krishnamurti did not advocate adjusting to society; he tended to be radical, if simplistic, in his social analysis and demanded a critical attitude from pupils:

You must be studying current events. There are wars, revolts, nation divided against nation...And you are being educated to fit into all of this. Do you know the world is mad, that all this is madness - this fighting, quarelling, bullying, tearing at each other? And you will grow up to fit into this. Is this right, is this what education is meant for, that you should willingly or unwillingly fit into this mad structure called society? (KE:11)

Secondly there are talks on the various difficulties that arise in relationships, with particular reference to school life. Questions such as the conflicting demands for freedom and discipline are raised, and some of the difficulties involved in living in co-operation with others are analysed:

This problem of freedom and order is one of the most difficult and urgent problems in life...It needs to be thought over much more than mathematics, geography or history. If you are not really free, you can never blossom, you can never be good, there can be no beauty...You cannot have freedom merely for the asking...Everybody wants to be free, and yet they want to express themselves - their anger, their brutality, their ambition, their competitiveness and so on. So there is always conflict. (KE:26)

Thirdly he pursues more deeply the psychological aspects of these problems: the processes of conditioning, selfishness and image-formation that were examined in detail earlier (2.2). His arguments are little different to those in the public talks for adults, although the language is somewhat simpler:

Do you know what that phrase 'self-concerned' means? It is to be occupied with oneself, to be occupied with one's capacities...with what your neighbours think of you...whether you are going to become an important man...Wherever you are, whatever you do, you are always in conflict, and you do not seem to be able to get out of conflict; not being able to get out of it you create the image of a perfect state, of heaven, of God...You have images not only inwardly but also deeper down, and they are always in conflict with each other. (KE:41)

Finally, even with young children he approaches questions of love, death, meditation and religion:

There must be love, otherwise your life is empty...Find out what it is to love people, to love dogs, the sky, the blue hills and the river. Love and feel. Then you must also know what meditation is, what it is to have a very still, a very quiet mind, not a chattering mind. And it is only such a mind that can know the real religious mind...without that feeling life is like a flower that has no fragrance. (KE:49)

These topics, together with the others noted in the Appendix, may be considered a kind of curriculum for a Krishnamurti school, an outline of the questions with which a student ought to become familiar. The aim is to provoke the student to think over a wide range of issues which directly relate to his/her psychological development and maturity as a human being.

It is hard to assess how much impression Krishnamurti made on the students who heard him. The opinion of many interviewees in India was that his direct impact on the majority of students had been minimal. He visited Rishi Valley for only a few weeks on each visit, and not every year, and only spoke to the students three or four times. Most of the teachers and students that I interviewed

said that he seemed a very remote figure and that only the oldest students could follow what he had to say. In the other Indian schools he spoke even less: he visited the schools in Bangalore, Madras and Bombay on very few occasions. His visits to Rajghat School in Varanasi were more frequent, but the majority of pupils there understand little English and were hardly able to follow his arguments. Nevertheless a handful of students every year were attracted to his teaching and would attend his public talks or videos.

However, his indirect influence on the students was considerable even in those schools which he seldom visited. Krishnamurti's world-view is conveyed to pupils in his schools in a number of ways: by discussions with teachers, through the general atmosphere of the school and through the approach to academic work. The mechanism by which this operates in the Valley School in Bangalore is discussed in Chapter 6. To anticipate briefly the presentation of my findings at Bangalore, it is worth stating at this point that all the older students with whom I spoke in the school were interested in Krishnamurti's ideas, which for the most part they had encountered through discussions with their teachers. Looking back over their educational experience they felt that the discussions had stimulated them to think over many important issues and been helpful in preparing them for later life.

At Brockwood the situation is somewhat different. The students are older than in the Indian schools and most of them choose to go to the school because of their own interest in Krishnamurti's ideas. This contrasts with the Indian schools where pupils are sent by their parents. Also, Krishnamurti himself spent a longer time at Brockwood, often three months a year, providing more scope for personal interaction and discussion. At Brockwood he was more like a human being and friend, whereas in the Indian schools he was a remote and venerated stranger: several interviewees suggested that most teachers in India found it difficult to have an informal

relationship with Krishnamurti because of the enormous respect traditionally accorded to spiritual teachers in Hindu culture.

These differences are reflected in the book *Beginnings of Learning* as compared to *Krishnamurti on Education*. The latter is in the form of lectures by Krishnamurti, with short questions at the end of the talks. In *Beginning of Learning* where he is in conversation with the students at Brockwood, the atmosphere of dialogue and inquiry is much more pronounced. The tenth dialogue (BL:132 - 149) is a good example of his work. Krishnamurti first raises the question 'What is the central core of your thinking?...And why is there this continual occupation about oneself?' (BL:132). The students begin to raise some questions about possessiveness in relationship which are obviously of relevance in a community of young people, and go on to consider the implications of relationship in a wider context, including the treatment of refugees in Pakistan. Krishnamurti suggests that identification with particular social groups is a major cause of conflict but refuses to allow the students to adopt his views uncritically: 'I am questioning you and you must question me too. Don't accept what I am saying, enquire' (BL:136).

A student raises the question of group action to protest against the war in Vietnam. Krishnamurti neither criticises nor approves such action but raises questions about its efficacy and limitations. He suggests that many people might be involved with such activities because they find security in a common ideology. A student replies that exactly the same thing may be happening at Brockwood (BL:139). And so the discussion continues, concluding with Krishnamurti making some remarks about observing thought. It is a process of inquiry, as Krishnamurti presses the students to talk about themselves, to examine the assumptions behind their thinking and not to jump to conclusions.

During my visit to Brockwood I was told by an interviewee who had been close to Krishnamurti that he himself did not know how far his discussions with pupils had really borne fruit. He started his work

in education with great enthusiasm and for a time seems to have believed that young people were less heavily conditioned than older people, that they had not absorbed the full weight of received opinions. One of the reasons that he stressed the importance of schools was because he hoped that some young people might be relatively unconditioned and able to understand his teaching. After Brockwood had been running for some years, he decided that this was not the case. The students at Brockwood were mostly teenagers and it became apparent that they were as heavily conditioned as anyone else. It was then decided that the new school in the USA should be for younger children, starting with an infant school. Again, after a while it became apparent that even these children were as conditioned as their seniors. The point was that there is no age at which a person is free from influences, and no age at which he/she is functioning freely and intelligently. The only exceptions known might be the occasional extraordinary figure like Krishnamurti himself.

Perhaps because no child seemed to be deeply affected by his teaching, Krishnamurti, particularly towards the end of his life, focused his attention on the possibility of a transformation among the staff at his schools. He was encouraged that a number of teachers had stayed at the schools for a considerable length of time and appeared to be approaching life in a serious manner. At Brockwood he urged the principal to ensure that they were encouraged to the utmost in their endeavour. The implication was that the transformation which Krishnamurti hoped for might arise among the staff at the schools as well as, or instead of, among the students.

Krishnamurti considered the vocation of a teacher as one of the highest for a person to undertake and also one which would be conducive to transformation. In the right conditions, he wrote, 'teaching becomes a holy act' (LS1:24) and 'the right kind of educator is deeply and truly religious' (ESL:111). The principal of Brockwood suggested that this was because teaching inevitably involves the action of reaching out to others. It is a constant

challenge to communicate ideas and emotions with other people and leaves no room for escapism or self-indulgence. Teaching, in a suitable environment, is not only a vocation of great social usefulness but can be a profession admirably suited to the kind of inquiry advocated by Krishnamurti. Krishnamurti's insistence on inquiry was thus not confined to his talks with students but extended to his discussions with teachers also and in his writings he made many observations about teaching as a vocation.

As we saw earlier (3.3), Krishnamurti considered the indifference of teachers as one of the factors contributing to the failure of conventional education. He gave various explanations for this: they may feel confused and unhappy in their own lives, frustrated by the demands of the school where they work, forced to cope with overcrowded classes and indifferent parents. Simply to advocate new teaching methods would not change the situation: the root cause of the problem is psychological, not technical. In this area as elsewhere, Krishnamurti's writings reveal his tendency to think in psychological rather than sociological terms. It is surely the case in Britain, for example, that many of the difficulties which teachers face are the result of social factors such as poverty, overcrowding, family environment, drugs and violence. Teachers are expected to perform the role of social controllers and child-minders, to uphold ideals of justice and 'good behaviour' which may appear irrelevant or hypocritical to large sections of the population. The problems they face in schools will obviously only be resolved by a change in the priorities of society as a whole. Given the socio-economic situation it seems highly unlikely that an improvement in teachers' psychological states could produce a significant change in the school system.

However, it would be wrong to accuse Krishnamurti of ignoring problems such as poverty or deprivation. Rather, he totally lacked faith in the system of state education: as with social change in general, he felt that it was a hopeless task to attempt to change the majority of the population or to implement meaningful reforms.

The only solution which interested him was the sudden and total transformation in consciousness. Consequently he expressed little interest in what was going on in state schools and his energies were instead focused on the establishment of small independent schools which by-pass many of the sociological problems mentioned above. We shall discuss later (4.4) to what extent this is an unacceptably élitist position.

As a consequence of this standpoint, Krishnamurti addressed himself to a small audience of teachers who were interested in his philosophy and who regarded teaching as something like a religious vocation rather than a salaried profession. Krishnamurti clearly expected the teachers in his schools to be involved in the issues raised in his public talks. In *Education and the Significance of Life and Letters to the Schools* he posed a series of questions which he felt it would be fruitful for a teacher to confront:

Is he [the teacher] going to teach the usual subjects in the habitual way? Does he want to condition the child to become a cog in the social machine, or help him to become an integrated, creative human being...? (ESL:104)

What is the future for these students? What is the future of man? ... Must we perpetually live in conflict, sorrow and pain? (LS2:34)

We shall ask ourselves why and to what purpose we are educating the children and ourselves; we shall enquire into the meaning of existence, into the relationship of the individual to society and so on. (ESL:106)

This process of inquiry includes questions specifically relating to education and the welfare of young people. As with all Krishnamurti's questions, the answers are not to be sought in books or authorities but rather to be found intuitively in the course of reflection and meditation. This would be the starting point for a transformation in the lives and relationships of teachers and hence in their teaching:

Surely the teacher himself must first begin to see. He must be constantly alert, intensely aware of his own thoughts and feelings...out of this watchfulness comes



intelligence, and with it a radical transformation in his relationship to people and to things. (ESL:105)

According to Krishnamurti, teaching in the way he advocated would no longer be a burden fraught with difficulties but a fulfilling way of life. Teachers would be deeply concerned with the psychological welfare of their students and teach them, by example and discussion, about such matters as fear, pleasure and religion. Within this perspective, Krishnamurti briefly indicated further details of what he expected a teacher to do: he/she would have to create the right environment for the child to develop (ESL:25); teach the child to be observant (LS1:32); help the child to understand his conditioning and to dispel fear (ESL:29); stimulate his spirit of enquiry and discontent (ibid:41). The main point is for the teacher to become an integrated, intelligent human being: if that has taken place, then the teacher will be able to see exactly what needs to be done in each case and will have the energy to do it. He/she will be totally independent, and will therefore be able to treat every child as an individual without reference to any system or theory.

Krishnamurti's talks with teachers, perhaps even more than his other work, are a mixture of idealism and sharp, practical observations. On the one hand he makes general statements couched in lyrical language about the joys and religious significance of teaching; on the other he makes penetrating observations about the difficulties of relationship between teacher and student. The idealism and also the sharpness of perception are apparent in the discussions on the question of communication with students. The 'Talks to Teachers' (KE:53-106) are full of questions such as 'How will you educate a group of children to be fearless?' (KE:91); 'How to communicate this sense of enquiry...to the student?' (KE:86); 'How will you help the student to understand?' (KE:81). According to Krishnamurti, the basis for communication is a trusting and affectionate relationship:

Once I have established the right relationship or communication between myself and the child, he is going to learn because he has confidence in me...What we are trying to do is to establish relationship (KE:92)

If a child feels that you are really looking after him, that you care for him, that he is completely at home with you, completely secure with you, then he respects you and listens to you...He is then at peace with what you tell him. (KE:91)

Beyond that, teachers and students must proceed by approaching each situation in an exploratory mood and with the intent to learn. Each occasion, person and problem should be approached afresh, on an individual basis, not referred back to some set of guidelines. Inquiry should be independent and creative. Everyone should begin by acknowledging their own limitations and conditioning:

It is free enquiry into ourselves without the barrier of the one who knows and the one who doesn't. This is the most destructive barrier, especially in matters of self-knowing. There is no leader and no led in this matter. When this is fully grasped - and with affection - then communication between the student and the teacher becomes easy, clear and not merely at a verbal level. (LS1:100)

This extract emphasizes one of the essential features of Krishnamurti's teaching: the denial of hierarchy and authority. As will be discussed in 4.4, some features of Krishnamurti's educational theory, for example the emphasis on spirituality as an integral part of a young person's education, are reminiscent of traditional Hindu ideals. But Krishnamurti's work represents a modernisation and demystification of the Hindu tradition: there is no elaborate respect to be shown for the teacher but on the contrary pupil and teacher are essentially equal partners in an open dialogue. Moreover the democratic approach is not confined to freedom of discussion but is an essential component of Krishnamurti's proposals for school structure and management. In the following section we will see how Krishnamurti envisaged his principles being applied throughout the whole life of a school.

#### 4.3 PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

In Chapter Five of *Education and the Significance of Life* Krishnamurti outlines some suggestions concerning the overall structure of a school and practical considerations in school life. The suggestions are not detailed but give a good indication of his overall approach, which has been adopted to some extent by all the Krishnamurti schools. As noted earlier, Krishnamurti had little expectation of influencing government policy or reforming the state system of education. He thought that governments would not take a serious interest in the kind of education he was proposing, unless there was a radical change of consciousness in a country, and felt that the type of education he advocated would only be possible in schools established specifically for the purpose of conveying his ideas. His remarks were therefore addressed to those parents and teachers who were attracted to his teachings, which was only a small number of people. He referred to these people as 'serious' and suggested that this minority were those who wanted to take full responsibility for the education of their children instead of allowing education to be dictated by the conventions of state or tradition. He implied that the energy and resources necessary to run an independent school would be forthcoming, provided that parents really cared for and loved their children:

Those who love their own children and the children about them, and who are therefore in earnest, will see to it that a right school is started somewhere around the corner, or in their own home... When there is love of the child, all things are possible. (ESL:88)

He admitted that 'to maintain a small school of the right kind is of course financially difficult; it can flourish only on self-sacrifice, not on a fat bank-account' (ESL:88). Concerning the lack of material facilities to be expected in a small self-financing school, Krishnamurti's argument was that the freedom and independence gained are essential. If these are lacking, school inevitably becomes an institution for the perpetuation of conditioning. He explained why a school should be small: he was

concerned with individual rather than mass instruction and felt that a good school would necessarily have relatively few pupils to allow for maximum individual<sup>u</sup> attention and to avoid institutional formality. However he did not specify precise numbers; in practice the Krishnamurti schools range from about forty to four hundred students. The principal of Rishi Valley told me that Krishnamurti was quite pleased with the relatively large number of students at the school (about three hundred and fifty) as it ensured a secure financial basis for the school and allowed a wider range of activities than would otherwise be possible.

The advocacy of small schools runs against the general trend of education in the past decades. Large schools have certain obvious advantages: economies of scale mean that a range of facilities and specialised teaching can be provided that would be difficult to afford for smaller units. Further, large schools seem to be the only way to cope with the huge numbers of children to be educated by the modern state. They are also seen by some as a means to social homogenisation and equality of opportunity. As we shall see in 4.4, Krishnamurti had little to say on social and political issues and made no attempt to address these questions.

However, there are undoubtedly advantages in having small, intimate schools. One is the possibility of dispensing with institutional management structures. Krishnamurti envisaged running a school along democratic lines, the most important thing being a 'spirit of freedom and co-operation' (BSL:90): there should be no control, authority or dominant personality (ibid:90); frequent meetings of the whole staff for executive decisions (ibid:91); equal distribution of work (ibid: 93); self-government by students (BSL:95). However, he confined himself to suggesting general guidelines, leaving the details to be worked out in individual circumstances. In practice his schools have experimented with different forms of management. For example, the school in Madras is run by a committee of seven teachers who take joint decisions on daily matters, while overall management is in the hands of a

committee which includes teachers, parents and members of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India. As described<sup>in</sup> 6.3, Valley School in Bangalore operates in a highly democratic manner and seems to confirm research which suggests that small, informal schools have far less discipline problems than large schools.

A basic responsibility of a school is to provide for the physical welfare of its students. Krishnamurti considered it vitally important that every young person should have a good diet and suitable exercise: in fact he thought the point so self-evident that he rarely mentioned it in his writings. On occasion he did confirm how essential these factors are to the well-being of young people, and wrote of the health of the body, along with the mind and the heart, as one of the necessary preconditions for harmony and flowering.

Any school will naturally allow a certain space for leisure and free time for students to devote to their own interests. Likewise, teachers would normally expect a defined working day with time to themselves during breaks and after school hours. However, for Krishnamurti this sort of delimitation of roles and time periods already implies a fragmentation. He suggested that for most people earning a livelihood is a strain, a denial of something else they would rather be doing. In these circumstances leisure becomes merely an escape, a respite from overwork: 'we are so occupied with our livelihood that it takes all the energy of the mechanism of thought, so that we are exhausted at the end of the day and need to be entertained' (LS1:23).

Krishnamurti argued that at his schools this fragmentation should not exist. Characteristically he sought the answer to the problem by examining its psychological implications, urging teachers to explore the question for themselves. He defined leisure as '...a period when the mind is not occupied with anything whatsoever' (LS1:23). Freedom from occupation is then not only lack of formalised activities but a sense of quietness and freedom from

pressure. In this state, the mind 'has infinite time to observe...it is only in this state that the mind can learn' (LS1:12). Teachers should organise school life so that they have sufficient free time and do not feel overworked and, equally importantly, they should discover any tensions or strains that are generated by problems such as poor relationships. If the latter are not resolved, it is of little use to increase leisure time.

Another cause of tension in schools results from discipline and behavioural problems. Krishnamurti certainly did not want his schools to be casual or lax. Everyone is expected to do a full day's work, to keep to schedules, to maintain high standards of cleanliness, to dress appropriately. Drink and drugs (including tobacco) are strictly prohibited. The underlying atmosphere should be of an ordered and structured society where all are expected to behave with respect for others and for the environment. The reason Krishnamurti gave for this was that both teachers and students should feel happy and secure (LS1:31) or feel at home (LS1:56). Further, they should understand the need for affection, care, consideration and politeness (LS1:96). He was aware that this ideal would be hard to attain, as many young people would automatically rebel against rules: 'in these schools you are free, and all the disturbance of your young lives come into play. You want your way, and no-one in the world can have his way' (LS1:101). In practice, staff do not allow rebellious attitudes to be expressed in destructive behaviour in Krishnamurti's schools. [4]

In cases of anti-social behaviour, Krishnamurti recommended that problems should be thoroughly discussed between pupils and teachers. When talking with students himself, he frequently pointed out that their urge to break rules was essentially a form of self-assertion, or a form of curiosity based on pleasure and excitement. At least with older children, he asked them to consider seriously why they felt impelled to experiment with drugs or drink, or why they created conflict in the community. In the course of discussion he would refer back to factors such as image-making, conformity and

conditioning which he felt lay at the root of behavioural problems. This demand for intimate discussion was one reason why schools should be reasonably small and intimate:

Some form of compulsion, the discipline of punishment and reward, may be necessary to maintain order and seeming quietness among a large number of students herded together in a classroom; but with the right kind of educator and a small number of students, would any repression, politely called discipline, be required? (ESL:33)

Given the right conditions and frequent discussions, Krishnamurti hoped that most children would be co-operative. In the event of persistent bad behaviour, there should be time and energy for inquiry, not force:

If...a student persists in disorderliness or is unreasonably mischievous, the educator must inquire into the causes of his misbehaviour, which may be wrong diet, lack of rest, family wrangles or some hidden fear. (ESL:33)

Krishnamurti also discussed the psychological significance of rewards and punishments. Behaviourist psychologists have shown convincingly that a coherent system of rewards and punishments (positive and negative reinforcement in behaviourist terminology) can modify behaviour in certain areas and teach fairly simple mechanical tasks (O'Leary and O'Leary, 1976; Walker and Shea, 1976). The system has certain obvious advantages, for example it is easily understood, widely accepted and demonstrably effective in at least a limited area of human activities. Almost all schools and families make use of it, either directly by the use of formal sanctions and rewards, or indirectly in the form of smiles of approval and subtle forms of reproach.

By contrast, Krishnamurti stressed that in his view this is an utterly mistaken way to deal with children. Punishment is a means of instilling fear, subtle or obvious, whereas the purpose of education in the widest sense should be to free a person from fear. Rewards are at first sight more acceptable, but it is clear that

they are effective because they appeal to competitive, ambitious or pleasure-seeking urges in the child. Use of reward and punishment will cause a lack of sensitivity and a damping down of the child's natural creativity:

Reward and punishment in any form only make the mind subservient and dull...If we have no respect for the child but merely offer him a reward or threaten him with punishment, we are encouraging acquisitiveness and fear (ESL:32-35). [5]

The relatively high standards of behaviour demanded in the Krishnamurti schools may seem in contradiction with Krishnamurti's insistence on total freedom, but this would be a misapprehension of his concept of freedom. Rebellion against clear and practical rules for community living, in Krishnamurti's view, would merely be a reaction of a troubled ego; freedom lies in action without self-interest, based on an understanding of the ego. In this context, reaction against demands is to be taken as an occasion for dialogue and learning:

You have to understand this very clearly - you cannot have your own way. Either you learn to adjust with understanding, with reason, or you are broken by the environment you have entered ... In these schools the educators carefully explain and you can discuss with them, have a dialogue, and see why certain things have to be done (LS1:101)

Krishnamurti did not advocate 'free schools' in the sense of schools based on libertarian ideology which allow maximum self-expression to the students. Instead he aimed at providing an environment where people could live and learn together. The school should be a community where people have the opportunity to carefully explore their relationships, since they live at close quarters for a number of years, involved in a variety of activities on an intimate personal basis. Students and staff are expected to understand Krishnamurti's teaching about the difficulties experienced in relationship, and therefore to be able to live in a more harmonious way:



When there is the pursuit of pleasure, human beings are exploiting each other. When pleasure becomes dominant in our life, relationship is exploited for this purpose, and so there is no actual relationship with each other. Then relationship becomes merchandise ... Surely [the schools] must be centres for learning a way of life which is not based on pleasure, on self-centred activities (LS1:83)

In the two areas considered so far in this section - school structure and discipline - it should again be noted that Krishnamurti to a large extent adopted ideas of the New Education movement. Although there were variations from one school to another, most schools favoured democratic management structures, often involving pupils in 'school parliaments'. Discipline was supposed to be agreed rather than imposed and teachers were urged to 'understand' rather than punish miscreants. At the same time there was in most schools a strong sense of morality bordering on puritanism and pupils were often expected to conform to 'progressive' ideas about health and conduct which might include vegetarianism, open-air activities and callisthenics such as eurhythmics (Skidelsky, 1969:151-154). *Education and the Significance of Life* was written in the early 1950s, but its discussion of discipline contains little that had not been said thirty years previously.

To summarize, a school as Krishnamurti envisaged it will be small and informal, with democratic management and excellent relationships between pupils and staff. Discipline will be maintained through discussions rather than punishment and the overall atmosphere will be one of co-operation and trust. Above all, attention will be given to fostering a spirit of religious inquiry as a co-operative venture between staff and pupils. Part Two of this thesis illustrates how these ideas have been implemented in practice, but first the concluding section of Part One considers some of the main themes relevant to an assessment of Krishnamurti as educator.

#### 4.4 KRISHNAMURTI AS EDUCATOR

Krishnamurti's work does not amount to a formal, comprehensive educational theory. However he discussed a number of important educational topics and his view of the human condition was clearly articulated in his teaching. It has therefore been possible to determine his general orientation in education and to identify, if not a Krishnamurtian theory of education, at least a characteristic approach which is as clearly defined as that of, say, Steiner or Montessori. We have also identified the two streams of thought which most influenced his thought: first, theosophical doctrines, combining Indian religious philosophy with elements of western esotericism, which formed the basis of Krishnamurti's later teachings; and secondly the progressive, idealist theories of the New Education movement. I would not suggest that Krishnamurti was entirely dominated by these influences; on the contrary, he created an original and personal synthesis, enriched by his own observations, reflections and insights. Nevertheless, reference to some important characteristics of Indian thought and the New Education movement is helpful in an assessment of Krishnamurti's work in education.

It was noted earlier (2.2.2) that the dominant mode of Indian thought has been introspective and subjective. The philosopher Scharfstein (1978:116), for example, suggests that Indian thinkers 'excelled in exploring human thought and emotion...[they were] explorers and categorizers of inner experience'. In the best of Indian religious philosophy there is an inward spirituality, a sense of self-reliance and autonomy, and this is forcefully conveyed in Krishnamurti's approach to education. It would be difficult to envisage an educational theory evolved entirely within western paradigms which could, so strongly and in such an illuminating way, argue the need for self-understanding.

Two further characteristics of Indian culture are relevant to an appreciation of Krishnamurti's work in education. Firstly, almost

all schools of thought in India agree about the goal of philosophy: the quest for liberation, *nirvana*, *moksa*. They start from the assumption that life in this world is full of suffering but that human beings have the capacity for transcendence and liberation (Organ, 1970:135; Nakamura, 1964:162). Here we may note a fundamental difference from western philosophy which typically lays greater emphasis on curiosity, the joy of discovery, knowledge for its own sake. Krishnamurti's educational work is deeply influenced by a salvationist element: the world is in a desperate crisis and humanity must transform. The search for knowledge is of secondary importance.

Finally, an important element in the Indian tradition was the relationship between guru and disciple. Religion was taught in a personal relationship: depending on the particular tradition, the guru's function might be to teach orthodox practices or to instruct the disciple in scriptural lore. At its worst, this tradition undoubtedly gave rise to an excessive formalism and sterile obedience: together with blind adherence to scripture it led to a conservative tendency in Hinduism where innovation was always regarded with suspicion (Scharfstein, 1978:70-72). However, there were positive aspects also, for example the understanding that youth could be a time for spiritual instruction and awakening, a time which could be devoted to religious studies prior to the assumption of adult responsibilities. Most Indian religious traditions also enjoined young people to uphold a high standard of morality extending to unconditional non-violence and vegetarianism. [6] Ideally, education was a spiritual undertaking and teaching a religious vocation. While one may doubt that the practice ever lived up to the ideals, at least in theory youth was a time for religious instruction, meditation and preparation for life's responsibilities (Organ, 1970:231-33).

India has produced colourful and outstanding *individuals* in many walks of life. Amaury de Riencourt has suggested that the Indian delight in self-experimentation, the urge to investigate and make

full use of the psyche, led to the outstanding personalities of modern India such as Vivekananda, Gandhi, Nehru (Riencourt, 1960:218-19). A similar idea was put forward by Aurobindo, himself one of the most charismatic and colourful thinkers of the sub-continent. Whereas the west has been deeply influenced by the Greek ideal of moderation, the ~~goden~~ mean, the Hindus developed a sensitivity to what Aurobindo calls 'a fine excess'. He suggests:

A tendency of the Indian mind...[is] the impulse to follow each motive...spiritual, intellectual, ethical, vital, to its extreme point and to sound its utmost possibility. (Aurobindo, 1946:19)

Krishnamurti, despite his rejection of Hinduism, was certainly such a larger-than-life, colourful, charismatic figure, although this was not translated into public life where he maintained a low profile. A consequence for his educational work was that his schools are largely centred around his world-view and importance is attached to pupils' exposure to Krishnamurti's work as religious teacher. It is difficult to imagine similar personal reverence being accorded to a western philosopher or educationalist. Perhaps the closest parallel would be found in Anthroposophy, the movement founded by Rudolf Steiner: it is surely no coincidence that this too was an off-shoot of the Theosophical Society. Together with the intent to develop spirituality among the pupils at the Krishnamurti schools, there are grounds for suggesting that Krishnamurti's educational theory has strong resonances with the traditional guru-disciple ideal.

On the whole, Krishnamurti represents a progressive development in Indian thought. His contact with western modes of thought helped him discard much that was obscurantist, superstitious or reactionary. He was thoroughly cosmopolitan and totally rejected Hinduism and Indian nationalism. At the same time he preserved the richness and depth of the Indian tradition, retaining and yet transforming the cultural patterns described above. He was a master of inner reflection and observation, of self-reliance and personal autonomy. He maintained impeccable moral standards of conduct and

his writings give accounts of his almost daily religious experiences. With regard to the role of teacher he renounced any tendency towards dominating a particular group of followers or young people and had no intention of indoctrinating anyone with traditional values; yet he felt a responsibility to communicate his insights both to adults and in the context of education.

In a wider frame of reference Krishnamurti's teaching is an excellent example of non-formal, non-institutional religious thinking which may have much to offer in today's society. I have suggested that this may be of particular value to youth in a period of anomie and social upheavals when there is a need for inner stability and a strong sense of personal identity. It may particularly appeal to people nurtured in a sceptical, secular environment because Krishnamurti made no use of traditional religious imagery or devotional practices and rejected the authority of scriptures. Yet at the heart of his vision there was a recognition of a mystery in life and a religious dimension to human experience: he did not accept the prevailing 'hermeneutics of suspicion' but saw in humanity the potential for a religious transformation.

At this point it is worth noting a characteristic of the mainstream of Indian thought which many commentators have considered a weakness, namely a tendency to isolation and withdrawal:

Nearly every Indian religious thinker seeks to live in the bosom of Nature and there to have direct communion with the Absolute. He renounces the world, lives in the depths of the forest, sits under a tree or on a rock and, keeping himself aloof from all secular affairs, concentrates his thoughts on the quest for truth...The main current of the Indian civilisation has not been in the cities but in the woods. (Nakamura, 1964:163)

The eremitic tradition is founded on the view, almost universally accepted in India, that life in this world is inevitably full of suffering (Nakamura, 1964:162). There is a strong tendency to

disdain any social activity and even to despise the physical body. Little or no value is attached to the secular, mundane world and the solution to suffering is seen by almost all Indian thinkers as transcendence, not social reform. There is an excessive emphasis on individual salvation, a lack of social responsibility, a non-development of social and political thought (Renou, 1962:75; Schweitzer, 1936:5). [7]

It is unfortunate that the other major influence on Krishnamurti's educational thought, the New Education movement, also suffered from a similar lack of social perspective and over-emphasis on the individual. The deepest influence on the progressive educationalists was Romanticism, with Rousseau's *Emile* being their seminal text. Many progressive schools were strongly influenced by the ideal of Blake and Rousseau: the full realisation of the power of the individual in opposition to a corrupt and uncaring society. Typically Romantic themes, which recur again and again in New Education, are an idealisation of Nature and a fixation on the vision of the heroic individual confronting a corrupt society, Prometheus unbound: the vision of a spiritual and creative release of the individual's God-like potential through art, music, poetry, contemplation of Nature and above all through mystical, intuitive flashes of insight.

Another feature of the Romantic movement was a tendency to anti-intellectualism. Karl Popper explains the movement as essentially a reaction against the arid scholasticism of the rationalists. The Romantics were repelled by the lack of imagination and perceived rationalists as 'the poor in spirit, pursuing soulless and largely mechanical activities, and completely unaware of the deeper problems of life and philosophy' (Popper, 1956:229). Skidelsky summarizes their attitude:

They associated the rationalist approach with book-learning, the amassing of facts and information, the suppression of the deep, vital urges of man; and contrasted it with the liberated world of the passions and emotions, the insights of the mystics and creative

artists, the symbolic unity of man and nature.  
(Skidelsky, 1969:97)

Instead of piecemeal, analytical academic learning, Romantics longed for vision into the innermost heart of things, the 'sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused' to quote Wordsworth, their paradigmatic poet. The scientific, rationalist approach was regarded as pedestrian, and the individual apprehension of Truth accorded greater importance than the organic growth of knowledge. The following quotation from an early progressive educator (Dr. Reddie of Abbotsholme) is a typical example of how their precepts were applied to education:

We cannot understand adequately external nature...unless we not only look at them as things at a distance from us, but endeavour to feel ourselves into them, and incarnate ourselves in imagination in their tissues and substance. We must look at them...not merely analytically...but we must feel in them the connecting links which constitute the very life itself. (Skidelsky, 1969:98)

There is much that is attractive about the Romantic movement. It led to a regeneration of aesthetic sensitivity and deeply influenced the course of European culture. There is a vigour and spontaneity, a full recognition of the importance of the individual, a sense of enrichment. But unfortunately the Romantics, and their disciples shared the weakness of Indian thought with regard to social philosophy. They showed little interest in social reform or revolution, and their social thinking tended to be dominated by nostalgia for a Golden Age, an idealization of life in Nature, the image of the Noble Savage or a longing for the New Jerusalem. None of these visions seemed to contribute much to the realities of social life in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. [8]

The New Education movement evolved many of its ideas from this source. Schools were located in idyllic rural settings to protect children from the coarse vibrations of a decadent society and expose them to the benefits of Nature. Academic work was often denigrated

and regarded as a necessary evil, not as an avenue for creativity and understanding. There were high hopes of restructuring humanity by transforming individual children who would then return to society and transform the world. Social analysis was never a strong point and the movement was largely centred around the preoccupations of idealist thinkers in the upper middle classes. However, as it became clear that the results of the new schools were far less dramatic than anticipated, a sense of disillusion set in which was intensified by the depression of the 1930s and by the Second World War. The world appeared to be heading for another cycle of destruction; the education movement had failed to prevent the repeat of the catastrophe which gave it its first impetus and lost much of its enthusiasm and optimism. There was no repeat after 1945 of the ferment which followed the First World War. Social change proved to be a far more complex and difficult proposition than had at first been imagined. It appeared that instead of being harbingers of social change, the progressive schools were merely self-indulgent communities, oases of privilege: not the privilege of power like the traditional public school, but the privilege of those who could afford not to dirty their hands with the corruption of society (Skidelsky, 1969:243-258).

As we turn to Krishnamurti, it appears that his educational work, despite its excellence in many respects, does seem to share the weakness of Hinduism and Romanticism in the lack of social perspective. His schools are mostly in idyllic settings, isolated from the stream of society, providing a rarefied atmosphere for a few hundred children. It is something of a paradox that although his intention was to eliminate selfishness, against which he so often inveighed, his philosophy is strongly centred on the individual: its orientation is psychological, not sociological. Krishnamurti's educational theory evolved naturally out of his philosophy of life, and his educational work suffered from a relative disdain for social reform and technological progress, an over-emphasis on introspective and intuitive understanding as compared to empirical or scientific knowledge.



There are few indications in his work that he understood or cared about the difficulties of mass education, and it is precisely on the social level that the failure<sup>of</sup> the psychological approach is evident: the experience of providing education for working class children has revealed problems that cannot be resolved by psychological techniques, however advanced. Where there is a basic lack of common values and communication between the educational establishment and large sections of the population, radical improvement<sup>in</sup> in general education will not only need psychological understanding but changes in factors such as employment prospects, cultural patterns, housing and even diet. Krishnamurti made little effort to make an impact in these areas.

However, it would be wrong to suggest that Krishnamurti ignored the question of social change: it would be more accurate to say that his vision of how this might occur was quite different from that of most western social scientists. Krishnamurti tended to disregard factors such as per capita income, greater life expectancy and better housing as evidence of social progress. His view was rather that society is essentially corrupt, prone to wars, famine, poverty, pollution and oppression. His denunciation in a series of talks in 1970 sounds like that of a latter-day Blake:

In every country, in every clime, under the banner of peace there is violence; in the name of truth there is exploitation, misery, there are starving millions; there is suppression under great tyrannies, there is much social injustice. There is war, conscription and the evasion of conscription. There is really great confusion and terrible violence; hatred is justified, escapism in every form is accepted as the norm of life.  
(IQ:13)

This is typical of Krishnamurti's observations about the state of the world. He sounds radical rather than conservative, with references to violence, poverty, exploitation and political oppression: he did not hold an inherently reactionary view of society, but on the contrary stressed the urgent and desperate need for change. The essential difference in his outlook, compared to

more conventional thinkers, then, is not concerning the need for change, which is recognized by both, but in how this change might be brought about.

Consider, for example, social democracy as a typical western paradigm of social change: a growth in industrial production accompanied by greater equality of consumption and improvement in facilities such as medical care and education. Variations on the theme might include increased aid to poor countries and stricter control of pollution. As to spiritual development, the ideal would be greater access to education and leisure, hence freedom for individual development. Krishnamurti would not have been opposed to any of these changes, but he was not hopeful that they would improve the human condition in a significant way: in fact at times he seems to have considered that more sophisticated technology would simply be a means to more sophisticated wars and social control. His view was rooted in the conviction that human nature at present is essentially corrupt, selfish and violent. It is the task of a few, highly sensitive and developed individuals to break through their conditioning and realise a radical transformation in consciousness, which would then become easier for all to attain. Nothing less than a step forward for humanity, an evolutionary change in consciousness, is of any significance: if social reforms take place they will merely provide a new scenario for new acts of terror and destruction. Krishnamurti argued this point of view forcefully throughout his life as can be seen from the following extracts in 1934 and 1961:

As long as you merely want to reform, that is, to bring about changes in the existing systems of thought, of culture, of possessiveness, though you may momentarily alleviate the suffering...you are but postponing...the fundamental question which is whether a society or a culture shall be based on self-aggrandizement, possessiveness and exploitation. (TANZ:1934)

The pattern of society is human relationship based on ambition, envy...desire for power...Such a society may and generally does profess to believe in love, in goodness, but it is always ready to kill, to go to war. Within this pattern, change is no change at all,

however revolutionary it may appear. When the patient needs a major operation it is foolish merely to alleviate the symptoms. (CL3:132)

The question is, of course, still to be decided by the course of history. Optimists might maintain that humanity is now set for lasting peace and a steady improvement of the quality of life. Krishnamurti's view was that there is likely to be a series of devastating catastrophes unless human beings radically change their behaviour in the immediate future. It seems to me that both positions are tenable and at present it is impossible to determine which is correct. At least we can understand why Krishnamurti pays such attention to the individual: it is not out of lack of concern for the future of humanity, but because of his vision of how significant improvement might take place.

When we consider Krishnamurti as educator, then, we should recognize that he had many excellent ideas and qualities that deserve further study. In particular his exploration of the psyche may be of great value to young people struggling to establish a sense of identity and a mature sense of self. However, his view of society and social change will be seen by most people as eccentric. He rejected the main trend of western social thought and had little interest in social reform or political philosophy. In this he was perhaps reflecting an established pattern of Indian thought and a naive Romantic model of individual liberation. It should be remembered that this was based on his belief in the possibility of a sudden transformation in human nature rather than on a reactionary conservatism.

However idealistic his philosophy may seem, one thing about Krishnamurti cannot be denied: he was an immensely practical man who was successful in implementing his vision in practice. His seven schools represent one of the most enduring achievements of the New Education. They are flourishing in the modern world and have dropped the slightly kitsch flavour of some of the educational

efforts of the 1920s. As we examine two of them in detail, we will hopefully shed light on some of the theoretical questions discussed in the first part of this thesis.

**PART TWO**

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESEARCH IN KRISHNAMURTI SCHOOLS

#### 5.1 THE KRISHNAMURTI SCHOOLS

Empirical research in Krishnamurti's schools was an essential element in the evaluation of Krishnamurti's work as educator and religious teacher. First, personal testimony was an important complement to Krishnamurti's published material. His writings convey the conceptual content of his teaching but they do not reflect the full range of his educational activities. When he visited the schools he held discussions with teachers, working with them to establish the guidelines for the schools. He was also involved in determining school policies and priorities and in developing new initiatives. None of this activity could be appreciated from written sources.

Further, the schools provide an opportunity to examine the values and attitudes of those closely involved with Krishnamurti's work. How did it affect them? Are there any signs of the transformation of consciousness he hoped for? How do teachers regard Krishnamurti? Such questions can only be examined by discussion with the people concerned. Empirical research is the only means to examine how the Krishnamurti schools operate in practice. How are the schools funded? Do they indoctrinate their pupils? Is there a cult-like mentality? Does his approach seem to contribute to maturity or psychological development? Which educational techniques have been adopted and how successful have they been? In undertaking fieldwork in specific schools I hoped that there would be some elements at least in Krishnamurti's educational work that might be

of interest to people concerned with the connection between religion and education, and that a discussion of the schools would provide material to illustrate Krishnamurti's achievement.

It would of course have been possible to visit all seven Krishnamurti schools but not to discuss them all in detail within the scope of this thesis. A full discussion of each school would require context statements, an account of its major organisational features, a description of atmosphere and relationships and a reporting of staff and pupil attitudes as well as my observations on the relevance to Krishnamurti's work. Since I did not intend to produce a comprehensive survey of the Krishnamurti schools, it seemed that the needs of the thesis would best be served by reporting in detail on two of the schools. However, in order to indicate the scope of Krishnamurti's work, I have included the following brief account of all the schools and some observations on Krishnamurti's role in them.

There are seven Krishnamurti schools, in England, India and the USA:

Country	Name	Location	Founded
England	Brockwood Park	Near Winchester, Hampshire	1969
India	Rishi Valley	Near Madanapalle (S. India)	1928
	Rajghat	Varanasi	1934
	Bal Anand	Bombay	1954
	The School	Madras	1973
	Valley School	Bangalore	1978
USA	Oak Grove	Ojai, California	1975

The Brockwood Park Krishnamurti Educational Centre (hereafter called Brockwood) is the only Krishnamurti school in Europe and is also a centre for adults who wish to study Krishnamurti's teachings. The students range from age fifteen upwards. Most students study for

GCSE and A levels, and some older ones take Open University courses while living at Brockwood. It has an international atmosphere with staff and students from many different countries. The school is described in Chapter Seven.

Rishi Valley was the first Krishnamurti school. It is a co-educational boarding school with a good academic record. The fees are high by Indian standards and most of the students come from wealthy families, predominantly South Indian urban upper classes. Approximately ten per cent of students at the school are aided by scholarships. The school also runs a small rural education centre where free schooling and medical care are given to local village children. There are plans to extend the services provided free of charge to the local community, but Rishi Valley and all the surrounding countryside is facing a serious long term water shortage which may threaten the further development of the school.

The area surrounding the school is of great natural beauty. Many people told me of the great love that Krishnamurti had for the valley, which he often described in his writings. At the western end of the valley stands a hill called the Rishi Konda, and it is believed locally that it is a sacred place where many *jivanmukti* (liberated souls) live. It is also believed that an enlightened teacher lived there about two hundred years ago and predicted the establishment of a religious centre. The name of the valley (*rishi* is the Sanskrit term for religious teacher) reflects the belief that the place was a centre for religious teaching in ancient times. Although Krishnamurti would not comment on such beliefs, many people there believed that he sensed something sacred in the atmosphere of the valley which made it an ideal site for his school. [1]

Rajghat is also a large and well-established co-educational boarding school, situated on the outskirts of Varanasi. Most of the students come from land-owning families of Uttar Pradesh, one of the most traditional areas of India. Descriptions of its beautiful



surroundings, particularly the pilgrims' path alongside the Ganges, occur frequently in Krishnamurti's writings. Again here I was told that Krishnamurti was deeply appreciative of the spiritual atmosphere of the place and while he was in Varanasi he met with the religious teachers, pandits and musicians who lived in the city. It was here that he came into closest contact with Indian cultural and religious traditions.

The schools in Bombay and Madras are smaller and of later foundation. Bal Anand is an after-school centre and kindergarten for poor children, educating about 130 children irrespective of caste or creed. The school in Madras is a fee-paying day school for children of 3 to 16 years, with about 240 pupils. Krishnamurti seldom visited these schools, although he met many of the teachers during his visits to India. The Valley School, just outside Bangalore, takes primarily day students although there are some boarders. It is more innovatory in approach to academic work and staff-student relationships than the other Krishnamurti schools in India. The school is described in Chapter Six.

The school in California is a day school which takes children from kindergarten through high school. It is situated in the Ojai valley, which was another place of great significance in Krishnamurti's life: he had important spiritual experiences there in 1922 and returned there when he was about to die. The school aims to concentrate on providing a comprehensive, coherent curriculum and bringing each child to a deeper awareness of him/herself. [2]

Each school is free to explore and work out its own way to implement Krishnamurti's intentions and there are no standard procedures of curriculum or pedagogy used by all the Krishnamurti schools. Each school reflects the local culture in which it operates. On the other hand there is constant communication between the schools, and a general framework is commonly acknowledged: to provide a happy and caring environment, to encourage respect for others and for nature, to be vegetarian.

In particular, the schools are supposed to reflect Krishnamurti's teaching. Older students are encouraged to attend videos and discussions about Krishnamurti's work as it is felt that students should be exposed to his teaching directly. Equally important, most staff members are themselves interested in the kind of inquiry proposed by Krishnamurti and are open to discussion with the students. The students are thus exposed to Krishnamurti's ideas in two ways, explicitly through talks and videos, and implicitly through the general ethos and value systems of the schools. Krishnamurti was adamant that no cult should be formed around him: there is no kind of Krishnamurti organisation which students could join and no pressure is exerted on students to make them give money or maintain contact with the schools once they have left. However, the schools do attempt to convey Krishnamurti's teachings to children and this inevitably raises the complex question of indoctrination.

Krishnamurti personally had several functions in the schools. On a practical level, he held numerous discussions with people who proposed opening a new school. If he was satisfied with their integrity and felt that the project was feasible he would then sanction the proposal. He would be available for advice and help to raise funds for the new project. Besides this, Krishnamurti took care to know what went on in each school, visited some of them and held many meetings with teachers and students. This insistence on direct personal involvement was one reason why the number of schools was kept small. In 1976, Krishnamurti explained that he could only be responsible for the already existing schools:

It is not that one wants to keep the name [Krishnamurti] exclusive, but it becomes impossible to be directly responsible for schools beyond one's close observation. (*Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin*, no.30, Autumn and Winter 1976:1)

To fulfil this responsibility, Krishnamurti stayed at his schools regularly. From 1969 to 1986 he spent four months or more of every year at Brockwood Park. On his visits to India he usually stayed at

Rishi Valley and Rajghat and met teachers from the other schools. In Ojai, his home was close to the grounds of the Oak Grove School.

Krishnamurti's visits to the schools, which provided opportunities for intimate private interviews as well as numerous group meetings, were of great significance to those teachers who were interested in his work. Krishnamurti also spoke to students, both in an informal, friendly way and in a more formal setting in group meetings or talks. Many teachers and students told me that these visits were the high point of the school year. Difficulties that had arisen in the course of the year seemed to fade into insignificance and the whole school would become more enthusiastic and energetic. People would spend more time talking seriously, meditating or evolving new ideas under the stimulus of his presence. A sociologist who spent one year at Rishi Valley School noted:

An important aspect of his visit is that Krishnamurti's presence [in Rishi Valley] enriches the atmosphere and lends a special mystical quality to it. There is an inexplicable aura associated with Krishnamurti which is experienced by those who come into contact with him and which pervades the atmosphere during his visit. A stillness and a sense of calm descends [on the school], temporarily removing the differences between people and uniting them in a commonly shared task. (Thapan, 1986a:214)

Thapan also noted that the principal effect of Krishnamurti's visits was to strengthen the ideological aspect of the school, the teachers' commitment to his world-view:

His brief presence [in Rishi Valley School] is a reaffirmation of the purpose of the school...and when Krishnamurti departs [from Rishi Valley School] he leaves behind a certain intensity in the atmosphere which results in a surge of activity...Krishnamurti's visit ...is an act of regeneration, a renewal which implies 'a new birth' of the community as a whole through a return to the origins of the school. It is thus the 'archetypal act', the repetition of which at periodic intervals ensures the regeneration of the community. (ibid:216-7)

As well as talking to school members, Krishnamurti held public talks on the grounds of or close to four of the schools, and several of the schools also hosted seminars with eminent visitors. [3] In general there was a ferment of activity centred around Krishnamurti. The visits were certainly not an easy time for staff members. Krishnamurti did not only discuss his teaching in an abstract way but made keen observations and criticisms about practical affairs in the schools. He was quick to expose problems that would more comfortably have been left hidden. His visits were not in any way serene or tranquillizing but tended to produce an effervescence of challenges and change. As Thapan observed:

In his contact with teachers, Krishnamurti's task seems to be that of shaking them out of their apathy and complacency by expressing his dissatisfaction with school processes and their own performances... There is an undercurrent of tension associated with Krishnamurti's impending visit and, in particular, his critical reactions to school processes which engender preparations at another level. ... That Krishnamurti should not find fault with the work they are doing becomes an overriding concern as the time for his visit approaches. (ibid:213)

Krishnamurti was active in the schools until the last months of his life. I was told by the ex-secretary of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India that at the time of his death the schools were running better than at any time in the past: she felt that he had left his house in order.

## 5.2 PREPARING FOR FIELDWORK

Krishnamurti maintained that his teaching was not bound to any one culture, but was universally valid and relevant to people of any nationality. When I considered which schools would provide insights into the religious significance and educational value of his work, it therefore seemed appropriate to choose schools operating in different cultures. It also seemed necessary to examine his educational work with reference to a variety of age ranges and

school structures. Was it more suited to younger or older children? In a residential or day school? In a school where Krishnamurti was well-known or where he was a relative stranger? In short, I needed to identify schools in different countries and with different intakes and structures.

Given the location of the schools, it was ideal to choose one in India and one in the west. Again, for the school in the west, Brockwood was an ideal choice. I had visited the school several times and knew the principal and some of the staff and students. It was within easy travelling distance. It is the school where Krishnamurti spent most time and is flourishing and well-established. There were also plans to open a new centre for adults in 1987 which would be an interesting and important addition to the educational work.

The other school in the west, Oak Grove School in California, had none of these advantages for me. I knew none of the staff and travel was expensive. Krishnamurti had spent less time there, and I had been told that the school was relatively new and still in a state of flux. Further, I discovered that an American researcher, Dr Anne Nalls, was conducting research at the Oak Grove school and that she was planning to produce a thesis describing her work (see Nalls, 1987).

With regard to India, where there are five Krishnamurti schools, the choice was more complex. Rajghat and Rishi Valley, the two largest, had certain disadvantages. They were both fully residential, both had received frequent visits from Krishnamurti and both planned to build adult centres: in these respects they were similar to Brockwood. Two further points were that Rishi Valley had already been the subject of a doctoral thesis and several articles (Thapan 1985, 1986a and b) and that Rajghat was in a state of change, with a new principal and many new staff members. Nevertheless I felt it would be useful to visit these two schools because many of the senior members of staff had had extensive personal contact with

Krishnamurti and many years experience of work in his schools. I therefore decided to visit these schools for shorter periods and without the intention of describing them in the thesis.

The school in Bombay is atypical of the Krishnamurti schools as it provides after-school care for very poor children and thus seemed an inappropriate choice for my purposes, although it would have been interesting as the only Krishnamurti school primarily concerned with a disadvantaged social group. However, the schools in Madras and Bangalore both seemed suitable. I had heard positive reports about both schools from acquaintances, and they differ from Brockwood in several respects. Apart from the obvious cultural differences, the two schools are primarily for day students, have an age range of six to eighteen, a local catchment area, little input from Krishnamurti directly and no adult study centre. Since I had no basis to prefer either, I eventually decided on the Valley School in Bangalore because I had visited it in 1982 and been favourably impressed by what I saw. I felt that my previous relationship with the school would be an advantage and would alleviate some of the difficulties of adapting to a new culture.

To conduct the empirical work required for the thesis it was necessary to have the permission of the responsible persons in each of the schools I intended to visit. I explained my intentions and received a letter from the secretary of the Krishnamurti Foundation Trust in England and the principal of Brockwood Park in which they gave permission for me to conduct interviews at Brockwood. They expressed themselves 'sympathetic with your request and prepared to co-operate with you in this project'. They also made a few requests: all interviews should be reported anonymously; any unpublished material from the school used in the thesis should have their specific approval; they wished to be advised before submission of the thesis of any lengthy extracts quoted from Krishnamurti's written work. During the three years of my study, several trustees of the Krishnamurti Foundation agreed to be interviewed and helped with information and observations. I was allowed to stay at

Brockwood whenever I requested to do so, to participate in school life, conduct interviews and examine the archives. There was no attempt by the Foundation or any person at Brockwood to influence my research or reporting by threats to withdraw the privilege or any other sanction. I felt free to observe and write as I wished.

To arrange my visit to India, I wrote in the autumn of 1985 to the Secretary of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India and to the principals of Rishi Valley, Rajghat and the Valley School. I stated my intention of visiting the schools for research purposes. All four wrote back to say that they would co-operate with my request. When my research programme was decided, I wrote and obtained permission from the same people to spend one month at the Valley School and shorter periods at Rishi Valley and Rajghat. Again, no constraints were placed on my research and I was given every facility for interviewing and observation during my visits.

### 5.3 RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

The two main objectives in my research determined my choice of research techniques. The first was to gain a deeper understanding of Krishnamurti as religious teacher and educationalist and of his impact on those who worked closely with him. This could best be gained by dialogue with the people concerned; thus I anticipated that one part of the research would be conducted by open-ended interviews which might vary considerably in length, depth, topic and organisation.

Second, I was interested in the effect of Krishnamurti's ideas on the organisation and running of the schools, and on their atmosphere and ethos. This interest was primarily on the religious and psychological rather than the purely educational aspects, and I did not plan to collect data on factors such as class origin, examination performance, development of cognitive skills or eventual employment. Instead, I intended to adopt techniques used in

ethnographic educational research, preparing my project with particular reference to Bogdan and Biklen's *Qualitative Research for Education* (1982) and other accounts of qualitative research (Rist, 1977; Kneller, 1965). The main emphasis of such research is a description and discussion of a particular community based on interview and participant observation. The description takes the form of narrative and quotations, and aims to provide a literary account of the community through which a reader can gain an insight into the lives and attitudes of participants. The strong points of the technique are that it may convey the quality of the community and the feelings of its members far more vividly than a statistical survey would do. It allows for lengthy interaction between researcher and the community, for trust and communication to develop, and is particularly useful when an important aspect of research is the discussion and presentation of values and convictions.

The qualitative approach does, however, have shortcomings. It is inherently subjective, fails to provide statistics or hard data, is limited to particular situations, and provides little possibility to generalise from its observations. In these respects it differs from approaches which rely more on quantifiable data obtained from techniques such as questionnaires and records, and usually concerned with relatively large sample groups and control groups (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982: 45). [4] These disadvantages were not critical for my project. The Krishnamurti schools are so small in number and size that a statistical approach seemed inappropriate. More importantly, I wanted to investigate and discuss somewhat subtle qualities such as the atmosphere of the schools, the relationships between teachers and pupils and the variety of attitudes towards Krishnamurti and religion. These factors could be more usefully examined through sensitive observation and dialogue than by compiling questionnaire type data.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982:223-233) provide a detailed list of 'observational questions for educational settings'. This suggests a



structure for observation of the school environment, human relations and learning. The school environment has physical aspects (buildings and surroundings), social aspects (money, social class, integration) and linguistic aspects (quality of dialogue, language). Human relations include those between teachers, other staff, staff and pupils, administrators, parents and visitors. Learning involves academic questions such as classes, curriculum, examinations, discipline and motivation. I noted these points as a possible basis for my observations.

The other important task was to identify and interview the individuals most likely to be able and willing to talk at length about their values, attitudes and experiences. The purpose of the interviews was, as expressed by Bogdan and Biklen:

To gather descriptive data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world...Good interviews produce rich data filled with words that reveal the respondent's perspectives. (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982:136)

To provide a focus for the interviews I formulated a number of questions relating to my central concerns. How do Krishnamurti schools teach the spirit of inquiry? What is meant by this? Which factors seem to help the process? Is it a central concern of the schools? If not, then what is? What about students who are too young or not interested? How much was Krishnamurti's personal presence a factor in the development of the school and its philosophy? What was the effect on students and teachers, how did they see the world? I realised that I would be meeting a wide variety of people and that my interviews would have to be flexible depending on the respondent's interest. My preparations were thus characteristic of much qualitative research where the design is flexible, general and evolves during the period of study (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982: 47).

I visited Valley School for one month, from January 1-31, 1987. For the first ten days I commuted from Bangalore on the school bus. After this a room became available in the school guest house and I was allowed to stay there. Valley School is a particularly free and open institution. I was allowed to attend any class I wished and to observe the open class system in operation. Moreover, I was allowed to sit in on all teachers' meetings, whatever the topic under discussion. There was no sense of being excluded from anything or that certain areas of school life were closed to outsiders. Whatever its weaknesses may be, Valley School was in my experience certainly a model of openness.

I attended school from 8.45 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. every weekday. Valley School does not have formal classes for most of the day. My usual pattern of work was to attend one 'culture class' (see 6.2) and one other class each day, and to write reports of these classes in my notebook. I then observed the open class system in operation for the rest of the day, conducting interviews with staff and students whenever I could make the necessary arrangements. I preferred to record interviews, particularly at first. When this was not possible I wrote an account of the conversation soon afterwards. In the late afternoon or evening I wrote up the day's observations and began to form a synthesis of my views, besides planning the next day's approach.

At first I found the school rather a confusing place. The organisation of the school day is loose, flexible and constantly changing. Quite often I was not sure where a class was going to be held or who was to teach it. If I wanted some particular information, it was unclear who would have it and when. As the days went by I became more familiar with the routines and began to feel the flexibility as an advantage rather than a confusing factor.

My first task was to establish a number of data about the school and gain an understanding of its overall activity. I gradually developed relationships with a number of the staff and was able to

arrange interviews which usually took place when the teachers could find time in the middle of the day. I visited one teacher at her home in Bangalore and spoke to several of the residential teachers on campus in the evenings. The advantage of staying for some length of time was clear. There was time to develop sufficient relationship to hold interviews with staff on complex topics. Later I could go back and discuss what had been said to clarify detail. This was even more useful with the pupils. They were quite used to seeing visitors in the school, but it took them some time to feel at ease and willing to engage in serious conversations. The time spent getting to know them was certainly worthwhile from my point of view, as I was constantly impressed by their conversation and observations. I conducted some formal interviews with pupils, but I also spent many hours in their company in the bus, sports-field, art-room and elsewhere.

In all I spent twenty working days and three weekends at the school. In that time I observed sixteen culture classes and fourteen other classes. I held lengthy interviews (usually around forty-five minutes) with twelve out of a total of twenty-one full time teachers and six of the oldest students, of whom there were nine in the top two classes. I followed up many of these interviews to clarify points and request further information. I had extensive informal contact with younger students and took notes of some twenty conversations with them. I also spoke at length with three ex-students of the school.

I went to the school with a number of questions in mind, as outlined in the previous section, and began to form tentative answers to some of them on the basis of observations and conversations. I then pursued these ideas by raising them with the next interviewee and looking out for confirmation or disproof in the next few days of school. There was a gradual evolution of my centre of interest which led to a variety of interviews. It was, however, clear from the start that the main emphasis of study would be on Krishnamurti's religious teaching and the practice of Valley School, and all the

interviews touched on these questions. I usually started the interviews by asking for the teacher's age, educational background and reasons for working at the school and then asked a question about my central areas of interest. In most cases I did not have to press for information or direct the conversation: respondents seemed interested and willing to communicate their views, although there was some embarrassment on the part of younger pupils. I did not get the impression that teachers were trying to mislead me or present the school in an unduly favourable light. I had seen the school some years previously as a casual visitor, and did not sense any change in attitude because of my new status as researcher. On the contrary, as can be seen from remarks quoted in Chapter Six, teachers were happy to discuss what they felt were weaknesses in the school and the difficulties inherent in Krishnamurti's teaching.

In Rajghat and Rishi Valley I held interviews with administrators, teachers and students, including staff who had had close contact with Krishnamurti personally during his yearly visits. Some of them, such as the ex-secretary of the foundation, the principal of Rishi Valley School, and the secretary of Rajghat School, had known Krishnamurti personally since the 1940s and were an excellent source of information, observations, anecdotes and insights. I also met junior teachers who had only recently joined the schools and had had little or no contact with Krishnamurti. In Rajghat there was a language difficulty, in that most of the pupils speak little English. It would have needed an extended visit to either school to give a full account of educational praxis.

I found several other sources of information in India. In Madras I consulted the Adyar Memorial Library which has an unrivalled collection of theosophical literature. In Varanasi I was introduced to members of the Theosophical Society who gave me interesting accounts of Krishnamurti's pre-war visits to Varanasi. Also near Varanasi, I was grateful to be granted an interview with Samdong Rinpoche, a close associate of the Dalai Lama and head of the Tibetan Institute of Sarnath. He had held many dialogues with

Krishnamurti and is a trustee of Rajghat School. Finally, I visited a small group proposing to open a new school in Kathmandu, Nepal, which would be influenced by Krishnamurti's work in education. It seemed to me vital for the possible future development of this kind of education that new initiatives are taken and I wanted to see what was being done. Although there were practical problems involved in starting the school, I was able to obtain detailed information about the proposals and later to receive information about the project by post.

Fieldwork in Brockwood was in some ways easier than in India. Brockwood was a relatively familiar environment. I had visited the school on several occasions before starting the thesis to attend Krishnamurti's public talks there and already knew several of the staff. I stayed at Brockwood for three weeks in June 1987 in accommodation provided by the school about half a mile from the main buildings, and was in school from 7.45 a.m. until 9.00 p.m. on most days, including weekends. [5] As in Valley School, I was able to observe classes. The school was in the process of experimenting with new ideas in the curriculum during my visit and I was invited to join in one of the groups, comprising about ten students and two staff members, which provided an excellent opportunity for participation and interaction. I made notes of my observations as often as possible and these formed an important part of my data. I also made three short visits to the school, in February and September 1986 and in May 1988.

Obtaining factual data and information about the school was relatively easy. The principal made time to see me on several occasions, and I also obtained information from the staff members in charge of academics and administration. I was given statistical information about the school and several unpublished documents relating to admission procedures, projects by students, talks by teachers and other areas. The archives at Brockwood, to which I was allowed access, contain books, pamphlets and papers by and about Krishnamurti and tapes or transcripts of all his discussions

with staff and students from 1969 to 1986, as well as discussions with some visitors.

Although there were less practical difficulties involved with my visits to Brockwood, in some ways I found the community harder to grasp and to write about than Valley School. This was perhaps due in part to the very close and intense nature of the community. Some ninety people live together in intimate circumstances for most of the year and participate in a wide range of academic and practical pursuits. Beyond that, there is an obvious warmth and emotional involvement between them and an intense involvement with the religious and other questions raised by Krishnamurti. Although many students and staff made every effort to welcome me and communicate, I nevertheless felt that I had not grasped the full implications of many areas of life at Brockwood. I was somewhat relieved to discover that I was not alone in this feeling when I heard from a teacher who had been there for several years that the school was still a mystery to him. My interview technique at Brockwood was much the same as in India. I tried to discover a particular interest or point of departure with each interviewee and let the discussions continue from there. I had come to the conclusion during the course of my work in India that a tape-recorder was generally more inhibitory than useful, so most of the interviews in Brockwood were done without recording.

Finally I will describe my method of data analysis and reporting. On return from India my first task was to transcribe all taped interviews and to type out my field notes. After a preliminary reading of this material, I decided it was feasible to continue with my original intention and write one chapter about the Valley School. Material from the other Krishnamurti schools and other sources in India was not included in the detailed discussion of Chapter Six but was used in the first four chapters, helping me in my overall assessment of Krishnamurti and his work.

I organised the material from Valley School in four groups: interviews with teachers, interviews with pupils, data about the school and notes of my observations. My first approach was to divide the interview material into only two sections, religion and education, but it soon became apparent that these sections would be too large and diffuse. I therefore grouped the staff interviews into four groups: attitudes towards Krishnamurti, religion, Valley School and education. The interviews with pupils I divided into three sections: concerning Valley School, Krishnamurti and religion.

It seemed likely that a considerable amount of description of the school would be necessary, partly because it is in an unfamiliar cultural setting, and partly because some of the educational techniques adopted are unusual. Besides, it was necessary to give an account of the atmosphere and functioning of the school, without which much of the interview material would be incomprehensible. I therefore organised my data to form the basis of the descriptive passages on the open class system, culture classes, discipline, decision making and other topics. I showed a copy of the first draft of my report to a number of people, including two ex-students and one teacher from Valley School and some teachers at Brockwood. I also posted the draft to the Valley School where it was read by a number of teachers. After considerable feedback I developed the material into its final form as found in Chapter Six.

I followed a similar procedure for the chapter about Brockwood, although the material I had collected was somewhat different. In particular I had more documentation from Brockwood. The school had published two newsletters, and there were several other privately published discussions and talks available. I was also given access to unpublished material, for example about sixty pages of written replies to a questionnaire that was circulated in the school by a group of staff and students. I organised this material into two sections, one containing data about the school and study centre, the other relating to more philosophical questions, and wrote a first draft on my return from Brockwood. In 1987 a new departure took

place at Brockwood with the opening of the Krishnamurti Study Centre and I included some new material after a short visit to Brockwood in May 1988. The principal of Brockwood made detailed comments and corrections on a draft of the chapter which were taken into account in the final version.

I have attempted to avoid being dogmatic in my assessments and evaluations. In the final analysis, the aims of the schools are religious and transcendent and it might be very hard to see 'the awakening of intelligence' or signs of transformation in the course of a school day. There are no obvious criteria by which to assess them. Furthermore, the Krishnamurti schools are still in the process of change and creativity. Any assessment made in 1988 would necessarily have to remain provisional. Nevertheless, I believe that this material acquired through observation and interview provides an important perspective on Krishnamurti and his work.



## CHAPTER SIX

### AN OPEN EDUCATION: VALLEY SCHOOL, BANGALORE

#### 6.1 PROFILE OF A KRISHNAMURTI SCHOOL

Teachers wishing to adopt Krishnamurti's teachings as a guide to religion and education have to consider a wide range of questions. How large should the school be? Where should it be situated? What sort of parents and children should be attracted? What age range should be taught? How can it be financed? Should public examinations be held? In addition to these immediate practical questions, more fundamental issues need to be addressed. How can the school become a centre 'for the enlightenment of man?'. How can it convey a sense of the sacred to its children? To what extent should children be exposed to Krishnamurti's teachings? How can they be taught to examine their own conditioning?

In this chapter I examine the approach adopted by the Valley School, near Bangalore, in its efforts to create a form of education based on Krishnamurti's work. The school has implemented innovations in class structure and discussion groups, and the structure of the school day is unusual. Similar arrangements can be found in some other progressive schools; but what is most characteristic of Valley School is the evolution of a school culture where staff and older pupils seriously reflect on questions relating to their own behaviour, to religion and meditation. My research suggested that the school has found a creative mode of operation with a strong element of spirituality, and has attempted to ensure open and harmonious relationships throughout the school by means of constant dialogue. I have used the present tense when describing the school

as it was at the time of my visit in January 1987. Of course the school is an evolving institution, and its arrangements will change over the years. Before examining particular facets of the school in detail, it is necessary to give a short account of the structure and operation of the school to provide an overview.

In 1975 a wealthy industrialist in Bangalore wished to make a gift to Krishnamurti of the estate which the school now occupies. Krishnamurti did not want the land for his own use, but proposed to start a school in the valley under the auspices of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India. This was agreed and the land donated. The industrialist also paid a large proportion of the school's building and running costs in the first few years.

A group of people interested in education and Krishnamurti's teachings came together and, after discussion with Krishnamurti and members of the Foundation, formed the nucleus of the new school, which opened in 1978. Several of the original group are still working at the school and are an important force in school life. They do not hold positions of authority, but newer teachers feel they can turn to them for advice. One teacher who joined the school recently told me:

The core group of five or so who have been with the school right from the start are really responsible for the school's success. They seem very clear and form a solid nucleus, but they are not exclusive and are easy to approach.

When the school was founded, the teachers did not follow the model of the two large and long-established Krishnamurti schools in India (Rishi Valley and Rajghat), but started on a more experimental basis. They intended that there should be great emphasis on Krishnamurti's teachings and less on formal academic work. In general, more progressive educational methods have been adopted at Valley School than in the older schools. At times in the school's history there have been proposals to make radical changes, for example to turn the school into a rural community focused on

Krishnamurti's teachings. In 1983 there were serious disagreements between many of the staff and a principal appointed by the Krishnamurti Foundation, which ended in his resignation; however, the school has usually been stable and operated relatively smoothly.

The school is situated in a campus of 104 acres in countryside seventeen kilometres to the south of Bangalore, a large city in the State of Karnataka, on the Deccan Plateau in central South India. Bangalore is considered a modern and progressive city by Indian standards and has been politically stable. In the past two decades it has attracted many immigrants from other parts of India, producing considerable cultural diversity. There is a prosperous professional class which forms the school's main catchment group. The local language is Kannada, but English is widely spoken, especially by the richer classes.

The campus of the school extends over a valley, much of which is uncultivated and covered in small trees and grass. When I visited in 1987, the valley was green and attractive; on my previous visit in 1982, it had been much affected by drought. The countryside is heavily dependent on monsoon rainfall, although the school is fortunate in having tube-wells to supplement this. In the centre of the campus is a small lake, fed by a stream, which provides a focus for walks. Some twenty acres are used as a dairy farm and to grow a small amount of grain, fruit and vegetables. The school has plans to extend the area under cultivation.

The main body of the school is situated beside a large lawn with flowerbeds and ornamental trees. It consists of single storey, rectangular buildings, mostly painted white. The largest section contains a dining-hall, kitchen, library, staffroom, two administrative offices, classrooms and laboratories. There are other buildings, of similar design but smaller, within a few minutes walk: extra clas<sup>S</sup>rooms, hostels, an assembly hall, art room, dance room and others. A visitor from England is immediately struck by an advantage of the warm South Indian climate: many lessons and

activities can be held outdoors throughout the year, and none of the buildings require heating.

Most of the rooms are light and airy, with large windows, but it seems that little effort is directed towards making them visually attractive. Some of the paintwork is old and there are few decorations. All the rooms, including toilets and kitchen, are kept clean, but there is no sense of luxury. Although most of the children are from wealthy families, the school buildings are functional rather than elegant. My impression was that staff did not attach great importance to the aesthetic possibilities of the buildings; on the other hand both staff and pupils were extremely appreciative of the natural surroundings and the advantages of the rural location. [1]

Within half a mile of the main school buildings are six small houses for staff and residential pupils. There is also a guest-house, accommodation for workers and some farm buildings. Most of the houses have small vegetable and flower gardens tended by the staff and students. The whole estate looks carefully managed. Many visitors told me that they felt an exceptionally tranquil and pleasing atmosphere in the valley, and this was also my impression. Myths start quickly in India, and I was informed that local people had already begun to attribute a religious significance to the campus, some of them believing that nobody will ever be bitten by a snake on the school grounds.

Valley School has about 160 students, two thirds of whom are boys. The age range is from six to eighteen, and the classes from Standard 1 to Standard 12. Standards 1 - 4 (ages six to nine) use classrooms slightly away from the main body of the school and are somewhat protected from the school life of the older children. The other age groups mix very freely.

Full-time teaching staff number twenty-one and there are four part-time teachers, with an approximately equal number of men and women.

Also on the school payroll are two drivers, four kitchen staff and about six labourers. In 1986 the school made a particular effort to computerize administration procedures, and this has enabled it to function with only one administrator/secretary. [2]

An important feature of the school is that it is run on democratic lines: all teachers have an equal status, and important decisions are discussed and taken at meetings attended by every member of staff. Day to day decisions are delegated to particular groups of teachers which change membership from time to time. It was found necessary for legal and practical purposes to appoint a headmaster, but he carries no particular power in decision making. In 1987 there were plans to organise a school 'parliament' to involve pupils in the decision-making process, but this was not yet in operation at the time of my visit.

The school was originally intended for day-students, and it was arranged to bring the children and non-residential staff from Bangalore every day by operating two buses along fixed routes in the city. For those who live furthest from the school this means a journey of about forty-five minutes each way. In the few years previous to my visit the school encouraged a number of pupils to become boarders in order to eliminate travel-time and to enable them to absorb the benefits of the school without the constant switch between home and school. By 1987 about fifty pupils, mostly aged fourteen and over, were residential. They lived with members of staff in a family setting, averaging six to a house with one or two staff-members. In 1987 twelve teachers lived on campus. The others, most of whom had family in Bangalore, commuted daily on the school bus.

A major project for the future is to make the school fully residential, since boarding has proved popular with the students and the staff feel it has been a success. The timing depends to some extent on finances and building. Money is a major difficulty for the school. Many projects are not attempted because of lack of

funds, and it is felt impracticable to raise the fees. In 1988 the school had plans for extensive renovation and new building work, but at the time of writing it is not known exactly how or when this will be achieved.

Subjects taught in most standards are English, Hindi, Kannada, mathematics, history, geography, biology, chemistry, physics and computer science. Pupils are also offered a variety of other activities including music, dancing, art, games and a number of popular hobby clubs ranging from astronomy to gardening.

There are no internal examinations in the school and children move up a standard at the end of the school year. This is unusual in India, where competitive examinations are held in most schools to determine promotion. However, students do sit public examinations: the ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education, approximately equivalent to O-level) in the tenth standard, and ISC (Indian School Certificate, A-level) in the twelfth. I was told that average results from public examinations have been comparable to those of other good private schools, but not outstanding. Competition in the labour-market is extremely intense in India, and many people I spoke to stressed the great pressure that is laid on pupils, particularly boys, to perform well in examinations in order to start a successful career. Several teachers highlighted this as a major cause of anxiety for their pupils.

Fees in 1987 were six hundred rupees (ca. £30) per month per child. This is very expensive by Indian standards, being average for the top few private schools in Bangalore. The high cost means that the catchment group of the school is quite limited. Middle-class families would only be able to afford the fees with difficulty, and lower class ones not at all. Some reduction is allowed occasionally, but very reluctantly. A factor that further limits the catchment group is that the school is based on Krishnamurti's philosophy. This means that many traditional Hindu families would be unwilling to send their children because of the implicit threat

to the Hindu world-view. Consequently, most of the pupils come from wealthy but not strictly orthodox Hindu families, many of the parents being architects, engineers, doctors, lawyers, or of similar professional status. A few parents are interested in Krishnamurti's teachings, but I was told that most are content to have found a school which is liberal, progressive, non-sectarian and where their children are happy. [3]

Pupils, then, come from a South Indian, progressive upper-class culture. They have an excellent command of English which is spoken by many as mother language. Kannada is little used at the school, even in informal conversations. The children reflect a sophisticated urban background, familiar with videos and computer games, pop music and jeans, and seem a world apart from the village children who live in traditional style only a few miles away. Valley School is an enclave of privileged city youth. One ex-student suggested to me that Valley School is seen as a prestigious, almost fashionable establishment by progressive professional circles in Bangalore.

The staff also mostly comes from an South Indian urban background. Most of them have good academic qualifications, usually equivalent to Master's degrees. Two teachers had doctorates from American universities and experience of post-doctoral research, while several others had left careers of much greater prestige and financial reward in order to work at the school. In 1987, staff were paid only 900 rupees per month, which was low by local standards. [4] The teachers break traditional Indian cultural patterns in many obvious ways: they happily do manual work, caring for the gardens and cleaning rooms; the school is non-hierarchical, and there are no possibilities for career advancement; women play an equal role in discussion and decision making.

The intellectual/manual divide is marked, and only a small number of students express an interest in such activities as carpentry and metalwork, although these are encouraged by the teachers. Games are

not stressed in the school and many children avoid them by various ruses. The general impression is of a rather bookish culture, with little emphasis on physical skills. A great divide between staff and pupils on the one hand and workers on the other is very apparent. The latter are employed from neighbouring villages for cooking, cleaning and manual jobs. They speak no English and have little contact with most of the staff or children. The school is a happy and family-like community, but the manual workers remain on the periphery.

The school is secular and does not encourage traditional religious practices. As will be shown later, teachers tend to be critical of organised religion and are certainly opposed to sectarianism. The religious perspective of the school is provided by Krishnamurti's philosophy, most teachers being deeply involved with Krishnamurti's teachings. Pupils are exposed to Krishnamurti's ideas indirectly, through discussions with teachers, but there is little attempt to introduce them to his work directly. Nevertheless the influence of his teachings is considerable, and most older pupils, as well as teachers, are interested in an approach to religion based on inquiry and observation of the self in relationship.

## 6.2 TEACHING FOR MATURITY

One of Krishnamurti's aims in education was to encourage a sceptical, critical and independent outlook as an essential part of spiritual development (see 3.4.2). Teachers at Valley School have tried to adopt educational practices that would nurture these qualities and promote a high degree of communication and discussion between staff and pupils. In part these aims are realised through the general ethos of the school and through informal discussions, but teachers have also tried to create specific structures for the purpose. This section will examine the two most important at the time of my visit: the open class system and the culture classes.



The open class system is an innovation in class organisation for Standards Five to Twelve, i.e. for pupils aged ten and above. Most of the school day is unstructured. The children are given worksheets and assignments in each subject, and are expected to work unsupervised at their own speed. When the system was first introduced there were no formal classes at all. This was found to be not entirely satisfactory, so that the school day is now as follows:

8.45 - 9.00 a. m.	Assembly
9.00 - 9.45	Lesson
9.45 - 10.00	Break
10.00 - 10.45	Lesson
10.45 - 2.30 p. m.	Open-class (with lunch-break)
2.30 - 3.10	Lesson or Open-class
3.10 - 4.00	Games/Hobbies

Every pupil attends ten main lessons - called contact classes - each week. In these lessons the subject is presented to the class, work is allocated and questions discussed. One of the contact classes, the culture class, is not concerned with academic work. For most of the day pupils work by themselves, deciding how much time to spend on each subject and discovering how to use appropriate books and resources. During this time the teachers sit in classrooms, or sometimes out of doors, and are available to give help when requested. Often the children work in small groups and may approach a teacher together.

In the early afternoon there is a contact class for some standards, and sometimes extra lessons for particular reasons. On other days the open-class continues until games time. At 4 p.m. the day pupils begin to board the buses to travel home. Boarders usually spend the evenings at their hostels. They are encouraged to work in the gardens and to walk or sit quietly by themselves as well as studying. An evening meal is served at dusk. At this time of day the school most resembles a peaceful community in the Indian

countryside as teachers and students spend quiet evenings together and the influence of the city seems least noticeable.

The open-class system gives the school a bustling and informal atmosphere. Children walk around the school with books and worksheets, often approaching any available adult or older pupil for help, and sit down wherever they fancy to work at their lessons. There is no supervision of their movements and they are allowed to sit outside, play for a while or take a break. There is great flexibility in the arrangements. Lectures or filmshows by visitors are sometimes arranged and are simply offered in the open-class time, with voluntary attendance.

However, the system was not intended to depart radically from the requirements of the examination syllabus, so each child, especially after the eighth standard, is expected to work through as much material as in a conventional school. Worksheets are carefully monitored and the child's grasp of the subject assessed. If children fail to fulfil their work-quotas, they have to explain their behaviour to the teachers. If they can finish all their work before the end of the week, they have free time to play, pursue hobbies or read. Pupils told me that if they worked hard they could usually finish their tasks by Thursday midday and then take time off.

One element of the open-class system is the extensive use made of the library, which is the focus of the school during the day. Children of all ages go there to find books, work or talk. I made the following observations during a typical open-class period:

21/1/87 2.25 p.m.

Two girls work on an economics project for the ICSE exam. They are helped by a third friend. Sitting at a table working seriously but talking.  
Next table: boy in 9th Standard working quietly, alone.  
Next table: boy and older girl both reading newspapers.  
One boy on the library rota, sweeping the floor with dustpan and brush, rather clumsily.

Behind the bookshelves a little girl is reading and from time to time bouncing a ball.

Some younger children sit reading magazines, others wander in and out. The librarian (female) is seated, surrounded by inquirers.

A girl takes over the cleaning work, using a mop. She looks clumsy too, but seems to enjoy it.

Altogether about 30 children in the room, about half working at a formal task, the other half reading magazines, talking or wandering around.

A certain level of noise in the school is tolerated and there is no attempt to maintain silence. Pupils are allowed to talk and even have quiet games. However when an adult or older pupil feels that the children are over-excited and too boisterous he/she will ask them to be quiet or go outside. Calm prevails for a while until a new outbreak of activity. It may be noted that this relaxed attitude towards noise is itself quite unusual. Denscombe (1980: 61ff) shows that in conventional school cultures pupil-initiated noise is taken to be indicative of a lack of control and to reflect a lack of competence on the part of the teacher. There is no such assumption in Valley School. Apart from the informal atmosphere and the tolerance of noise, it is striking that boys and girls of high social standing are willing to clean a room, which in almost all Indian institutions would be done by servants. In small but significant ways the school introduces children to new attitudes.

The open-class system was very popular with all the pupils I spoke to. Younger ones seemed to appreciate most the flexibility in determining how they organised their time:

In open classes we can do any work we want. Now we can go to history if we want to or geography if we want to. We follow the worksheet. But we have to finish our work by Friday. If we finish enough work we can go to the library and read, or go to play. We like this system. They give us a diary - you have to write it down. You don't have to go for help for every little question. You can at least think a little.

This girl from Standard Five, aged about ten, has evidently grasped the basic requirements of the system. Older pupils more often

claimed that it allowed scope for unsupervised work and independent thinking. This was stressed by an ex-student of the school now in his second year at college. He reported that when he reached college he felt several advantages over most of the students he met there: he had grasped the fundamentals of his subjects for himself, not just learned enough to pass examinations; he could work without supervision, which was particularly useful in the college environment; and he felt self-disciplined and motivated.

Teachers felt in general that the system works well. It breaks down the traditional classroom structure and produces a less restrictive atmosphere; it allows for considerable individual attention; above all, pupils learn to study and find things out for themselves. They are obliged to work to a large extent independently, to set their own pace and working patterns, and to adopt a mode of behaviour that is acceptable to the rest of the community. There is no pressure to conform to a set pattern of classroom work, to perform the same tasks at the same time as others. The system demands a flexible but self-disciplined approach to work. One teacher commented:

I like the idea of this so-called open-school a lot. First of all this thing of the classroom is broken. And certainly in mathematics there is no doubt that most children are at different levels. So you have to teach them in a different way. In a classroom you cannot do that. It is also wonderful to watch a child of say ten years old to be sitting and working entirely on his own, not bothering you, not asking you anything.

Many other teachers reported similar feelings although there were some criticisms too. The system was in some ways time-consuming and inefficient. Teachers might have to explain the same point to ten children separately, when it could equally well have been done once in a class. It also meant a passive teaching role for much of the day, sitting in a classroom waiting for questions. The last staff meeting I attended discussed these problems and proposed some modifications to be introduced in the following year. Overall, however, the open-class is seen as a successful innovation.

The system has obvious implications for the psychological development of pupils, with its emphasis on self-discipline and independence, and seems an appropriate approach to academic work in the context of Krishnamurti's ideas. But the open class system still does not entail a radical departure from conventional academic concerns, being a change in teaching methods rather than a rejection of academic achievement. The school accepts the public syllabus and prepares children for examinations. Valley School has not gone so far as the Krishnamurti schools in England and the USA, which have created their own curricula and teach non-examinable courses. In practice, the need to prepare children for public examinations is an important factor in determining the extent to which the school can experiment. On one occasion all the parents were asked how they would react if the school became a community which provided for children's learning but had no formal courses or examinations. All but two or three families said they would withdraw their children. The school is free to make changes within limits, but if it failed to prepare children for public examinations it would probably lose most of its support.

While the open class system is an attempt to foster certain qualities in pupils by the structuring of their environment, 'culture classes' (as they are known in the school) are an explicit attempt to convey values and ideas. They are one of the means by which teachers at Valley School introduce pupils to a philosophy of life, and where Krishnamurti's ideas are discussed and made known. The classes are an important feature of the school.

Each standard (except for the 1st to the 4th) has one culture class a week. In the class, the children sit in a circle on the floor (this is a common practice, for example for music and assembly) together with, usually, two or three adults. There is no fixed programme, and each teacher and group of children is free to conduct the class as they think best. The intention is to encourage children to think for themselves and to discuss in a group.

I attended thirteen culture classes during my visit. The topics discussed ranged widely, including anger, frustration, lying, love, posture, sleep, pollution, freedom, action, school trips, Scottish culture, conventional life-styles, work, art and school rules. Many other subjects were discussed tangentially, and usually two or three topics were covered in each class.

I was told by an ex-student that in the early years of the school the topics tended to be limited to those which Krishnamurti discussed in his talks. Even children of age ten were expected to discuss fear, thought, death and related questions. According to one ex-student it was not an entirely happy experience: 'sometimes we felt rather burdened by it, but later we began to understand something'. With time the classes became more relaxed, and now younger pupils in particular talk more about day to day events in the school and society.

By age fourteen or so pupils seem ready to participate in more abstract and difficult conversations. Many of the teachers tend to use Krishnamurti's vocabulary and to share his interest in certain topics. In the older classes, the result is something like a free discussion on Krishnamurti's favourite themes. Many of the older pupils are familiar with the concepts and join in the rather complex discourses with evident interest. They confront serious questions and are able to speak about them in a group. At the same time the teachers do not adopt an authoritarian attitude and are seen to be open to discussion.

It was quite remarkable to listen to discussions between teenagers, mediated by sensitive teaching, on topics such as independent inquiry, conditioning, the nature of thought and the self, observation and religion. The level of discussion at times seemed very mature and confident, with pupils using a wide vocabulary and being open to new ideas and suggestions. In 6.4 I will discuss in more detail their thinking about religion and related questions to give an indication of the achievement.

However, culture classes also cause difficulties. The younger classes seem bored and negative towards the classes. Many children find it difficult to sit down for forty minutes with no clear direction or rules and have difficulty in maintaining a conversation with the whole group. There is a constant tendency for private conversations, teasing and playing to break out. The older pupils participate much more willingly. Many of them told me that they had disliked culture classes when they were younger, but appreciated them greatly as they grew up. New staff members generally feel that they are difficult classes to conduct. The original teachers of the school are evidently more at ease than their newer colleagues, and one of them told me that he now found the classes much easier and more satisfactory than when he started. One of the newer teachers told me:

In the lower classes I am not satisfied with the way I do the culture classes. I have not seen much positive response from the younger children. I wouldn't say it is their fault. They are far too young. Maybe the way we go about it is not right.

Several other factors were suggested by teachers as possible causes of the difficulties: lack of clarity about the intentions of the class (both among children and adults), unsuitable choice of topics for children and the difficulty of holding meaningful discussions at a fixed time and place. On the latter point, several teachers noted that they could have more productive conversations when they arose spontaneously in the course of the day.

A deeper problem felt by some teachers was that the classes could be a subtle form of indoctrination, encouraging children to discuss concepts in an abstract way simply to win approval from teachers. Teachers might give subtle forms of approval and encouragement to those pupils who learned to manipulate Krishnamurti's vocabulary and set of concepts. This was felt to be incorrect and damaging. One teacher replied to my questions on this point:

Q. Do you think in this school, in the culture classes, there is the risk of teaching an ideology, teaching pupils to manipulate concepts?

A. I would say that is definitely going to happen. For example you must have seen in some classes if some statement is made they say: 'That is a very good statement you have made.' I am sure that will lead to a situation of immediately getting rewarded you see. And so they will start picking it up, then they learn how to talk...Instead...you should immediately counter-question it. That is what I do. The child may be making his statement out of fear. And you can make that out if you are in relationship with him.

It was felt most helpful when the children could relate the discussion in the culture class to events they personally witnessed in school or home life. In that way the discourse was not merely abstract, but helped the children formulate and understand their feelings in daily life, and to open their minds to broader perspectives.

Despite the difficulties and inherent dangers, the staff and many older pupils felt that the culture classes were an essential part of the school and should be retained. Several pupils told me that they had found the culture classes difficult, boring and a waste of time in younger years, but began to appreciate them later. One girl observed that even though she had nothing to say in the classes earlier, at least she listened to what was said and began to think about the questions. She and several other pupils thought that it was a good idea to have culture classes for the younger children, but to make the discussions more interesting and lively and not so serious. Some teachers at the school were justifiably pleased that several ex-pupils had written to the school to say that they were just beginning to appreciate the value of the discussions, several years after leaving the school.

Culture classes and the open class system both tend towards flexibility, high pupil participation and initiative, and an open and supportive social climate. It is noteworthy that they display many factors that have been identified by educational researchers as



conducive to creativity and positive self-development. Concerning teaching styles, Stern (1963:427) compared the non-directive, democratic or learner-centred approach with more directive, authoritarian and teacher-centred styles, with particular reference to gains in cognitive skills and attitude changes towards self and others. It is interesting that his research showed that with regard to cognitive gain, there was little difference between the two approaches; however, with regard to personal interaction and attitudes towards the self, the non-directive style had more favourable results. A similar conclusion was reached in a large-scale review of research (Dunkin and Biddle, 1974:94-131). The experience at Valley School seemed to support this finding: results in public examinations were no better than those of other good private schools, but children seemed very happy and well-adjusted. As discussed in the next section, pupil behaviour was good and there were no discipline problems at the school.

Nalls (1987:22ff) provides an analysis of fifteen major studies on educational environments that tend to encourage creativity. Some of the most widely accepted conditions are a non-authoritarian, internal locus of control; flexibility (allowing non-conformity); freedom to explore new ideas; acceptance of humour and play; time to be alone and time to explore. All these factors were present in Valley School. In the open classes, children have considerable self-determination, particularly concerning where and when they work. The school is flexible and does not follow a rigid routine. Children are often confronted with new ideas, and are also allowed freedom to play and to spend time by themselves.

The open class system and culture classes therefore seem an excellent basis for encouraging independence and creativity among pupils. A further dimension, which is stressed by both Krishnamurti and mainstream educational research, is the importance of warm and caring personal relationships in schools. Valley School's achievement in this respect is considered in the next section.

### 6.3 RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY

As we saw earlier an important characteristic of Krishnamurti's educational philosophy was his emphasis on establishing good relationships in school life. He argued that this was far more important than the formal techniques adopted for pedagogical purposes. Concerning such matters as academic orientation, curriculum and teaching methods he was prepared to be flexible, but relationships lay at the heart of his vision of the school as a religious community. This view is fully accepted at Valley School, where much time and energy is spent ensuring that relationships are harmonious and meaningful.

A first consequence is that Valley School has been kept small so that it can operate on personal, friendly terms. Everybody knows each other, there is little formality, and the atmosphere is similar to that of a family. The small size is not due to any difficulty in attracting children: the school receives about four times more applications from prospective parents than it wishes to admit. The small numbers bring many advantages, in particular in the areas of discipline and decision making, which will be considered in this section.

One reason for keeping numbers small is that expansion would entail increasing the pupil-staff ratio, or else employing extra staff, both of which are seen by teachers as undesirable. The staff-pupil ratio is about one to seven and this is felt to be an important factor in the functioning of the school. It allows a great deal of individual attention and emphasizes the importance of relationships between staff and children. There is little sense of stress or overwork among teachers, who frequently have time for informal conversations, walks and outings with the pupils. It was felt that this would only be feasible with a good staff-student ratio. The objection to employing extra staff is two-fold. First, the school seeks to employ only highly motivated teachers who will integrate happily into the school. It does not employ teachers merely because

they have appropriate teaching qualifications. Second, the school highly values its family-like atmosphere which could easily be threatened by expansion even if the staff-pupil ratio stayed the same. Teachers would much prefer to retain the intimate and personal quality of a small school.

In general children are only admitted for Standard 1, although vacancies arising in older classes may be filled. This means that most children have their entire educational experience in the school. It is felt that too many newcomers in the older classes might upset the atmosphere, particularly since school procedures are different from those in more conventional Indian schools. The recruitment of new children is considered carefully with the intention of preserving a continuity of atmosphere and minimizing disruption. Prospective parents are invited to lengthy interviews where the principles of the school are explained. It is stressed that the school teaches no formal religion and encourages children to develop a sceptical and questioning outlook, and it is also made clear that the school does not emphasize competition or academic achievement. The school makes an effort to recruit children from family backgrounds which would be harmonious with the ethos of the school. One teacher told me:

What we look for is parents who are progressive but not too modern, in the sense of people who drink and smoke and have too many parties. Parents who have a certain austerity and simplicity and discipline in their lives and yet at the same time are open or questioning.

All parents are expected to assent to the school's underlying philosophy although their commitment to Krishnamurti's teachings is for the most part slight. The headmaster told me that, in his opinion, most parents express agreement with school principles merely to ensure a place in the school for their child. Parental involvement in the school is low, usually limited to a few functions every year. The distance and difficulty of travelling from town was one explanation offered.

The school does not seem to have avoided the difficulties of friction between home and school. In several areas pupils may feel sympathy with teachers' views - for example concerning careers or religion - but still feel strong family loyalties and pressures. One pupil told me:

There are some children whose parents are very orthodox. When they hear people here talk about religion they get very confused about what is right, and they cannot go into it very deeply for themselves...there have been a few children becoming absolutely confused, and it can cause problems with parents.

The recruitment of staff is slow and carefully considered. Most members of staff applied for their posts because of interest in Krishnamurti and the style of education at the school, several of them being friends or family of teachers already there. Others have transferred from other Krishnamurti schools. Recruitment has also been conducted through newspaper advertisement. For example in 1986 a post was advertised in the national press. A three page letter was sent to all applicants explaining the principles of the school and the demands made of teachers. Applicants who continued to show interest and who seemed good on paper were then interviewed and one person was invited to spend a month on the campus as a trial period. He was then given a year's contract, to be made permanent if both he and the school agreed. This lengthy process resulted in one appointment out of an original eight hundred applicants.

The result of these recruitment procedures has been a degree of homogeneity among staff and pupils which has certainly favoured the development of a relaxed and harmonious community. Pupils are taken almost exclusively from a social stratum which is affluent and stable; they are expected to be successful in education and to proceed to higher education or careers. The Valley School in this respect reflects a characteristic of Krishnamurti's work: it displays little interest in social reform or education for the poor and limits its intake to those who are able to pay. This

undoubtedly means that it can offer a more sophisticated and liberal education, although it does make one question the morality of paying so much attention to the education of the rich when there is such a desperate need among the poor.

The atmosphere of the school is made up of several influences. First, the campus is unmistakably that of a school. Despite the background of Krishnamurti's work, there is little sense that Valley School is concerned with the propagation of a particular philosophy. Children are learning, preparing for examinations, there are classes in laboratories and classrooms, and most children seem to spend considerable periods of time in the library.

Second, this activity takes place in a free, informal and constantly changing pattern as a consequence of the open class system described above. I was never entirely sure what would happen the following day: a visitor might give a talk; a teacher might sit in a different room; some children might decide to do a particular project in the artroom. A basic structure to the school day is retained, but much of the activity is spontaneous. There are few signs of stress. Staff members were busy, but could always find time to relax and talk, or attend to extra problems. I did not hear complaints of over-work.

Third, especially in the evenings or early mornings, the school has something of the atmosphere of a rural community. The impact of nature on the school is considerable, and most students I interviewed remarked on it without prompting. The younger classes spend much time outside, going for picnics, walking or playing and this seems to have impressed upon them the beauty of the surroundings. Older students noticed the difference between Valley School and others in the city:

I would hate to go to school in the city. That would be really awful. Sometimes you can see schools in Bangalore, they have very tiny compounds, hardly any place to play and no trees. Traffic. I don't know how they study or do any work. You can feel the difference

in the air from here to Bangalore. (Student, 12th Standard).

One young poet in the school magazine expressed similar feelings:

Coming to school in the morning,  
Far faraway from the traffic's horning  
I experience a kind of heavenly peace,  
Watching the dancing grass and trees;  
All so very pretty  
And so unlike the city.

Close contact with nature was stressed by Krishnamurti as an important part of a religious life. David Hay quotes research which suggests confirmation of this: the multi-media world of a big city has a de-sensitising effect:

Feelings such as involvement, understanding, consideration and sympathy [fade in an urban environment]...the mechanism of habituation involves a blunting of emotions, a reduction of sensitivity and reactivity. (Frankenhaeuser, quoted in Hay, 1982: 198)

The overall impression which I received at the school, and which other visitors commented on, was of unusual harmony and openness. Among pupils there was in general very good humour and co-operation. There was no sign of bullying. In some classes small cliques had formed to the exclusion of outsiders, and sometimes older children became frustrated with younger ones, but this did not disrupt the overall atmosphere of trust.

Staff pupil relationships were also good. The younger classes were innocent and affectionate, enjoying physical contact and security with their teachers. The older pupils often developed considerable respect for teachers. They were aware that many of the teachers had deliberately opted out of careers because of commitment to a new kind of education, and they were interested in their teachers' views and approach to life. Apart from the culture classes many informal conversations between pupils and staff took place, the older boarders particularly having time and opportunity for this. One ex-student told me that he often came back to the school if he had any

problem to talk over, as he had real respect for two or three of his teachers. Several staff and pupils observed that informal conversations were often more meaningful than discussions in culture classes.

All the teachers I spoke to felt happy about their relationships with the students. Teachers felt that children would usually listen to and consider any proposal, and could be trusted to respond honestly:

When I first came here the thing that struck me was that the children are open, willing to listen to what you say. They may take it or not take it, but they are willing to give you a hearing. They do not accept it because you are in authority, or rebel against it, again because you are in authority. (Valley School teacher)

Another teacher believed the good relationships arose because there was no use of authoritarian methods. This allowed students to behave openly instead of fearfully:

The students feel free with us...this means there is a frank discussion between the teacher and the student...the other thing is the students don't try to put up a kind of behaviour which we expect to see. So we can observe very closely and find out how they are reacting to all this. (Valley School teacher)

The advantages of the small school and good relationships are easily seen in the question of discipline. Krishnamurti frequently expressed the view that there should be no punishment in a school, and no reward for good behaviour (see 4.3). Valley School manages perfectly well with no sanctions at all. It may be that this is in part because Indian children generally are more tractable and respectful towards their elders than are Western children. This was the opinion of one teacher at Rishi Valley who had had several years experience of teaching in an English school, and was confirmed by my own observations. But other Indian schools make use of traditional methods of punishment, so part of the explanation must lie with the Valley School's arrangements.

The basis of these is that teachers and older students can preserve a sufficiently quiet and serious atmosphere in the school without resorting to authoritarian techniques. For example, when younger children become too noisy, they are simply asked to calm down or to go and play outside. There is no element of threat or disapproval in this. If they fail to respond, it is explained that other people want to work, and the children usually co-operate. A teacher explained to me that having small groups of children and good relationships avoids most problems in this area:

There is a lot of interaction between the students themselves. That's maybe why we don't have problems like bullying...if you herd together fifteen boys, then you are going to have a lot of noise, and resistance to what you are saying. But if you have five boys and five girls together, some are younger, some are older, many things just don't come into play. It seems a more intelligent way of doing things...Also, the quality of relationship is such that they do listen. They may forget about it and they may do it again, but I don't think there is any hardness.

During my visit I saw no aggressive or disrespectful behaviour, and no sanctions were taken against any student. In the event of more complex problems of behaviour or consistently poor work, a pupil will be approached by a teacher, usually one who has noticed sub-standard work. The pupil is obliged to explain his behaviour and to make suggestions for improvement. Teachers and students refer to this process of correcting unacceptable attitudes or work as 'nagging'. I was told that essentially there had never been any discipline problem at Valley School: the 'nagging' is generally sufficient to resolve difficulties. However, more serious difficulties arise occasionally with older pupils and a particular teacher may feel unable to deal with the situation satisfactorily. It is in these instances that the value of friendship and trust between staff and pupils is clearly demonstrated. Most pupils in the course of their school career form friendships with one or two staff members in particular, often teachers of the same sex to whom pupils turn for advice and help in informal discussions. In the



event of protracted difficulties with work or behaviour these teachers will become involved and try to rectify the problems.

Pupils generally agreed with staff feelings that relationships in the school are good. One 15 year old girl told me:

The teachers are more like friends to the students rather than being on a different level. You can talk to a teacher about any problem and not worry about how they might react...Most of the teachers have a similar outlook and they must have the same objective because a lot of them have given up good jobs to come and teach here. They must really care very much about the school. The school is really very friendly.

Several female pupils commented on the help they had received from female members of staff who were willing to talk over personal questions as well as academic related ones. Feminist literature was made available to the older girls. [5]

However, I was warned that not everything in the school was perfect. One female pupil found it disappointing that pupils seldom managed to hold serious discussions when there was no teacher present: 'the teacher always acts as a medium through which we learn all this'. Pupils could maintain a mature discourse with adults, but it broke down as soon as they were left to themselves. She also said that peer group pressure was quite strong behind the scenes in the school. If students began to talk seriously to one another and expose their personal feelings about sensitive questions, they would be subjected to teasing and gossip. This also exacerbated the difficulty of holding a friendly conversation with a student of the opposite sex. It seemed to her that if relationships and activities were held on a superficial level, then everything went happily; as soon as deeper issues were raised, conventional attitudes asserted themselves.

Various factors described above have been shown by research to be important in staff-pupil relationships. First, the avoidance of discipline problems is related to the size and structure of classes

and schools. American researchers have suggested that large schools have about twice as many severe behaviour problems as small or medium size schools and that discipline problems multiply as class size increases (Hamachek, 1979:504; Barker and Crump, 1964:passim).

Second, staff, parent and school administration expectations affect pupil behaviour. If there is a strong emphasis on control, order and routine with use of coercive and punitive methods, pupils tend to start acting in counter-aggressive and impulsive ways (Kaplan, 1971:373-375). If teachers rely heavily on dominating techniques, there are more signs of interpersonal conflict, while if cooperation-evoking methods are used, spontaneity and social contributions are greater (Hamachek, 1979:471).

Third, much research suggests that a teacher's personal interest in a pupil is of vital significance in fostering affective and cognitive development. Several research findings in this area are summarised by Hamachek (1979:375). They suggest that a warm and close relationship between teacher and pupil produces positive effects on children's mental health and emotional security, creativity, original poetry and art, and interest in science and mathematics.

Although the school has been remarkably successful in achieving a sense of order and discipline without sanctions, it has found more difficulty in addressing the problem of motivation. The general feeling among staff is that there should be no dependency on rewards to motivate pupils to work or behave well, and moreover there should be no appeal to the pupils' sense of self-interest or competition. According to one of the original teachers, this can easily lead to difficulties:

Q. Do you find that the children here lose their self-centredness to some extent and it's hard to find a substitute motivation?

A. Yes. That's what we have seen generally. As they grow older two kinds of things happen. One is that the student gets lost into a kind of sloppiness. It is a kind of laziness because nobody is pushing them, they

want to take it easy...There is another kind of student who really doesn't know what to do...because you have taken away the drive of self-centredness they just really don't know what to do....The result is that a lot of people are not trying to achieve excellence, are not trying to do things well. And this happens to teachers also. This is not just the students.

In practice, there seem to be two main kinds of motivation in operation. Most importantly, nearly all pupils are subject to family pressure of greater or lesser intensity and are well aware that examinations are of the utmost importance in determining college entrance and employment prospects. There is no sign of rebelliousness against these priorities and the older children settle down to try and achieve high grades with little pressure from staff. In fact the staff tend to de-emphasize the importance of examinations and conventional assessments of success, constantly pointing out, in culture classes and elsewhere, the negative aspects of a career oriented existence.

Some pupils may be in sympathy with the teachers' views, but they also feel a strong family pressure to conform to conventional expectations. One indication of the strength of these expectations is that very few boys take the option to continue at the school for the 11th and 12th Standard (to prepare for examinations leading to university entrance). At the time of my visit there was only one boy in these classes, compared to nine girls. This is because they would be obliged to spend three years at Valley School doing the same work that would be done in two in a college in Bangalore, and the year's delay is perceived as a threat to career prospects. It seems that male pupils, or parents, are willing to express an interest in the school's philosophy in theory, but would be unwilling to defer their college entrance by one year. Similarly, although girls were encouraged to try to determine their own futures, it was generally felt that all female graduates would soon make marriages to fulfil parental expectations.

The other means of increasing motivation is to stimulate pupils' interest in subjects. Instead of emphasizing the importance of examinations, many teachers attempt to present subject matter in such a way that children became interested in a topic for its own sake. One teacher told me:

Motivation, if it is external, can work only for a short time...I cannot go on showing them wonderful experiments every day. I cannot go on praising or encouraging them every day...it is the inner motivation that is important. If I guide them properly, if they are able to find out the beauties of the principles of the subject, that is the motivation.

Such an approach is obviously an ideal to be reached, but the problem of motivation remains an issue which many teachers feel the school has yet to resolve fully. On the question of internal examinations and competition inside the school there was a division of opinion among pupils. One ex-student felt that there should have been some element of competition in the school and more preparation for examinations. He said that both these things had come as a shock for which he was not prepared. The only time he had experienced competition prior to college was in sports activities, and in the friendly and confined atmosphere of the school he had not been prepared for the general indifference and selfishness that he came across outside.

A different view was taken by a boy in the twelfth standard:

I really think it is much better without examinations. In other schools they have exams right from the first standard ...and I don't know if that really works. Examinations build up pressure right from the beginning.

Q. Some people think it's good to pressurize the child to make him learn faster.

A. I wonder. I don't really believe that. I know many of my own friends at home, they all just mug, mug, nothing else. They don't really know anything concrete apart from that.

Among teachers, the feeling against competition was more decided. School policy will probably remain as it is, i.e. to have no competition, and to have examinations only when required to for national certificates. The opposition to competition accords with Krishnamurti's view that competition is destructive. In a talk to teachers (published in *Krishnamurti on Education:74-77*) Krishnamurti argued that ambition and competition form 'the established pattern of existence in modern civilization'. In his assertive style he continued:

You coax the child, goad him, encourage him to compete, to succeed, to arrive at a certain intellectual level. You are worshippers of labels. So you have an inborn attitude which is essentially competitive and aggressive. This is so not only in economic and social life but also in religious life.

Researchers who do not adopt such a critical attitude towards conventional values tend to suggest that a certain amount of competition can encourage successful learning. In particular, creative students tend to perform better under competitive conditions, producing a larger number and greater flexibility of responses (Torrance, 1965:passim). However, less gifted students may experience anxiety states and feelings of inferiority, which eventually affect performance adversely (Johnson and Johnson, 1975:187-191). After a review of recent research, Hamachek concludes:

Although research conclusions do not paint an entirely consistent picture, the general trend of results indicates that although competitive conditions tend to motivate students to produce more and perhaps work a bit harder, cooperative conditions are usually perceived as more positive and pleasant. (Hamachek, 1979:279)

It seems that in this respect there is a divergence between the philosophical attitude of the teachers and the demand for academic success. Examination results could probably be improved slightly by the introduction of competition into the school, but at the cost of a change in the atmosphere. It remains to be seen if the school can

overcome the problems of 'sloppiness' and laziness without resorting to competitive pressures; it is significant that despite social pressures for high examination results the school has retained its non-competitive ethos, preferring to abide by Krishnamurti's ideas and ensure a co-operative atmosphere.

A factor which contributes greatly to the overall success of the school is the fact that the teachers live and work together harmoniously. Part of the reason lies in the fact that they share a common philosophical and religious perspective which is open and flexible, and which has led each of them as individuals to seriously consider the wide range of questions which Krishnamurti addressed. Further, there is an explicit attempt to enact this philosophy in the daily business of running the school, to act co-operatively and intelligently as a group.

The practical arrangements are to hold a weekly meeting for all the staff to discuss immediate problems, and less frequent meetings to discuss more general questions. There is no figure of authority, and decisions are reached by consensus. If anyone disagrees with the consensus he/she will raise the question as often as he/she wants in subsequent meetings or informal conversations until some outcome is achieved. Some teachers stick to a minority point of view for months, if need be, until others begin to change their attitudes. Of course some of the teachers are consistently more vocal and forceful than others and new teachers may be less ready to assert their point of view, but there is a genuine attempt at reaching joint decisions for the benefit of the community.

One teacher told me that the aspect of the school which she found most meaningful was the part played by staff meetings, formal and informal, in maintaining a high level of commitment and awareness. She felt there was a real effort to keep an open mind and to reach decisions together, and she always came away from the meetings revitalized, with new ideas. Apart from these meetings there were informal contacts and smaller groups formed for specific purposes in

which she felt able to talk over problems in a supportive atmosphere.

Part of the success of the staff meetings lies in the approach to decision making. The absence of hierarchy and freedom of discussion were frequently cited as the reasons for successful co-operation:

People often remark at our school that the teachers seem to have a certain vision of doing things together. It has come through constant dialogue. Not a few people imposing on the others, or the majority imposing on the few. (Founder teacher of Valley School)

The following teacher suggested that this was possible because all the teachers are independent personalities in their own right. He contrasted this with the widespread obedience to hierarchy in India:

Nobody is going to be intimidated because the headmaster says this or that. Nobody worries about losing their job or not. One person who disagrees with the whole other bunch will keep on voicing his disagreement. That's very unusual for Indian society. We usually go by hierarchy and authority.

He felt, however, that there was still room for improvement in awareness of personal relationships, and that the situation was made more difficult by Indian cultural patterns:

The teachers' level of awareness would have to raise. But anyway it is much better here than anywhere else in India that I know. There are probably gifted teachers in other schools who are doing it intuitively, but we could probably do more of it here. But I think the whole thing goes against the grain of Indian culture.

The suggestion that hierarchical social relations dominate Indian society is confirmed by Kakar in his study of Indian childhood:

An Indian's sense of his relative familial, and social position - which is superior to some and inferior to others - has been so internalized that he qualifies...as the original *homo hierarchicus*...The ordering principles of this hierarchical system are age and sex. (Kakar 1981:117)

It is noteworthy that such widespread social mechanisms did not appear to operate in staff meetings. The female teachers were quite willing to hold their own in discussions with men, and younger teachers were not expected to adopt a subservient role. Here again, Valley School operates in a non-traditional way. Several of the teachers told me that they had nowhere else experienced such a sense of honest co-operation, and that it was a major positive feature of the school. This democratic management pattern is advocated by Krishnamurti (e.g. in *Education and the Significance of Life*: 91), and also by much contemporary social psychology. Satisfaction of group members in a variety of organisations is thought to be related to the degree to which they can influence decision making: leadership functions should be well distributed and all participants should feel some sense of power and self-worth (Secard, Backman and Slavitt, 1976:252-257).

Finally, as an observer from England, I was quite surprised to note that such a progressive institution as the Valley School still employed a number of unskilled villagers to perform menial jobs around the school. These people spoke almost no English and did not participate, as far as I was able to observe, in school life to any extent. They are poorly paid and, I presumed, illiterate. This situation causes considerable unease among the staff, some of whom refer to it as a 'feudalistic set-up'. It is felt that it would be impossible to integrate the workers fully into school life, as the cultural differences are too great. One female teacher who was concerned with kitchen duties told me that she tried for many months to interest the kitchen workers in becoming more autonomous, but met with total lack of response. It was generally felt to be a hopeless task to integrate these people as full or equal members of the community.

The current proposal to deal with the problem is that as each worker leaves, he/she will not be replaced by another. Instead, the school will either try to increase efficiency (as has been done successfully with administrative work), or else will employ educated



people on an equal footing with the other teachers, and all adults will share in the necessary tasks. All teachers I spoke to felt the need to change the situation, and some felt that the changes proposed were too gradual. If implemented, however, they would make Valley School a very unusual community in India in not relying on servants or low-paid, unskilled workers for menial jobs.

One teacher thought that the slow speed of change in this question was a stain on the atmosphere of Valley School, and reflected a deep rooted tendency of the Indian psyche:

It's just a pretence that they [servants] don't exist.

Q. What effect does that have?

A. That would bring the question to the whole structure of the Indian psyche. People are more dead than alive. They shut out parts of themselves by denying their feelings. Here is a question where they are denying their feelings.

Although the school plans to deal with the situation, the issue of servants has not been approached with a great sense of urgency. One wonders if this would have been the case had Krishnamurti addressed the question of social equality with greater passion.

On the whole, Valley School has created a warm and supportive educational environment. The importance of such an environment for both academic achievement and personality development has been well documented (Johnson, 1970:238-240; Anderson and Walberg, 1968:175-180; Anderson, 1970:135-152). It fosters a positive attitude towards future learning and nurtures qualities such as acceptance, caring and mutual respect. This already appears a considerable achievement. However, the intention of the Krishnamurti schools is to go beyond the concerns of conventional education and introduce students to a religious vision of the world. This aspect of education at Valley School will be discussed in the following section.

#### 6.4 TOWARDS RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION

Krishnamurti elicited a variety of responses from the people around him. Some treated him with a kind of personal commitment and extreme respect reminiscent of that shown to charismatic religious figures, while others were more interested in his ideas. I found that the Krishnamurti schools tended to reflect this distinction, although teachers of both attitudes could be found in some of the schools. In Rishi Valley, for example, Krishnamurti was a regular visitor and a personal presence if only for a few weeks in the year. Some teachers stressed to me that Krishnamurti's personal involvement was of critical importance to the spiritual well-being of the school:

Krishnamurti's influence on the school, at the time of his visits, was enormous. He really shook up the teachers every time he came. (Rishi Valley teacher)

Ultimately this thing must be communicated live - audios and videos are a very poor substitute...a lot of inward journey, inquiry, penetration took place year after year when Krishnamurti came. When he left there were very few who could sustain that inquiry by themselves. (Rishi Valley teacher)

Besides the stimulus of his personal teaching, several interviewees at Rishi Valley stressed the special aura or mystical quality associated with Krishnamurti's visits:

The whole place had a special presence when he came here...sometimes it was almost as if the pebbles were singing about him. (Rishi Valley teacher)

My interviews at Rishi Valley tended to confirm Thapan's view (quoted in 5.1) that Krishnamurti's visits were of great importance to the religious life of the school, enriching the atmosphere with the charismatic quality of his presence and 'providing [teachers] with the necessary sustenance to go back to their difficult and generally unrewarding jobs' (Thapan 1986a: 214). Valley School teachers did not subscribe to these ideas. There was a marked reluctance to comment on the mystical or esoteric side of

Krishnamurti. I heard no suggestions that the school was in any way a site of particular religious significance, and nobody maintained that his teachings had to be absorbed through personal contact. Teachers expressed interest in his ideas, but much less in Krishnamurti as a personality. Some teachers in particular were careful to avoid any traces of a personality cult, and viewed the current intention of the Krishnamurti Foundation to construct study centres with misgivings:

In the study centres they are going to concentrate on Krishnamurti's teaching. They are going to keep only his books, his tapes. Then how is it different from any religion?...The relation between us [teachers and Krishnamurti] is the relation between people who are taking a journey together and that's all...At no point was I willing to say that this man knows what is to be done, therefore I have to apply all the things which he is saying. I think that would be a very great mistake. (Valley School founder teacher)

Several other Valley School teachers expressed the view that Krishnamurti should be valued for his teachings rather than revered as a holy man:

I don't subscribe to the theory that he was an enlightened person, or a totally different human being. I would say he was exceptional, yes, but just very much a human being. I don't think of him as a god or an incarnation or any of those things. (Valley School teacher)

Q. Would you consider Krishnamurti as an enlightened man or rishi?

A. I've never really thought about it. I've never really thought too much about Krishnamurti the person or the teacher. It's always been his thought or ideas that have led me to go on thinking about things...but I don't think about him in a religious sense as such. (Valley School teacher)

These attitudes are representative of the general outlook at Valley School: respect for Krishnamurti as thinker and teacher but no emphasis on his charismatic qualities. In the school there are no photographs of Krishnamurti, no buildings named after him, no signs of devotional practices. The contrast with traditional Hindu

religious practices is extreme, and the contrast even with certain other Krishnamurti schools, Rishi Valley or Brockwood for example, is marked. [6]

The explanation of this difference perhaps lies in the fact that the school was founded towards the end of Krishnamurti's life, by which time he had reduced his traveling for health reasons. He visited the school only twice, and many of the teachers had little personal contact with him. The school never established the tradition of receiving Krishnamurti as a visitor and was obliged from the start to be self-reliant. Thapan suggests that in the case of Rishi Valley:

Foundation Members and ideologue teachers, in particular, treat Krishnamurti with considerable veneration and look to him for guidance in implementing his world-view...They are apparently dependent, for a personal sense of well-being, on their contact with Krishnamurti on his visit to India. (Thapan 1986a:214)

Teachers at Valley School never had the opportunity for prolonged personal contact and could not look to Krishnamurti for guidance. The school was of necessity less personally oriented. It seemed to me that this arrangement accorded better with the temperament and attitudes of the teachers who chose to work at the school. As has been shown, the school is quite radical in its attitudes towards traditional Hindu cultural patterns. There is a strong anti-hierarchical feeling, and attempts are made to resolve the inferior status of women and servants. There is a strong awareness of feminist ideas, and teachers and pupils, coming from a prosperous urban background, reflect a modern section of Indian society. The majority of teachers are under forty and none of them were closely involved with Krishnamurti on a personal level. It is understandable, then, that Valley School has also made a radical break with the traditional tendency in India to idealize important figures, particularly religious teachers, which is noted by Kakar:

Leaders at every level of society and politics ... take on an emotional salience independent of any realistic evaluation of their performance, let alone

acknowledgement of their all too human being....The search for leaders of purity and authority, and their idealization, is vividly manifest in the sphere of religion....When contemplating or confronting these holy men, as well as a few political leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru, Indians are apt to be overwhelmed by the propensity to idealize and to transmute the commonplace into the miraculous, as 'objectivity' is swept away in a flood of reverence. (Kakar 1981:138)

This break with tradition makes the religious atmosphere at Valley School very different from that of a community centred around an individual. The factors that stand out in accounts of devotees' reactions to shamanic gurus such as Sai Baba, Anandamamai or Mehr Baba are precisely the elements of uncritical acceptance and personal devotion. The words of the guru are thought by devotees to reveal Truth, and it is the duty of the disciple to internalize the teachings uncritically. At the same time there is unequivocal reverence for the person of the guru, expressed in songs of praise, offerings and prostrations. In Valley School, by contrast, there is a critical distance maintained towards Krishnamurti's teachings, and no sign of a personality cult. There is no emotional dependence on an idealized vision of Krishnamurti.

This emphasis on the ideas rather than the person also affects the ways in which pupils are exposed to Krishnamurti. The pupils at the school are hardly aware at all of Krishnamurti as a personality. Most of the children only saw him once, and there were only vague recollections of what had been said on that occasion (one young girl told me that she remembered him saying that 'we should be kind to each other and make sure tigers don't die out'). On the other hand, there is considerable exposure to his ideas. By about the 9th Standard (age fifteen), most pupils become somewhat familiar with the content of his teaching, through culture classes and discussions, and over the next few years those who continue at the school become aware of Krishnamurti himself as the inspiration for the school and author of many of the ideas which the teachers espoused. In order to find out more about him, most of the pupils

had read one or two of his books and watched a few videos. The staff do not encourage them to do so unless pupils express an interest for themselves, and videos are not shown regularly - in the course of my visit only one video was shown, at the request of a visitor.

Pupils I interviewed generally felt they had absorbed the ideas much more through discussions at the school than by reading or listening to Krishnamurti. They said that they did not feel pressurized to take an interest in Krishnamurti or to believe in his teachings. One boy noted that they were encouraged to question the validity of what he said: 'it's not a set of rules that you must follow' (Brugger 1985:78). There is certainly no crude imposition of Krishnamurti as religious figure on the children, and on the whole they express little interest in him as a person. However, older pupils had realised that many of the teachers' views were similar to those of Krishnamurti. One girl noted that although he was not imposed in a heavy-handed way, the pupils were never really exposed to the work of other philosophers or religious figures. She felt there should be more of an effort to give a broader education in this respect, so the pupils had more opportunity to assess his views objectively. None of the pupils in any way simply repeat phrases or ideas taken from Krishnamurti, but there is no doubt that his work formed the philosophical perspective of the school.

Some of the older pupils showed considerable interest in his teachings. One boy evidently valued the fact that Krishnamurti's ideas are still open to exploration and have not yet been institutionalized and codified:

Those men - Christ, Buddha - all those people say almost the same thing, but in different places. All of them say 'Be kind to your neighbour'. And I find that people just do the opposite. So people haven't listened properly, they haven't understood. They are just looking after their personal interests.

Q. How about Krishnamurti's teachings?

A. Maybe that will suffer the same fate. He explained beautifully but not many people will listen. I think that will happen. Over the years - say fifty years

hence - it will be slightly more defined. So people will interpret it in their own way. Inevitably it is going to happen. It may easily become a religion.

Q. What is it at the moment?

A. It's hard to say what it is. It is a thing which either you go into, if you want to, or not if you don't. Nobody is going to force you into this because it is fairly fresh at the moment. If you are really interested you can take it up.

The aspect of Krishnamurti's work which many teachers stressed above all was the emphasis on questioning. As one teacher said: 'he never taught us answers, but he did teach us how to ask questions of everything'. This sense of free inquiry is accepted by all and is part of the fabric of the school. Pupils are encouraged to find things out for themselves as far as possible, both in school work and in other areas, and to question staff about everything. 'The biggest thing Krishnamurti has done is to show very clearly that one must inquire on one's own,' as one interviewee put it. He continued:

You see I have also seen that when you ask any serious question there is really no answer available anywhere. That is a simple fact. For any non-trivial question there is no answer available with anybody. Even in Krishnamurti's teaching. If you ask a non-trivial question you will find that the answer is not there. So what is the role of the teaching? To tell you that there is no answer to any question.

Another key idea of Krishnamurti - no authority or hierarchy - is also universally endorsed. Every staff member I spoke to felt very positive about this. Its practical application, as we have seen, is that there is no hierarchy in the school. Further, there is no authority in the school on religious or philosophical questions. Krishnamurti's books and ideas are never quoted as authoritative. All staff members felt this was an essential part of being able to question freely and that it helped to foster a sense of co-operation and affection rather than relationships based on power.

Staff members also recognise the great importance of understanding human behaviour, particularly their own, by means of introspection, observing psychological states and examining daily behaviour in relationship. All these are central to Krishnamurti's teaching. As well as attempting this in their own lives, staff often try to encourage the children to develop an awareness of human behaviour. It is one of the main themes of the culture classes, particularly with older children: of the classes I observed, most were concerned with topics such as fear, anxiety, greed, the nature of the self. But several teachers also pointed out that it was of little significance merely to talk about such things with the children. It was much more important to actually live in such a way that children would see for themselves the relevance of the approach. One young teacher told me:

What I have learned after coming to this school is that all these [teachings] were OK. But the moment you come to the school, the way you lead your life becomes terribly important. I think to the child it doesn't matter whether you talk about these things or not. It's more that they see the kind of life you lead. So you start looking at your own life.

The view that self-understanding is important for teachers is supported by researchers in educational psychology: indeed some writers sound surprisingly like Krishnamurti himself on this point:

A teacher cannot make much headway in understanding others or in helping others to understand themselves unless he is endeavouring to understand himself...The process of gaining knowledge of self and the struggle for self-fulfillment and self-acceptance is something in which he himself must be involved. (Jersild, 1955:13)

Hamachek, in his textbook on educational psychology, also stresses the importance of self-understanding to healthy relationships: it may prevent teachers falling victim to unconsciously motivated whims, selfish desires or unnecessarily defensive behaviour. It can help reduce unhealthy student-teacher relationships and reduce teachers' nervous tension and anxiety (Hamachek, 1979:395-419). As



we have seen, Krishnamurti strongly emphasized the importance of healthy relationships based on an understanding of the self, both in general terms and with reference to education in particular. However, his aim was not limited to reducing tension and anxiety: he hoped that people who followed his teachings would undergo a transformation and touch a transcendent dimension. He was a spiritual teacher, not a psychologist, and this is reflected in the school. The ultimate intention of the school is to approach the question of living a religious life in Krishnamurti's sense of the word: self-understanding, based on personal insight and experience, simplicity and honesty is important because it can lead to transcendence. This represents a different perspective from that of more conventional psychology (see also the discussion in 2.2). Teachers in the school state their aims in explicitly religious terms:

You could say that the various things we are attempting to do here might integrate as the true religious spirit. A religious mind believes in simplicity, actually, in the way of life. An honest life. The ability to inquire into everything, what is right and what is wrong. The ability to be free of all kinds of prejudices, where the mind is free from all traditional structures. Then it may be really compassionate. That is the true spirit of religion. To have a compassionate and intelligent mind. (Valley School teacher).

The same teacher saw this as the fundamental aim of the school:

This [religion] is the most important part of education. If we can guide the children to some understanding of what is a true religious spirit then I think the school will have achieved something.

Another teacher also emphasized the search for the sacred:

Q. What would you call meditation?

A. Really this contact with something that is beyond, something you may call the 'spirit' or whatever you want to call it....I would really like the child to have a deep sense of wonder about life and really want to find out what is the significance of life, to come into contact with what is, to find out if there is anything sacred. That is, I would say, the main aim of

the education that I would like to give. (Founder teacher of Valley School in Brugger, 1985:87/92)

Independent inquiry and religion were also considered important by older pupils. However, they tended to relate these ideas not to Krishnamurti personally, but rather to discussions they had held with teachers. In general it was clear that most students responded positively to the idea that everybody should think independently. This idea is implicit in the open class system for the academic work and is also discussed explicitly in culture classes and conversations. Several pupils told me that they felt able to think things over for themselves, that they were more interested in discovering their own solutions than in accepting traditional beliefs. Through conversations with teachers they had become aware of alternatives to established career patterns, religious beliefs and family structures. Even if they felt unable to confront their parents in these areas, they were used to considering them critically.

In their views on religion, it is possible to observe how students have to some extent absorbed the teachers' views, but also have thought the matter over for themselves and can speak about it freshly and directly. Teachers generally shared Krishnamurti's views on organised religions: they are considered factors of divisiveness, and children are urged to question the validity of Hindu religious beliefs and practices. Culture classes often discuss the problems of sectarian conflict and violence which afflict contemporary India. The following critique of religions, written by a teacher for the school magazine, is typical:

A cursory survey of what religions have done throughout history quickly dispels any relation those religions could possibly have with the holy...religion has divided man against man in a way no other single factor has ever succeeded in doing. This division has not only shed the blood of millions of human beings but threatens to ensure that peace will never prevail over the world in the years to come.

Similar views were expressed by pupils. I asked one 15 year old girl how she felt about religion:

If you are caught up in any religion you always see people of other religions as something different. You seem to feel you are not on the same level. So you can't think without having that wall between...These so-called gurus and preachers, instead of bringing it all to join at one point they all give different paths, as they call it, to reach God...And people have just grasped onto that. For them it's more of a security. For the lower sections of society it's also their social life.

She identified divisiveness as a major weakness of organised religion and maintained that this was something she had seen for herself: 'So-called religion now actually I have moved away from it completely. I saw exactly what it was doing.' Another perceptive critic of orthodox religion was an 11 year old girl:

All that *puja* and rituals is nonsense. In India they say God is truth and then they worship that but actually they tell lies all the time.

Q. Have you been taught that?

A. No, I noticed that. So many people tell lies all the time. If they spoke the truth but didn't go to *puja* that would be much better.

An older girl suggested that formal religions had a stultifying effect on the intellect:

Hinduism and Christianity are just views, world-views. Complete in themselves. And when something is complete in itself there's no looking outside to find more. No exploration. And we are limited by those fields we have which we call religion. So I don't want to get involved in those.

As well as divisiveness, other common criticisms of organised religion in the school are that it is based on beliefs and scriptures that one is not allowed to question; that it is based on hierarchy and authority; that it encourages superstition; and that it encourages the subservience of women. Pupils tend to deny the validity of religious claims based on revelation or tradition and

stress the role played by religious movements in causing social conflicts. This view is particularly attractive in India which has suffered so terribly from inter-religious conflicts since independence, and to a social group which has a basically humanistic and scientific educational background.

Despite the rejection of formal religion, the school has had a remarkable success in awakening a deep interest in spirituality in most of the older pupils. All those I spoke to had thought a great deal about meditation, truth, and the religious life in the broadest sense. Moreover they were able and willing to discuss such topics. They obviously owed much to discussions with the teachers, but here again much of what they said was based on personal experience and interest. I asked one 16 year old girl if she had observed her thoughts moving, as Krishnamurti had suggested:

In a way. You really have to watch yourself all the time. Sometimes you are watching yourself and you see your mind wandering. And then as you see that everything stops. The wandering stops and really you know what is going on. And you have to think it out for yourself. Nobody can tell you. You may find it interesting what somebody says, but you cannot feel it unless you see it for yourself....Sometimes you need to get everything out of your mind...I don't know how to explain it. You just suddenly come back and then you realise that you haven't been thinking anything.

Other pupils said that they found it important to observe their behaviour in daily life and the beauty of the natural surroundings. One male student felt that he attained a quality of alertness sometimes, which allowed him to observe nature or other human beings very clearly. He noticed that when he was in this state, he never felt sad or worried about anything, but that it was a fluctuating state. At the time he spoke to me he was interested in discovering why he felt alert sometimes and at other times dreamy and lost in thoughts.

A female student of 15 felt that religion really implied moving away from fixed patterns of thinking:

I personally think religion is a much deeper thing which you have to question for yourself. You can't question it through other people's experience. This year I have started to question and it has changed my views and opinions. I have recently learned to look at things with an open mind. If you know that something does affect you, you feel the drag of the set way of thinking. Then you can learn to move away from something which you know is not right.

In all this one can detect traces of Krishnamurti's teaching, but clearly transformed by personal reflection and experience. As well as personal experience of this sort, one or two pupils had interesting observations to make about religion in general:

Q. What do you think Krishnamurti meant by a religious quality in life?

A. Certain things that Krishnamurti talks about, I feel that man originally was like that, before society developed and technology and he changed.

Q. He was originally pure or more alive?

A. I think he must have been a real human being as it were, he could have all those qualities. But centuries have changed us and we are still continuing the whole tradition. so each generation loses more and more.

Q. Do you think there was some kind of golden age in the past then?

A. Not like that. But talk about the Buddha or something. There were people like that. I feel there must have been something like that in each man. Probably now it is deteriorating. That may have been religion, the real sacred thing. Also connected with nature and the natural balance. (16 year old girl).

As one teacher observed, the older pupils talk about these things far more seriously and maturely than most adults. My research suggested that the school has succeeded in introducing the pupils to an approach to religion and spirituality which could be called non-sectarian, open-ended and exploratory. Many teachers and pupils have evolved a flexible and sophisticated outlook which leads to considerable serious reflection and meditation. However, both staff and pupils felt that the school had not succeeded in producing a transformation. It may be remembered that the ultimate aim of the Krishnamurti schools was to transform young people and/or teachers and to awaken a transcendent intelligence and religious mind. A

criticism that some pupils raised was that in the end for most pupils and teachers the interest remained on a verbal level, and they failed to change in any significant way: one female pupil observed 'most of them follow the majority - it's easier for them to get into the same stream rather than go in a different direction'. Most boys who left the school started on a prestigious career, and girls expected to marry and follow a conventional family life.

No teacher claimed to have witnessed or experienced a transformation of consciousness. The general attitude was that Krishnamurti was a truthful, perceptive and important religious teacher and so his words ought to be taken very seriously. But since the concept of transformation is one that is not open to scrutiny in the normal way, the correct approach is to leave it open: 'I wouldn't deny it,' one teacher told me. 'I would leave it as an open question.' Another was more sceptical:

I haven't been here long enough to believe in that. I would like to believe it. But I don't know. I really don't know if these schools as they are at present constituted are doing that. I am a biologist, a student of ecology and evolution. And I can't really leave all I have learned aside and accept a theory because it sounds good.

This topic was one where the staff held a wide range of views. Several said they had not considered it very carefully as they felt they had no basis on which to make a judgement. Others, as above, were prepared to entertain the idea as a possibility. Others, such as a founder member of the school, felt that it was the *raison d'être* of the school:

Yes, I would say that [transformation] is the only reason why such a school should exist. Not really for giving knowledge, nor for progressive education, which a lot of schools are doing, nor for experimental education and so on. (Brugger, 1985:13)

In reply to my question 'How does the idea of transformation affect teachers?' a Valley School teacher who had previously worked in

Rishi Valley gave the following answer which, I feel, is representative of the general attitude:

I think it is something which is there in the background of our consciousness, but we don't really know what to do with it. As far as we can see, Krishnamurti was somehow totally different from normal people, there was something special about him. Perhaps nobody else in the world, including these schools, has this quality. So what can we do? At least we try to provide an environment as conducive as possible for such a transformation. If a child comes who has the seed of something special, then at least let us not crush it. Rather provide good soil where the seed can grow. That means showing kindness and care and so on. I feel that is all one can do. The rest is not in our hands. Most of us do have this in mind as a possibility, at least we don't rule it out.

In an earlier chapter (3.4.1) I argued that the concept of transformation might tend to stimulate a sense of exploration and inquiry, whereas the view that human development was categorically blocked at the present level would tend to be discouraging. This seemed to be the case in Valley School: teachers were interested in discussing new ideas and there was no sense of cynicism or despair. Several teachers were interested in exploring the possibility of more radical forms of education which were frequently a topic of discussion in teachers' meetings and in informal conversations. Some of the ideas could be traced back to Krishnamurti's observations, while others seem to have grown out of the experience of the schools and are possibly influenced by other thinkers.

Two ideas which have been discussed at Valley School are the creation of a community without a fixed syllabus or exams, and a new way of approaching the question of learning. Neither of these was immediately practicable, but they provide an interesting insight into teachers' creative thinking, and of the aspiration to further the integration of education and religion.

The first proposal was that the school should become entirely independent of state examinations and function as a rural community.

Members would be totally committed to pursuing a religious life, in Krishnamurti's sense, and might spend time gardening and farming as well as in cultural activities. The teaching of formal school work would be abandoned altogether, although children would spend time with the adults in the community, pursuing various interests. The intention would not be to revert to a state of illiteracy, but rather to allow children to learn more freely without the artificial pressures of syllabus and examination. The school culture could be much less traditional:

We don't have to be concerned with examinations if we could unlock ourselves from the system. Just have a good school where people could come and live and learn...Here there is still a great deal of emphasis on academic learning, although there is some truth when they say they also learn about society and psychological states and so on. (Valley School teacher)

The new emphasis would be on a different development of the brain, through free interaction, study and conversation:

The child could remain in a situation like this - nature - and also be in contact with human beings who are intelligent and talking of various things - talking about the universe - because after all if the brain is healthy and full of energy it will read a lot, learn, and it can do all kinds of things. (Valley School founder teacher).

The same teacher observed that such a thing has really not been tried before:

To be honest you don't really know what happens to a human being who is brought up this way. If he is very healthy and he is very safe and secure inwardly, then you don't know what the brain is going to be. It may have infinite energy to do anything. From what we know, it may be that the brain will have much more energy than it has after going through all the formal process. If the sense of security is very real then the brain's energy is going to be very very wide, strong.



Two main difficulties seem to have prevented the implementation of this proposal. First, very few parents would continue to send their children to the school: as mentioned earlier, the possibility of such an arrangement was once proposed to all the parents and met with a firmly negative response. Given the school's dependence on fees, it may not have been a feasible proposition. Second, a teacher suggested that money may not be the root of the problem; it may be that the consensus of teachers was not prepared for such a radical step. The underlying cause was psychological rather than practical:

Until a few of us have a radical change things will stay pretty much the same. We are only willing to change in small ways. Given the financial situation it is difficult to see what we can do. But to be honest I don't think money is the main problem. If we really had a special consciousness, if we were doing something creative, then probably the money would come. (Founder teacher of Valley School)

A few teachers had also evolved views about learning and knowledge. These views were formed after observation at the school and are also similar to some of Krishnamurti's ideas on these topics. They are discussed in some detail in *A New Approach to Learning and Living* (Brugger, 1985:Interviews 2 and 10). First, a child should primarily be taught and encouraged to look, listen and observe. Emphasis should be on non-verbal interaction, gardening, looking after pets, looking at nature, coming into contact with beautiful places and with affectionate and responsible adults. There would be no emphasis at all on the process of acquiring information.

Second, there may be the possibility of 'an entirely new way of learning' (Brugger, 1985:22). This does not refer so much to questions of reward and pressure, but rather to the idea that there may be a non-analytical approach to things based on direct perception with the whole brain. It raises the possibility that the brain might develop a mode of functioning that is more efficient than thought. Two teachers felt this was a far deeper question than that of school structure or class organisation.

Thirdly, this involves overturning the whole concept that school is a place where one learns in order to live successfully later on in life:

The whole process of living will be intensified here. And learning comes out of living. And not the other way round. Now it appears that you learn first and live later. It's a ridiculous thing, isn't it? (Brugger, 1985:94)

The first illusion that should be dispelled is that academic study will help the student to face life. The more fundamental problems of life, such as relationship, corruption in society and wars, will never be solved by an academic approach, nor are good qualifications any sort of passport or guarantee of a happy life. What is important is that the teacher helps the student to 'live life now, so that the student is all the time living, and learning out of living' (ibid:98).

#### 6.5 VALLEY SCHOOL, KRISHNAMURTI AND SPIRITUALITY

The Valley School is a good example of Krishnamurti's educational philosophy in action. Not only is the school formally affiliated to the Krishnamurti Foundation, but many of Krishnamurti's educational ideas have been implemented or at least seriously considered: for example the school has adopted most of the suggestions made by Krishnamurti in *Education and the Significance of Life* concerning school size and structure (see 4.3.). The school itself is small, as are the classes, and discipline is maintained without punishment. There is no competition in the school. Relationships also conform to Krishnamurti's suggestions: the school is non-hierarchical, staff meetings are frequent and honest and staff-student rapport is good. There is no sectarian religious teaching but an emphasis on personal inquiry, reflection and sensitivity to the natural surroundings.

Less successful areas are diet, physical education, parental involvement and academic work. Some attention is paid to the health of the students, but this is not seen as a high priority and physical education and games are not stressed. One teacher told me that he considered that activities such as hatha yoga, although good in themselves, could easily become fads. In general it was felt that physical exercises should not occupy an important part of the school curriculum. In academic subjects, the open-class system and the excellent staff-pupil relationships have led to a friendly and flexible atmosphere. However, there has been no attempt at a radical restructuring of the curriculum, which follows national guidelines. Further, there are no signs that children at the school have become outstanding in their studies, and results in public examinations have not been especially good. In this respect, Krishnamurti's educational vision has apparently led to little change.

In many areas the school had succeeded in implementing not only the letter but the spirit of Krishnamurti's suggestions. For example, the lack of hierarchy was not merely a formal or organisational principle. There was a strong feeling that all teachers met together on an equal basis and felt free to speak their minds, and that others would respect their opinion. In Krishnamurti's words:

Happy agreement is possible only when there is a feeling of absolute equality among all. It is essential that this kind of equality prevail in the right kind of school, for there can be real co-operation only when the sense of superiority and its opposite are non-existent. (ESL: 92)

It would be exaggerated to claim that there was a feeling of 'absolute' equality among staff - for example younger and newer members felt their relative lack of experience - but the testimony I heard and my own observations suggested that the school had gone far towards realising this vision. Similarly, I felt that the absence of discipline in the school was not merely to conform with Krishnamurti's writings, but was based on a great deal of care and

attention to relationships. Krishnamurti raised the question: 'With the right kind of educator and a small number of students, would any form of repression, politely called discipline, be necessary?' The school has shown in practice that there can be an orderly community without recourse to disciplinary measures.

The above achievements are certainly impressive, but for Krishnamurti they would only be a starting point for nurturing the spiritual life of the child and the teacher by encouraging inquiry rather than formal practices:

Dogmas, mysteries and rituals are not conducive to a spiritual life. Religious education in the true sense is to encourage the child to understand his own relationship to people, to things and to nature... True religion is not a set of beliefs and rituals, hopes and fears; and if we can allow the child to grow up without these hindering influences then perhaps, as he matures, he will begin to inquire into the nature of reality, of God. (ESL:38-39)

In the same passage, Krishnamurti suggests that it is impossible to convey a complex religious teaching to a young child purely verbally, but that one could find other means to communicate 'without too many words and explanations the meaning of a spiritual life'. He continues to argue that the educator must constantly be in the process of self-inquiry, examining his/her own thoughts and feelings and discarding prejudices and conditioning.

What does this mean in practice at Valley School? First, teachers seriously devote time and energy to introspection and self-questioning. They frequently discuss ways of improving the school and are ready to accept criticism and suggestions. There is little sense of self-satisfaction. Pupils are encouraged to think over a wide range of questions concerning their own behaviour and that of humanity in general within the context of a non-formal religious environment. Above all, they move in an environment where the staff are seriously searching. Teachers have often given up more prestigious careers to pursue their quest, and it does indeed seem,

from the testimony of students, that this dedication has the effect of making pupils aware of an alternative to conventional careerism. Whatever the final cause, pupils at Valley School are responding to some element in the teachers, in the Krishnamurti teachings or in some combination of both which stimulates their own sense of inquiry.

The second important aspect of spirituality at Valley School is the commitment to establishing excellent relationships. Staff meetings and staff-pupil contacts in school are conducted with great attention to the quality of relationship, emphasis also being given to informal relationships, conversations, shared activities and projects. Valley School is a highly personal institution. Relationship with nature is also encouraged as children are expected to pay attention to the surrounding estate. It has been noted that in several respects this commitment to inquiry and to good relationships is advocated by educational psychologists. Not only are self-knowledge and satisfaction in relationships of personal value, but they lead to better education (Hamachek 1979:393-421).

The third aspect is the commitment to a transcendent vision. In accordance with the underlying philosophy, the ultimate aim of the school would be to assist a transformation of consciousness. Despite its sharp rejection of conventional religions, the school is a religious environment in Krishnamurti's sense. Teachers' philosophical perspective is that inquiry and attention to relationship could lead to a transcendent state of consciousness or experience of the sacred. Among pupils this was reflected in an interest in religious teachings and meditation. Many older pupils had at least some experience of meditation and expressed an interest in pursuing religious thinking. Most teachers regard their involvement with the school as essentially a religious commitment.

From the experience of the school it is also possible to note certain characteristics of Krishnamurti's thought which are less attractive. Although there was no heavy handed imposition of his

ideas, the perspective of most of the staff was clearly derived from Krishnamurti's teachings. There was little effort to present the views of other philosophers or teachers, and pupils were not encouraged to adopt a critical attitude towards Krishnamurti himself. Another weak area was the relative lack of interest in the servant problem as opposed to other problems. This possibly reflects Krishnamurti's tendency to regard social injustice as a secondary phenomenon that must await spiritual awakening before resolution. The school did indeed have plans to resolve the question and did not ignore it entirely, but one sensed a lack of urgency about the attempts. Finally, there was no attempt to celebrate or recognize any local tradition. Pupils were not encouraged to participate in local festivals and there was little sense of solidarity with the rest of the community. All this has led to an atmosphere and ethos of spiritual development that is characteristically 'Krishnamurtian' with its strengths and weaknesses.

In the school's educational discourse one can still recognise some elements which stem from the progressive educational movement which was discussed in 3.2. For example, the two 'radical' ideas that were discussed at the end of 6.4 - the establishment of a rural community and the development of new modes of perception - can both be traced back to the Romantic tendency which, it was argued, had such an influence on Krishnamurti's educational thought. However, Valley School represents a modernisation and reworking of these ideas: the school deals with life in the 1980s, and there is no sign of the rather precious concerns of some of the 1920s European progressives.

Teachers expressed various views as to the success of their undertaking. There are no obvious criteria to judge the success or failure of a Krishnamurti school. It is clear that there has been no spectacular transformation, either among staff or students. No student who graduated from the Krishnamurti schools in India over the past fifty years had become an outstanding spiritual leader.

However the general impression which ex-students gave to the secretary of one of the original Krishnamurti schools, Rajghat near Varanasi, was that they had a certain honesty and kindness, they tended to be tolerant and non-sectarian:

It is true that a student from Rajghat may behave in a good way, in the ordinary sense of that word. For example, if he sees a stone on the road you might see him pick it up where another child would ignore it. Things like that. But these are acquired virtues, something the child has learned because he is mixing with children like that, rather thoughtful teachers and so on.

Teachers at Valley School did not make dramatic claims about their achievement, some feeling that the school, despite its many good points, had basically failed in the question of transformation. 'The school is not exploding' as one put it, echoing Krishnamurti's own feelings about his schools. Another discussed the reasons for this:

Unfortunately I feel we are becoming more and more like other schools. A little more progressive, more open, perhaps, but basically exactly the same...it seems we all have the same sort of mind as the rest of society, give or take a little bit. Same likes and dislikes, judgements and routines. So gradually we have built up a system which is the same as any other school - training children for a good role in society.

However, the general mood of teachers at Valley School is optimistic. Although there were no signs of a sudden transformation, several students had certainly been introduced to a serious spiritual life at a young age. One of the original teachers explained that on the whole he felt that the school had been successful, although there are obvious difficulties in judging this:

It is a very difficult matter. It is not like a factory assembly line where they all come up to one level or you have quality control and discard the ones that fail and so on. It is such a tenuous and delicate thing one is attempting. Even if two or three have been able to understand quite deeply, then we have been able to communicate something. And I think yes, some

have understood very deeply what we are conveying to them...a few have gone very far indeed.

It seems likely that even if the school produces no important religious thinkers, at least most pupils will have an open and inquiring mind, be relatively free of sectarian prejudices and would have a certain quality of honesty that might prevent them becoming entangled in corruption or violence of any sort. One ex-student of Rishi Valley school who also studied at Valley School told me how he found life in college:

I find I can cope with all sorts of people I meet. I feel quite confident and can think things out for myself. Also I notice people from other schools are rather easily influenced. For example the first few days in college there was a lot of ragging, the older boys throwing their weight around. Some of the first-year boys couldn't take it and just cracked up.

Q. How about you?

A. I just wasn't bothered. It didn't touch me at all. Actually I feel able to cope with any situation. I believe the schools made a great difference to me. I don't know how I would have been otherwise.

One can speculate on the reasons for such success. The school is a co-operative community and children have to function in relationship without the constant imposition of discipline. The environment is not stressful as there is no competition or violence. The school is in a rural location and the pupils come from prosperous and successful family backgrounds. Teachers are affectionate and problems are talked through rather than resolved arbitrarily. Children are not exposed to sectarian propaganda. There is considerable emphasis on understanding human nature, and children are encouraged to observe and be responsible for their own behaviour. It is quite understandable that students from such a school might tend to be self-reliant, independent, open-minded and skilled at relating. Emotionally they might tend to feel rather secure.



This should provide a firm basis for the development of spirituality. Teachers can begin to discuss more philosophical or religious questions, as are done in the culture classes for older children, and pupils can consider questions such as the possibility of transcendence, meditation and the nature of religious experience. Above all, Krishnamurti's teaching is one of personal experience, awareness, inwardness and transcendence. In Valley School it is possible to see how a school environment can be structured to nurture these qualities without ignoring social demands for efficient education. Many of these qualities are traditionally respected and practised in Indian religious and philosophical traditions, and it is perhaps understandable that such a school can exist in India. The next chapter will examine a school which tries to implement the same philosophy in a totally different cultural setting.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE SCHOOL AS RELIGIOUS CENTRE: BROCKWOOD PARK

#### 7.1 A CENTRE FOR KRISHNAMURTI'S WORK

Brockwood Park and Valley School are very different institutions. The Valley School was intended for local pupils of school age. At the time of its foundation there were already several major centres for Krishnamurti's work in India and there was no intention that the new school should become an administrative or religious centre. Krishnamurti visited the school only twice and did not hold public talks there.

Brockwood Park was intended to have a different role. It was founded partly as a school but also as a centre for Krishnamurti's work in Europe. It is an institution with multiple functions, and this has given rise to a number of interesting questions. How is a centre for Krishnamurti's work different from a traditional religious centre? How important are academic studies compared to spiritual teachings? Are teenagers interested in introspection and reflection in a religious context? Did Krishnamurti's personal presence make a significant contribution? Is this different from his contribution at the level of ideas in Bangalore? This chapter will explore these questions and examine the centre's religious activity, based on documents from the school and on observations and interviews in 1987/88. As with my account of Valley School, I have used the present tense to describe school life, but it should be remembered that the centre is an evolving and changing institution and my observations will inevitably become dated. The first section provides a brief account of the centre's overall development which

sets the context for a more detailed examination of life at Brockwood.

The idea of forming a Krishnamurti school in Europe was discussed in the 1960s by people who attended his talks in Switzerland. One interviewee told me that the project was probably influenced by the general mood of ferment and optimism towards the end of that decade. Transformation was in the air. A new generation was becoming involved with eastern religions and there was a surge of interest in Krishnamurti's work. Various groups of people approached Krishnamurti with proposals to start a school and he discussed the possibility during his visits to Europe and England. From the start it was envisaged as an international school, with Switzerland and France being considered as possible locations. Eventually it was thought that Switzerland was too expensive and France politically unstable, and so it was decided to found the school in England. The Krishnamurti Foundation purchased a suitable property in 1969, and the school opened in September of that year. An English woman, Dorothy Simmons, became the first principal, and held the post until her retirement in 1983. [1]

The centre's full name is the 'Brockwood Park Krishnamurti Educational Centre' (hereafter called Brockwood). This was thought more appropriate than the term school, because Brockwood's function was to be much wider than that of a conventional school. In the Bulletin of the Krishnamurti Foundation the aims of Brockwood were stated as follows:

To make a home for Krishnamurti...an educational centre for boys and girls of school-leaving age and over...and a meeting place where responsible, free, dedicated and serious human beings can come to discover for themselves what it is to live intelligently, and then go out into the world and transform themselves and others. (*Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin* No.2, Spring 1969:2).

Krishnamurti used to spend at least four months every year at Brockwood. He gave public talks there yearly from 1969 to 1986 and

the school was the venue for many of his seminars and meetings with individual visitors. Since 1987 Brockwood has also housed the offices of the Krishnamurti Foundation Trust, archives and library facilities and a centre for adults to go on retreat. Brockwood is the main centre in Europe for the study of Krishnamurti's teachings.

The centre is sited on a small hill in the Meon Valley between Winchester and Petersfield, Hampshire. The setting is entirely rural and the school is surrounded by farms and woods. The main house of the school is a Georgian mansion, an elegant white building backing onto lawns. The ground floor provides space for the kitchens and dining hall, a communal sitting room, an assembly hall, the library, and various classrooms, offices and utility rooms. Upstairs are bedrooms for female students and teachers. Additional rooms were built close to the main building. These were originally intended to serve as accommodation for visitors, but gradually became used for school purposes. They are single storey, small rooms which provide bedrooms for male students, classrooms and offices. In addition, Brockwood owns a few cottages which are used for staff accommodation. The new building created recently as a study centre is discussed below (7.4).

Brockwood is fortunate in having beautiful grounds and owns about forty acres of land. Beside the house there is a large vegetable garden which is cultivated by the staff and students on organic principles and provides about a half of the school's requirements. There is also a rose garden with other flowers and vines. Most of the rest of the land is lawn and field. At one end of the estate is a small but well stocked arboretum known as 'The Grove', which was a favourite place of Krishnamurti's.

Many visitors comment on the fact that Brockwood is extremely well cared for and cherished. It shows none of the lack of care that can easily afflict institutions, and there are no signs of destructiveness or carelessness - dirty floors or walls, spoilt paintwork, graffiti or broken furniture. Students and staff

maintain a high level of cleanliness and neatness. The carpets, furniture and fittings are well maintained, and many hours are spent on the gardens and grounds.

The school is financed partly by fees charged to students, and partly by donation. Staff salaries, food, lighting and heating and schoolroom expenses account for a large part of the expenditure, but there are also very heavy maintenance expenses because the original building is old and needs constant repair. The school is dependent on donations for major building projects, but fortunately several large gifts have been made. [2]

Since its inception, the school has mainly taken young people between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. They are taught academic subjects, but the emphasis of the school has been much more on their psychological development. In particular, students learn to live responsibly in a community and are expected to study Krishnamurti's teachings. They reflect a very wide variety of social and cultural backgrounds, with places of origin ranging from California to Indonesia.

A new principal was appointed in June 1985 and a new management structure was established in the school. [3] The principal is responsible for the overall running of the school. Two other teachers are responsible for important areas of school life: one for academic work and the other for household, maintenance and administration. At the same time, a group of fifteen teachers, most of whom have been at the school for a number of years, meet together on a weekly basis. The intention is that this group forms a solid nucleus in the school which can think things over in a reflective and non-personal way, being concerned with Krishnamurti's teachings rather than day to day decisions. These arrangements seem to have worked well, and all staff I spoke to expressed themselves content with the present situation. Many felt that the school is stronger and more cohesive than ever before.

In the 1980s Krishnamurti initiated a major new project at Brockwood, the establishment of a study-centre for adults which was completed in December 1987. The centre has about twenty rooms available for visitors to stay for a short period, perhaps one week, to study Krishnamurti's works. As a result the number of adults at Brockwood will increase, further removing the atmosphere from that of a conventional school.

Brockwood is a stable and well organised community. Most of the staff members are between thirty and fifty years old and there is a core group who are committed to staying at the school in the future. The centre is financially sound and it seems very likely that both the school and the study centre will continue to prosper and develop. The philosophical orientation of the school is clearly defined. Teachers are recruited on the strength of their interest in Krishnamurti, there are regular meetings for staff and students to watch his videos and discuss his teachings, and the study centre is dedicated to the study of his teachings.

## 7.2 CREATING A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

### 7.2.1 School life

We have seen that Brockwood has several overlapping functions, including that of being a school for young people which is the aspect we shall consider first. With regard to the school and Brockwood as a whole, Krishnamurti stated explicitly that his aims were fundamentally religious. In a statement in 1983 entitled 'Brockwood Today and in the Future' he said:

Brockwood must be much more than a school. It must be a centre for those who are deeply interested in the Teachings, a place where they can stay and study...Brockwood must be a place of integrity, deep honesty, and the awakening of intelligence in the midst of the confusion, conflict and destruction that is taking place in the world.

The school is based on Krishnamurti's educational philosophy. Students and staff should learn about society in general and relationships in particular, and this should lead to a 'life of goodness' or inquiry into religion. The task that teachers faced was to create a school that could implement this philosophy in action. They had to decide on appropriate living arrangements, curriculum, pedagogy, numbers, age-range, fees and a host of other practical questions; beyond that were the central questions of sustaining the spiritual life of the school and working towards the profound change in consciousness that Krishnamurti insisted was possible.

Before we examine what has been done at Brockwood it is worth recalling the argument put forward by David Hay, among others, that contemporary society has tended to adopt an anti-religious and materialist outlook. Other widespread assumptions are the desirability of material success and instant gratification. The media abound in images which glamourize consumer goods, happiness is often equated with money and sexuality is stimulated by suggestive portrayals of the human figure. Little attention is paid to qualities such as self-knowledge, compassion or austerity. As discussed in 4.1, other writers have identified characteristics of modern consciousness as anomie, fragmentation, loss of identity and futurity (Berger 1979:101-115).

Brockwood, both in its underlying philosophy and in practice, provides a sharp contrast to these values. The school offers an environment where religious experience is allowed and even encouraged, not only in particular classes, but in the life of the community as a whole. Students are exposed to many aspects of contemporary thought, including science, the social sciences and literature, but within the overall context of a religious philosophy. Moreover, the values of Krishnamurti's philosophy differ radically from those of consumerism. Happiness, for him, may come after diligent inquiry into oneself and one's relationship with others. Security is not to be found in money or power, but young

people may develop a sense of inner security when they have considered their identity and their place in society. Sexuality is not something to be indulged in irresponsibly, but should be considered in the context of a loving relationship. Teachers at Brockwood perform the task which Hay regards as essential for religious education (see 4.1):

The religious education teacher has the important task of providing an environment in which there is permissiveness with regard to religion...the positive creation of a climate in which the class members give themselves and others permission for the unhindered examination of the religious areas of human experience. (Hay 1985:144)

A particular feature of Brockwood is that it is an international centre, with students and staff from all over the world. Over the last five years, less than half the students have had English as mother language, although English is the language in which the school operates. 22% of students came from the UK, with other relatively large contingents from the USA and France. More than half the students came from a wide range of countries, including many third world states. All students I spoke to emphasized that this had been of great interest and of benefit to their education. They felt they had an insight into other cultures and, above all, had no feelings of nationalist prejudice. One Argentinian at Brockwood was highly amused when I asked if there had been any animosity shown towards him by English students because of the Falklands War. He said that not only had there been no animosity, but that such a thing was utterly unthinkable in the environment of Brockwood. People were considered as individuals, not judged by their race or colour.

One of Krishnamurti's continual pleas throughout his life was for people to abandon nationalist prejudice, and teachers at Brockwood, even if they have achieved nothing else, have at least provided a model for education that transcends national divisions. This provides an example of the benefits derived from operating a small,



independent school. The entire philosophical perspective of the school is anti-racist, and in the school environment there would be no room whatsoever for racism to arise. Any aggression towards another on the grounds of race or nationality would immediately be stopped. Given the widespread problems arising from racism and nationalist prejudice, Brockwood has achieved a significant success in this area and shown that a warm acceptance of diverse backgrounds is possible.

Statistics from the last seven years showed that on arrival about 20% of students had already completed secondary education. 60% took O and A levels while at Brockwood and many students also sat for the Cambridge First Certificate and Proficiency in English examinations. An important recent development was to encourage older students to follow Open University courses while living at the school. Since they are older, these students have various extra responsibilities in the community. Academic work at Brockwood is discussed below.

Recruitment of students is considered carefully. Students are always invited to spend some time, usually about a week, at the school before they are accepted. During this time staff members will approach them and discuss the school and the student's reasons for joining. Each student's application is carefully considered by the principal and all the staff, and often by older students. A place is only offered when it is felt that the prospective student has some understanding of the school's philosophy and intentions and will make an effort to integrate happily into the community and accept its standards of behaviour. Some members of the school felt that the screening was still not sufficient and that only students with a specific commitment to Krishnamurti's work should be admitted; however, it was stressed to me by the principal that no students would be admitted merely to make up numbers. The intention is to create a school with a shared philosophical perspective, where all members fully co-operate. In practice, some students have been accepted at the school who later proved to be unsuited. [4]

The average age of students in 1987 was 18.5 years, approximately the same as for the last five years. The youngest age at which students are accepted is usually fourteen. The older students can be much older, which increases the average age. The majority of students were sixteen or seventeen. Most students stay about three years at the school, although many have left after only one year. Several students stayed for four years or even longer. The age range is thus quite different from that of the Krishnamurti schools in India: Brockwood students start at about the age where most Valley School pupils are preparing to leave. This choice of age range was carefully considered by the original teachers and Krishnamurti. It was felt that younger children would need much more supervision and physical care and would not be able to take a serious interest in Krishnamurti's work.

However, adolescence is an age with its own difficulties, and several teachers I spoke to suggested that in some ways it is an unsuitable age for what is being attempted at Brockwood: teenagers seem to be very concerned with their image, with sexual relationships and peer groups. One ex-teacher told me that after some years experience at Brockwood, staff came to a tacit understanding that maybe six or seven students out of fifty would become seriously interested in Krishnamurti's teachings: the rest were deeply involved in their own sub-culture, 'gossiping about other students' romances'. Another teacher raised the possibility that perhaps it was wrong to expect adolescents to be interested in religious questions at all:

Should we not rather be concerned with making sure that the kids get all the time and attention they need? It may be that for them religion is meaningless. It may be something that happens to a person after he has been out in the world for some time, working or travelling.

However, as we shall see later, staff members generally felt that many students had learned a great deal and, as one put it, 'I can't believe that anybody who has stayed here for a year or two leaves absolutely untouched'. A teacher who worked for many years at the

school felt that the short length of stay was a disadvantage for students who could only stay for one or two years. They were often only beginning to settle down and appreciate what the school had to offer when they were obliged to leave. Many students came with very fixed ideas and it took time to begin the process of questioning.

Another difference between the young people at Brockwood and Valley School is that Brockwood students had not grown up in the same school environment. The majority of students (62%) were previously educated at state schools, with the rest coming from a variety of private schools, including Summerhill and Steiner schools. A few came from other Krishnamurti schools: in 1987 there were five students from Ojai and three from the Indian schools.

The social background of students was also very mixed. Fees in 1987 were £4000 per annum but a considerable number of scholarships are offered every year. I was told that if a young person was seriously interested in living <sup>at</sup> Brockwood, he/she would be allowed to study there regardless of parental income, and the principal informed me that many students came from families who normally would not consider private education but who make particular sacrifices because of their regard for the school; on the other hand a few students come from wealthy families.

In 1987 there were thirty-four staff members. This seems a very large number to teach fifty-five students, but the staff have functions other than teaching: the adults in the community are also responsible for the maintenance of the buildings and grounds, for office and kitchen work, for Krishnamurti Foundation, video, study-centre and related activities. A small number of people from nearby villages is also employed by the school.

Staff members are of many different nationalities, although the proportion from the UK is higher than among students. They came from a remarkable range of backgrounds: in 1987 the staff included an engineer from South Africa, a carpenter from Belgium, an American

businessman, an English physicist, a French actor and an Indian doctor. This mixture naturally reinforces the international spirit of the school. Over the last seven years there has always been a majority of male staff members, which reached a maximum in 1985/6 with 70% males. The recruitment of female staff members seemed to be a difficulty, for reasons which are discussed later. From 1979 to 1985, 57% of staff had a degree, and 12% had Ph. D.'s. Staff without academic qualifications tend to help more with manual or administrative work. About 30% of staff were teachers before joining Brockwood. The average length of stay has been about four years, but in recent years there has been a tendency for staff turnover to become slower and for staff to stay longer. A few teachers have been at the school for more than ten years. Many other people come to work for a short time - a year or even a term.

The main criterion for acceptance at Brockwood as a staff member is interest in Krishnamurti's work. In the course of my interviews with staff, it appeared this was a genuine interest - certainly no-one seemed to simulate an interest in order to gain acceptance. Staff generally seemed to have great respect for Krishnamurti as religious teacher and to be convinced that his teachings give a profound explanation of the human condition. They were also interested in Krishnamurti's teachings on education and in the proposal that a transformation of consciousness is possible. Their interest in religion was not confined to Krishnamurti, however: most expressed interest in various schools of meditation, religion, self-knowledge and philosophy.

Recruitment of staff is considered carefully and slowly. A prospective teacher is first asked to visit the school for a short period during which he will naturally come into contact with a number of staff and students. His application will be considered at a staff meeting. Students also may make observations and these will be taken into account. The person may then be invited to return for a longer period, perhaps a term. A decision is finally made by the principal, after consultation with all the staff, as to

full-time employment. The decision is particularly important because it is not merely a question of employing a teacher, but of finding a person who will live as a member of an intimate community and be involved with all kinds of personal questions.

The principal told me:

The important thing here is that we are a group of people living and learning together. You have to have academic qualifications in this world and learn certain things, just as you have to brush your teeth. But the purpose of this place is not to teach for qualifications. What we are looking for is people. So I have never asked about anyone's degree or experience in any field. I have never asked for letters of recommendation. We are looking for people who are deeply interested in the teachings and in living their daily life with great honesty. If anyone like that comes to the school we will certainly find a place for him, it doesn't matter what his record is.

The result of this recruitment policy has been a staff that is well equipped to meet students for discussions and dialogues. Teachers seemed to be reflective people who had often spent many years in religious inquiry and meditation. However, some students did feel that teaching in academic subjects occasionally seemed unprofessional and inefficient.

Relations between staff and students on the whole were intimate. Most students I talked with had several close friendships with staff members and felt able to discuss any personal questions with them. The relationships were important not only in the classroom but extended to leisure activities and the long and adventurous school trips which some students undertake. [5] The great majority of people I spoke to, staff and students, expressed themselves happy with the state of staff-student relationships. .

One of the few criticisms I heard, from a few students and one female teacher, was that there was a lack of caring for the youngest students. Few of the Brockwood staff are parents themselves, and

it seemed to me that they expected the students to behave in a very adult way: 'they have to grow up sometime, so they may as well start as soon as possible', as one teacher told me. Many students stressed the positive side of this. They said they had learned a great deal about responsibility at the school. Often they were put in charge of some aspect of community life (cleaning a particular area of the school for example) and had to learn to cope with that responsibility whatever the difficulties. Similarly, students have considerable freedom to decide which courses they follow and are encouraged to study independently. On the other hand there is little room for loud laughter or childish fun. One girl of fifteen told me that she felt treated the same as much older students, which she found difficult. Another felt that there was always an element of disapproval, often unspoken, at any sign of high spirits. For many years there has been a system of personal pastoral care whereby each member of staff meets frequently with individual students or with very small groups to discuss personal difficulties. For most students this perhaps covered all their requirements, but it was suggested to me that some younger girls in particular had difficulty establishing relationships with women to whom they could turn for advice about personal problems.

Although there is much that is implicit in Krishnamurti's work concerning a satisfactory development of the personality, there is no explicit description of developmental tasks. As an aid in considering what is being done at Brockwood it may therefore be interesting to note some views of developmental psychologists on this point. Despite different details and emphases, there is substantial agreement that adolescence is a time for questioning, for testing a wide range of attitudes and values, and for developing social skills in relationship. For example Havighurst, in his study of education and development tasks, identifies the major tasks of adolescence as:

1. Achieving more mature relations with peers of both sexes.
2. Achieving a masculine or feminine social role.
3. Accepting one's physique and using the body effectively.
4. Achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults.
5. Achieving assurance of economic independence.
6. Selecting and preparing for an occupation.
7. Preparing for marriage and family life.
8. Developing intellectual skills and competence for civic life.
9. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour.
10. Acquiring a set of values and an ethic system as a guide to behaviour. (Havighurst 1972:43-82)

Another influential account of adolescent tasks is that of Erikson (Erikson 1950; Stevens 1983: passim). He conceives adolescence as a time of intense physical and social change, where the focal issue, which encapsulates many of the points listed above, is developing a sense of identity. Young people are confronted with the need to make numerous decisions about themselves and their lives. What employment should they prepare for? How should they dress and behave? How should they handle relationships? What attitude should they have towards society?

The relationships between staff and students and between students themselves at Brockwood help in many of these areas. Students told me that they spent a great deal of time socialising, sitting in each others' rooms, walking or going to town together. The school is a close community, and people know each other very intimately, exchanging confidences, hopes and fears. At this critical formative period, students at Brockwood are fortunate because the philosophy of the school specifically encourages a questioning outlook, and at the same time explicitly discusses many of the developmental tasks listed above. As was shown earlier, Krishnamurti in his talks with students often stressed the importance of developing an understanding of relationships, of considering the implications of careers and family life, and of respect for human values. These

concerns are recognized by staff, and there is a conscious effort to bring them to students' attention.

The community at Brockwood has some advantages over a traditional nuclear family/school environment in this respect. Several interviewees, staff and students, told me that they felt a greater variety of relationship was possible than in normal circumstances. There are about ninety people living in a shared environment, and all know each other to some extent, often intimately. People come from a wide variety of backgrounds, but arrive at the school with the intention of accepting its rules and standards of behaviour. Young people can learn to experiment with new ideas and are expected to behave responsibly, but at the same time are given guidance and move in relatively protected environment. It seems that the arrangements are conducive to independent behaviour<sup>a</sup> and personality growth. This is certainly the impression one receives from visits to the school. The students seem articulate and self-confident, and at ease with members of the opposite sex. Those I interviewed had clearly thought over many of the questions listed as developmental tasks. It is obviously<sup>u</sup> difficult to assess the role played by Brockwood in this development: many of the students may have been relatively mature and serious individuals even before arrival at the school, and it would be difficult to argue that the school alone is responsible for their happy development. Nevertheless the environment offers much that is seen as important by developmental psychologists, as well providing the particular opportunities to study Krishnamurti's philosophy.

Besides these special features, Brockwood offers a range of academic activity. In most years mathematics, English, French, art, physics, history, chemistry and biology are taught to O and A level, and the Cambridge English Proficiency syllabus is covered. However these subjects are not taught for examination purposes automatically; rather, each student's specific requirements are considered and courses are offered to meet them if possible. Although it is recognised that examinations are for many an essential step,



teaching for examination syllabi represents only a part of what is taught at the school and some of the most interesting courses are not examination-related. General studies courses were introduced in 1979 and proved successful. Staff created a course called 'One Man' for use in the school and others are based on the University of London's 'One Earth', 'Modern Movement' and 'Science and Society' syllabi. These courses are taught by a team and it is felt that they allow teachers and students the opportunity to approach academic studies in a more holistic way and to cover a wide range of thought, for example combining philosophy with literature, developmental questions and sociology. On a less formal basis students may take other courses known as term courses (which may in fact last longer than a term). These are timetabled for one or more periods a week, although they may also meet out of school hours. The courses on offer change yearly and in the past have ranged from restaurant management through Indian music to house maintenance. Students commented favourably on the fact that many courses were not taught with an examination in view: students could decide how they want the courses to evolve, not just follow a syllabus.

Sports include badminton, swimming, cycling and squash. All students are encouraged to participate twice a week, but Brockwood does not give the impression of being a sporty place. Competition is not encouraged and there are few matches against other schools. Music, art, pottery, woodwork and drama are taught, and there are also courses on climbing and outdoor pursuits. A further resource is the large garden and estate. Many students have learned the basics of organic gardening and some have followed more serious studies in horticulture. The estate provides scope for the study of ecology. At present one student is doing a project to discover how such an estate can be used for the conservation of wildlife as well as for human enjoyment.

There are no standard teaching methods or pedagogy as such at Brockwood, and each class is approached on an individual basis. Since classes are rarely of more than eight students, and often

only one or two, problems of classroom discipline are practically non-existent. The teacher responsible for academic work in the school told me that two factors strike him as particularly significant in the teaching at the school. First, there has been an attempt to break down the practice of having only one teacher responsible for a class or a course. Instead, teaching has become a co-operative venture with two or more teachers working together to formulate the course content and to share the teaching time. This has been particularly valuable in the case of general studies programmes where four or five teachers could share their expertise. It led to a greater sense of co-operation among staff and obviated the feeling of being a lone teacher confronted by a class.

Second, the classroom is seen as part of the community life as a whole. The particular concern of the classroom is academic learning, but this is always seen in the wider context of learning in the community. Thus in cases of inattention or lack of motivation, the teacher will consider the underlying causes of these problems, which may also be reflected in the student's behaviour in other areas of the school. Teaching in this environment allows for creativity and is a constant challenge, not only to pass on knowledge, but to reach out and communicate with people.

A perennial concern at Brockwood has been the attempt to use academic work as a vehicle for exposure to Krishnamurti's ideas. This was stated for example in the school newsletter of January 1985:

Each school should evolve not only a high academic standard but bring in the "Teachings" while teaching the children. (p.1)

This has led to much discussion over the years, not only at Brockwood but in the other Krishnamurti schools also. There is no question of establishing one curriculum for all the schools, but there is a shared intention to convey some of the key ideas of Krishnamurti's teachings to the students through the medium of

academic study. Two important aspects of this attempt are to look for possible psychological implications in any topic, and to try to place all areas of academic study in a holistic perspective. In the same newsletter a history teacher gave an indication of the first of these concerns:

The following proposal for a new approach to history owes an obvious debt to Krishnaji's teachings... The proposed approach to history is based on three assumptions: 1) That human beings everywhere are fundamentally the same. 2) That human beings, at least from the dawn of civilisation - and possibly much before - have always been much the same, and so still are the same. 3) That groups of people act from the same "dynamics" as individuals. (p.10)

The class went on to examine periods of history where fear was obviously present and considered fear as a possible motive for people's behaviour. Another history teacher in the same newsletter wrote:

In history you are studying the nature of mankind and of yourself. Instead of studying one particular event you might look at the whole nature of, say, group egotism or national pride... You encourage the students to relate the subject to themselves so they might ask, "What is it in me that might follow Hitler?" (p.4)

The idea of exploiting the psychological content of the curriculum is discussed by the educational psychologist Hamachek (1979:436) who also identifies history as an area where psychological factors as well as events, institutions and movements should be taught. Other possibilities are offered by literature and even sports: these can be studied for their own sake, but also because they provide insight into human behaviour.

As noted above, Krishnamurti stressed the primary role of psychological attitudes in determining social structure and social events, and this view is widely accepted in the schools. At the same time, he frequently maintained that all human beings are

fundamentally the same, that emotions such as fear and self-interest are universal and primary, while cultural differences are secondary.

To examine psychological factors seriously seems a worthwhile undertaking, especially considering adolescent needs for deeper understanding of behaviour and values. However, Krishnamurti's views are one-sided and over-emphasize the psychological aspect of historical or social processes. Most contemporary sociologists and historians would rather view the psychological element as part of an infinitely complex interaction between self and society. The relationship between the two is dialectical rather than mechanical: the psyche acts on society, but in turn is shaped and reproduced by social processes. Similarly, although fear and self-interest may be similar in different cultures, it would be an over-simplification to suggest that all people are fundamentally the same: the transformation of consciousness produced by industrialization, for example, has led to a basic shift away from dependence on nature. Finally, the statement that groups act from the same dynamics as individuals again seems open to question. The behaviour of normally restrained individuals can change dramatically when they are in groups, for example football crowds, as group contagion and peer pressure assume greater importance.

One student told me that he felt some subjects were taught from too idealistic a standpoint. The individual psyche was sometimes over-emphasised, and too little attention paid to social factors. This seems to me a natural consequence of adopting Krishnamurti's views without sufficient attention to their scope and limitations: his work may be extremely valuable as a religious teaching, but it cannot be considered an adequate philosophy of history. It would be inappropriate to introduce such views into a curriculum for academic study without careful reassessment.

A second area of inquiry has been the possibility of creating a new curriculum. An article on the subject, written by a teacher from

the Oak Grove school, was published in the newsletter of November 1985:

Among the qualities that seem desirable in a general curriculum for school children are comprehensiveness and coherence. This essay proposes that at the core of any curriculum that can be considered comprehensive, there ought to lie an articulated vision - a description, a portrait, a map,- of the whole of what is; that is a vision of the universe in which the fundamental phenomena of the universe (matter, life, mind) are displayed, not only as wholes in their own right, but also in their relationship to one another.  
(p.2)

The article went on to propose a curriculum which studied the physical universe, the biological universe and the psychological universe as deeply interconnected aspects of the whole.

The Krishnamurti schools have expressed considerable interest in holistic thinking and the holographic model is seen by some teachers as the scientific paradigm which best coincides with Krishnamurti's vision. In June 1987 an experiment was conducted in Brockwood for two weeks to test the feasibility of developing a new curriculum which would mean a radical restructuring of the approach to academic work. It was decided to abandon the traditional division of subjects and instead to formulate areas of study on a new basis. These areas were: order, communication, beauty, nature, culture, relationship. It was felt that, for example, mathematics should be seen as part of the order of the universe, not merely as a separate area of study, or a subject unconnected with others. Other subjects might fall into several areas: for example literature is connected with communication, culture and beauty. It was hoped that in this way students would be helped to put particular subjects into a much broader perspective, not to be narrow minded and dogmatically specialised.

This curriculum is still in early experimental stage and will be introduced into the school gradually if it proves feasible. The

principal hoped that it would also be of interest to those working in other schools, who did not necessarily have any knowledge of or interest in Krishnamurti's work, because it provided a possible basis for a curriculum in harmony with holistic values.

As part of the movement to a more holistic education, Brockwood hopes to move away from a narrow conception of school subjects. More emphasis will be put on practical skills such as building, gardening and electronics, with the intention of helping students to become practical and flexible as well as competent in academic work. Another aspect of the change would be to use the resources available at Brockwood, the estate and the surrounding countryside, to encourage a co-operative attitude to nature instead of an exploitative one.

A final point of interest at Brockwood is that although the school is situated in England, it is not particularly bound by English academic traditions. This is particularly noticeable at the moment because the principal, who has considerable influence on all important decisions in the school, is American. He expressed the view that English schools tend to be particularly inflexible, slow to change and single-career oriented in their academic approach. The tendency in the better schools in the USA and Europe is to be more alive to the implications of new technology and changes in society. People need to be quick-witted, easily retrained and able to acquire new skills easily, not educated for obsolescence. There is a need for practical skills - car repair, gardening, computers, house maintenance - as well as for academic knowledge. This should be combined with depth of thought about personal relationships and existential questions, not just an acceptance of conventional values. Brockwood's aim as a school is to teach a wide range of practical skills as well as academic subjects. Young people should also be exposed to the demands of community living and confronted with serious questions about their life and role in society. This would hopefully help a young person to be well equipped to meet the demands of the modern world as well as to become a serious and

reflective person. In these proposals one can clearly see the advantage of having a small, flexible and independent school. There is considerable scope for new initiatives, and teachers and staff can approach education as a creative undertaking, responding to students' needs in a changing society.

The demands of academic work and other activities have resulted in a school day at Brockwood structured as follows:

- 7.30 Morning meeting. Occasionally music or extracts from a Krishnamurti tape are played, but more often the meeting is silent. Attendance is voluntary, and usually about half the school attends.
- 7.45 Breakfast. All meals at Brockwood are vegetarian, and the kitchen makes an effort to provide a varied and adequate diet. Special meals, e.g. vegan, are provided. People choose where and with whom they want to sit, and staff and students mix freely.
- 8.25 Morning job. Every student and staff member has a job, cleaning, kitchen work or similar.
- 9.00 Classes
- 1 p.m. Lunch.
- 1.30 Free time. This is a rest period and supposed to be quiet.
- 3.00 Classes or sports.
- 5.00 Free time, hobbies, extra classes, meetings.
- 7.00 Supper, free time, T.V., homework.
- 9.45 Return to rooms.

On Tuesday afternoons and Wednesdays there are no classes and many people go away from Brockwood for the day, but school is in operation on Saturdays and Sundays. This allows students free time when shops are open and weekend visitors the opportunity to observe the school in action. Three people, usually one staff-member and two students, are on duty every day to take care of receiving visitors, answering telephones and locking up at night.

Almost all staff and students I spoke to said that they felt too busy. Most started the day at 7.30 a.m. and were busy until bedtime with a continuous flow of activities - classes and sports, meetings, cultural pursuits, helping with cleaning and other work, socializing. When I wanted to speak to somebody for more than a few minutes, I usually had to make an appointment for a few days ahead and often had the feeling I was interrupting a busy schedule.

The sense of overwork has been a cause for concern at the school, and various proposals have been made to improve the situation. The problem perceived is that the busy routine limits the possibility to be quiet and to explore the fundamental questions about life and religion which the community is supposed to examine. Some staff felt that the busy aspect of life at Brockwood is really symptomatic of a deeper problem, namely that after a certain point it becomes painful or difficult to maintain an honest observation of oneself, and the easiest escape is to become involved in a rush of activities. Others felt that there was a need for teachers to be able to spend periods where they could be by themselves, perhaps meditating. Several teachers wondered whether a school could be the right environment for a religious inquiry. Was the whole project misconceived? Does Brockwood suffer from a contradiction in trying to provide an education and to be a religious centre at the same time?

One of the reasons why staff have held differing views on this question is because Krishnamurti's teachings about meditation were difficult. Sometimes he used the word only in the sense of a benediction which might occur to a person spontaneously. In this context, the benediction might take place during a walk or any other activity. At other times he suggested that there was a need for a more formal practice of sitting quietly and observing one's thoughts until one reached a state of silence or stillness. Since the question of meditation is fundamental to religious life at Brockwood it will be discussed in detail in a later section. For now it



should be noted that the school day is as busy and structured as one would expect to find in a school with more conventional aims.

Standards of behaviour are also as strict as one would expect to find in a more conventional school. For example, the use of drugs, tobacco and alcohol is not allowed. Students are supposed to be in their own rooms by 9.45 p.m. A high standard of personal hygiene is demanded. Students are expected to co-operate fully with jobs such as washing up, helping with laundry, laying tables and cleaning work. Since there are no rules as such, these arrangements are known as 'agreements': students are made aware of what is expected of them before they join the school and agree to abide by the standards of behaviour of the community.

As most of the students are teenagers, it is natural that there is a certain amount of rebelliousness from time to time. This has sometimes expressed itself in the infringement of the agreements. Secretive drinking has occurred and a few students have been disruptive in class. A more common expression has been a rejection of the values of the school: refusal to attend school meetings or Krishnamurti videos. The usual response to such behaviour is to discuss the problem directly with the student involved and in the first instance the student's tutor might call him/her to talk over his or her behaviour. Otherwise he/she might ask a staff-member who had a close relationship with that student to help. Sometimes, staff turn to the student's friends to help resolve the difficulty.

Very often such behavioural problems are resolved after discussion. The student is persuaded to accept the way things are done and to behave accordingly. The rationale is that all the rules exist for the smooth and healthy running of the community, and that everybody should co-operate in adhering to them. Students are free to challenge any of the rules at open meetings, and small adjustments to procedures may be adopted. Occasionally students have adopted a belligerent attitude in discussion and made it clear that they intended to behave as they pleased. In these cases the final

recourse is to ask the student to leave. One student who had been at the school for several years was entirely in agreement with this policy: 'we have far more serious things to do here than chase around after someone who is smoking or drinking. It is just a waste of energy and creates difficulties for everyone'.

In the area of discipline one can note a sharp distinction between Brockwood and Summerhill, the famous school founded by Neill. Neill was influenced by theosophy as a young man, but left it far more radically than Krishnamurti, adopting many ideas from radical psychoanalysis, Homer Lane and Wilhelm Reich in particular. The essence of Neill's approach was to provide a loving, approving and supportive environment where every child could relax, 'unwind', release his/her emotions. Except for physical violence, most forms of behaviour were tolerated at Summerhill: classes were voluntary, rooms could be kept dirty and untidy, teachers had no authority over children (Skidelsky, 1969:121-181). Despite the attractiveness of Neill's writing and the stimulating impact of his ideas, research conducted by Bernstein (Bernstein, 1968) strongly suggested that the free atmosphere of Summerhill did not suit all pupils. Extroverted and assertive members of the school seemed to benefit more than introverted shy people. Some ex-students commented unfavourably on the lack of academic input, while the lack of clear structures and guidelines was felt by others as a disadvantage.

Hamachek in his summary of research on freedom and control in education (Hamachek, 1979:281-286) concludes that the evidence suggests that some balance should be found between the two extremes. Uncompromised freedom has drawbacks, as does a highly structured and authoritarian regime. In this respect Brockwood's approach appears to be that sanctioned by the bulk of research: providing a measure of control and structure, but accepting students' freedom to question. As with Valley School, Brockwood lends weight to Krishnamurti's contention that a school can function satisfactorily without any form of punishment. Although the age range at Brockwood would lead one to expect a considerable discipline problem, in fact

the careful selection process and the clearly stated expectations of the community keep problems to a minimum.

With regard to academic work, students have to develop their own motivation without the stimulus of a competitive environment. The school philosophy, to which many parents also subscribe, is that competition and ambition are destructive and students should not be pressurized to perform well. A few teachers I interviewed were concerned at the quality of academic work. However, the principal, while admitting there is room for improvement, suggested that many students had done outstandingly at Brockwood, producing excellent work in electronics and computing, photography, mathematics and drama. He pointed out that in the twenty years of its existence, and despite the small numbers, many students from Brockwood had had excellent university careers and become, for example, artists, doctors and lawyers.

Skidelsky (1969:249-250) in his study of progressive schools in England, notes that the progressive education movement, despite the great optimism with which the movement operated in the first part of the twentieth century, in fact produced very few outstanding pupils. He raises the possibility that 'a well-adjusted childhood may be the recipe for a well-adjusted mediocrity' and notes that Darwin and Einstein were profoundly unhappy at school. It could be that the schools provided too comfortable an environment, and that some measure of anxiety or pressure is necessary to stimulate creativity. [6] It is reasonable for Krishnamurti to argue that a school should eliminate competition and ambition: empirical research seems to substantiate Krishnamurti's own observations that these factors produce anxiety among all students and feelings of failure among a great many (see 6.3). If the most important aspect of education is to provide for a relatively carefree, enjoyable youth, then this is a sound approach. However, it is a great challenge to such a school to foster 'academic excellence', particularly if the overall ethos of the school is to de-emphasize the desire for power,

prestige or money which is perhaps an important stimulus in more conventional environments.

One student told me that another factor which affects academic performance is the wide range of activities and interests at the school, which mean that nobody becomes intensely and exclusively concerned with one particular area. Also, there is a great emphasis on socializing, discussions and dialogues, all of which take time and energy. This allows for the excellence in relationships and in the functioning of the community, and many students do leave with a sense of depth and thoughtfulness. Does it also allow for the sort of dedication needed for outstanding achievement in a specialised field? It would be interesting to see if Brockwood's students maintain a high level of creativity in later life.

#### 7.2.2 Relationships and atmosphere

Everybody at Brockwood mixes easily on an equal basis, eating, working and living together. Among the staff, there were in 1987 about six couples, married or co-habiting, out of thirty-five staff. It is felt that the school does not have the space or facilities appropriate for young children and it would therefore be unsuitable to employ teachers with young children.

It was mentioned above that at the moment there is an imbalance in male/female staff members and that the recruitment of female staff has been a problem for several years. Brockwood gave me the impression of being a somewhat patriarchal culture, with men in most of the executive positions. One ex-teacher suggested that this was one reason why women often did not want to work at Brockwood:

Brockwood is a terrifically patriarchal place. The whole place is geared to men's rhythms and speed. If you just look, all the decisions are taken by men, some of them have female assistants just like secretaries. And in meetings it is always a very masculine approach,

trying to be logical and unemotional about things...I think probably prospective women teachers would be put off by this. Those who stay on here maybe ignore it or don't want to see it.

However, the above statement and my observation must be seriously qualified. The ex-teacher quoted was somewhat disillusioned by her period in Brockwood which perhaps led her to unreasonable negativity in her judgements. It also should be said that most staff members I spoke to said that they disagreed, some strongly, with the view that Brockwood is patriarchal, and it is not perceived as a problem by the community. It was pointed out to me that for the first fifteen years Brockwood's principal had been a woman and that in 1987/88 the male teacher responsible for academic work was replaced by a female, which meant that decisions in an important area of school life were taken by a woman.

The principal also pointed out that the difficulty in recruiting female teachers was not due to the fact that female applicants were put off by attitudes in the school. Rather, for some reason as yet undiscovered, there are almost always fewer applications from prospective female than male teachers. This corresponded to an observation I had made at Krishnamurti's public talks, where it seemed that more men than women were attracted to his teaching. Many people went as couples, but there was a relatively large number of single men compared to women. Possibly Krishnamurti's teachings appear rather abstract, intellectual and without immediate emotional appeal to some women. On the other hand, perhaps surprisingly, the majority of Krishnamurti's closest associates and figures of importance in the Krishnamurti Foundations were female, and it would be quite wrong to think of his work as particularly masculine in orientation.

Among students, sexual relationships are discouraged. In a letter which used to be sent to prospective students, the former principal wrote:

We do not want students to form sexual relationships while they are of school age because this kind of involvement diverts energy, makes for isolation, and prevents a full and happy association with the life of the school as a whole.

This does not amount to a total ban. If older students decide to form a relationship and do so reasonably discreetly without upsetting others, they would generally be permitted. Sexual relationships between staff and students are definitely not permitted. However, there is a great deal of physical contact in the school - holding hands, embracing - which reflects the very warm feeling between many people there which is often in evidence. The positive side of community living was explained by one female teacher:

Students by the time they leave here have seen that it is possible to really co-operate, to live as a group of people in harmony. They also notice that there are plenty of single staff here and they can see that it is possible to live a fulfilled life without necessarily having a male-female relationship.

Overall, staff attitudes towards sexuality are not hostile but could reasonably be called sober and restrained. There is certainly no encouragement of sexual activity as a means to self-development as there is in some new religious movements, for example the Rajneesh sect. Likewise, radical psychoanalysis has had no impact on the philosophical perspective of the school, and no teachers seemed particularly interested in Freudian or Reichian therapies. I heard differing assessments about how open the school atmosphere is with regard to sexuality. Some interviewees maintained that sex was almost a taboo subject or at least an area which gave rise to uneasiness and was thus rarely discussed. However I also heard of frank and honest dialogues on this issue, which needs especially sensitive handling at Brockwood because of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students and staff. On the other hand, if sexuality is relatively restrained compared to contemporary western standards, there is a strong awareness at the school of health and

body awareness. The diet is carefully considered and reassessed and there are numerous classes and courses in yoga and other techniques.

Decision-making at Brockwood is a complex process. Before the new principal took over, arrangements were very democratic in the sense that there were many staff and school meetings which discussed matters in great detail before any decision was made. According to the present principal, whose view was confirmed by several other teachers, these meetings became boring and unsatisfactory, and people began to feel the need for a more efficient and less time-consuming way to run things. One ex-teacher told me:

Some of the meetings seemed to be held for the sake of holding a meeting. I used to get so frustrated by the end. There was a tacit agreement among the older staff at least that there was not going to be a radical change - or at least not at this particular meeting - and if I didn't change when Krishnamurti was here why should I when X is leading the meeting...A certain amount of resignation, yet we were all supposed to be terribly interested all the time.

The system that operates at present is that meetings are held for consultation about important matters, but have little executive function. One teacher has been appointed to be responsible for all matters relating to academic work, another for all other matters of general concern. The principal is in overall control and moreover is in charge of the adult study centre. These three take many important decisions on their own initiative. If they feel uncertain about any decision they will consult other staff members or people concerned. If the matter seems sufficiently important then it would be raised at a meeting of the staff or of the whole school. The principal felt that in this way a lot of unnecessary and time-consuming debate was avoided. It was the responsibility of decision makers to ensure that the decisions were correct for the whole community and to be willing to reconsider if objections were raised. All teachers I interviewed said they were on the whole content with the arrangements and felt that they worked well.

Brockwood also strongly encourages students and staff at all levels to take initiatives and to bear the responsibility for whatever they are doing. Students may be put in charge of certain activities, and they will be expected to ensure the smooth functioning of what they are doing. The intention is to encourage independence and a sense of responsibility. In these areas, too, the tendency is for the people concerned to take decisions on their own initiative, with the well-being of the community at heart. In my interviews with students, several commented that this had been an important learning experience for them.

In contrast to the school at Bangalore, I was not permitted to attend staff meetings in Brockwood and so cannot report directly on the quality of discussion. From what I was told, staff meetings were rarely lively, and some staff members felt them to be draining rather than invigorating. Most teachers felt that more fruitful discussions were held informally, but there were exceptions to this. For example, all agreed that when Krishnamurti himself had been present, and occasionally at other times, there was a sense of deep understanding and sharing. Starting in June 1985, a group of fifteen teachers has been meeting once a week to discuss wider issues in a more contemplative way, and one or two people felt that this group achieved some depth of discussion. I was allowed to attend meetings of the whole school, where students and staff met together. These meetings tended to be on practical matters, although wider issues were sometimes discussed.

The key point in the arrangements for decision making is that Brockwood is supposed to function without a sense of hierarchy. This means that although certain people take many of the important practical decisions in the running of the school and community, they are not supposed to be in any way superior to others, and no status is accorded because of the function performed in the community. Several students told me that they felt this did not work in practice, and that people entrusted with more power usually became somewhat distant and hard to approach; however, others denied that



this was a problem and suggested that this impression was given only because some members of staff were particularly busy.

Brockwood has evolved a system of management which is somewhat different from that of Valley School, but which also seems to function well. I heard no complaints about autocratic management, and teachers felt they had ample opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process: indeed, some teachers gave the impression that they were quite relieved when they were not asked to participate. A particular feature in which Brockwood compared favourably with Valley School was that students were responsible for more areas of school life and shared more in decision-making.

Over the years, besides the formal processes of school life, a characteristic ethos and way of doing things has naturally evolved at Brockwood. A striking feature of the school, which many visitors comment on, is the sense of spontaneous co-operation. Professor David Bohm noted that:

Most visitors receive an impression of overall harmony and order, which is natural and spontaneous rather than imposed... There has been an ever greater intensity of interest and inquiry into the questions raised in Krishnamurti's teachings on the part of the staff. In general this results in more harmonious relationships, and in mutual and co-operative action. (Bohm, 1975:38)

A young staff member who worked in the kitchen illustrated how this could feel:

There can be a sense of co-operation and real dialogue, and a sense of order, with nothing being imposed - no order or even the tradition of the place. It doesn't happen all the time, but I would say that it happens in a flash now and again, and it always makes a deep impression. Sometimes it can even happen with a guest - you know he may only be staying for a day, so instead of going into the usual small-talk you can go straight into discussion.

Despite the spontaneity, there was very little sense of conflict or disorder, and one had the feeling that this was because people would

consider the consequences for the community of their actions. One teacher described Brockwood, at least on good days, as like being involved in a dance: people knew what they were supposed to be doing and there was no chaos, but at the same time the feeling was fresh and lively. Of course, there were bad days too when people seemed bored or unresponsive.

Another positive feature was the openness to change, with considerable flexibility in arrangements and willingness to experiment with new approaches and new projects. This is probably a legacy of Krishnamurti's personal contact with the school: one characteristic of his visits to all the schools was his frequent challenges to accepted modes of behaviour and routines. Another aspect of Brockwood which may also reflect Krishnamurti's personal involvement with the school was the general politeness and consideration, the high standards of hygiene and care for the environment.

The quality of dialogue is an impressive aspect of the school. This is a direct lesson learned from Krishnamurti's teachings about 'the art of listening'. Discussions are not based on the premise of coming to a solution by dialectic, confronting one opinion with another. Rather there is an attempt to listen with very great attention to what one's interlocutor is saying, no matter whether it contradicts one's favourite opinions. One then may make a response that is not merely the expression of prejudice and habit, but move together with the other person towards a new understanding. Teachers felt that Krishnamurti's approach to listening and talking had great implications for their way of working together:

We have found the usual manner is so unsatisfactory - you say something, I try to knock it down, then you counterargue, and so we try to find the right answer. It often means that the most persuasive personality or the best speaker wins. I think that is a very crude way to try and find the truth about something. What we try to do here is quite different. If you say something, I must really try to listen to it, without criticising or pointing out weaknesses or jumping on you. And you do the same to me. That way we will be

able to learn from each other. It seems to me that is the only way to arrive at a truthful answer.

When I asked one ex-teacher what she had found the most valuable lesson at Brockwood, she answered that it was certainly this facility for two or for many people to think and talk together. It led to a sense of co-operation and affection in discussion instead of confrontation, and could operate both in formal meetings and in private conversations.

The atmosphere at Brockwood generally seems light and happy. There is little sign of anxiety, existential malaise or boredom. Students are well cared for physically, and find a wide group of peers and older friends. Of all the teachers and students I met, none were critical of the school; on the contrary almost all said that they were pleased to be there. However, I also made some observations, confirmed or stimulated by discussions with staff and visitors, about a less successful aspect of life at Brockwood. The rarefied and isolated way of life was seen by some as a problem. At its worst this could lead to a sense of superiority and complacency, or loss of contact with the outside world. To live in a protected environment is a double-edged matter: on the one hand one is protected from the stresses and ugliness of the world, but it can also lead to illusion and withdrawal. One ex-student expressed this as 'while I was there, Brockwood was the whole world for me, I had no contact with the outside world (except with my parents). I got used to feeling very protected (more than at home), to take it for granted to have everything, materially and emotionally'.

Some people had a sense of leading an ivory tower existence. In many ways life at Brockwood is comfortable. Company is congenial, food and shelter are provided. One student commented:

You can get rather hooked into the input here. There is input from one hundred people and it's all pretty much the same in a way and so are the visitors. Some people are addicted to it and never move away. They never extend themselves or stretch their minds to anything outside Brockwood. People tend to stay month

after month without reaching out...This is particularly critical for staff. Perhaps some of them stay on and on because they can't face life in the outside world, they are addicted to the place.

Other comments in the same vein were that Brockwood has to face reality, face up to facts, not consider itself so different from the outside world and so exclusive. One visitor expressed this as a 'sense of being judged all the time', and another as being under constant observation. Personally I felt this quite strongly the first few times I visited Brockwood, but as I began to know people there on a more friendly basis the feeling lessened. It is probably a price that has to be paid if Brockwood is to maintain its rarefied atmosphere.

In response to these observations the principal made some interesting comments. First, Brockwood was far from undemanding; on the contrary, it was a tremendous challenge to work as a staff member. When a staff member seemed to fail to respond to the challenge he/she might well be asked to leave: Brockwood was no place for complacency. Secondly, it is true that there is constant observation at Brockwood, but this is not a hostile, judgemental scrutiny. Rather, it is the consequence of living in a community with almost unbroken contact between a hundred or so individuals. There is a very high level of awareness and whereas in conventional life one can always withdraw to the security of one's own family or room, at Brockwood one is constantly obliged to live with a deep awareness of other people.

On the whole, despite various minor problems and shortcomings, the overwhelming impression of Brockwood is that most people there are very happy and find that the school is fulfilling its function. It provides an environment where students and staff can discover and pursue their own interests, make friendships, have time to themselves and enjoy the surrounding countryside. Relationships and the structure of the school are conducive to promoting maturity among students and form a good basis for teenage education.

### 7.3 KRISHNAMURTI AT BROCKWOOD

Krishnamurti's input at Brockwood was on many different levels since he used the school grounds for his public meetings as well as being involved with the school as such. For example, during a typical year, 1976, he held a series of discussions at the school with Professor David Bohm and Dr David Shainberg which were subsequently edited and published in the book *The Wholeness of Life*. Later in the month he spoke to students and staff, and in July and August gave a total of eighteen public talks in Switzerland and at Brockwood.

In mid-September he held six discussions with staff at Brockwood which were recorded and published in video form as 'On Education', and later in September he spoke three times to the whole school. The talks with staff covered topics such as: how to transmit 'the teachings' to students, conditioning, authority, habits, transformation, academic learning, violence, intelligence, jealousy, role of the teacher, love. With students he discussed similar themes and also explained the intention of Brockwood for the benefit of new students: 'to bring about a different type of human being...To change the human mind and the human heart'. [7] As well as these group meetings, he gave numerous private interviews, details of which are not available.

This would have been a full work load for a man of eighty one, but he was also closely involved in day to day questions at the school. He usually ate lunch in the dining hall and observed very carefully how students and teachers behaved. According to several interviewees he had an uncanny sensitivity concerning people's feelings and moods. He constantly challenged the principal and others about their decisions and made suggestions for change and improvement. Many teachers told me how exhilarated they felt by his visits, but also how difficult it was to keep pace with him. Even as an old man he seemed to have inexhaustible energy. In the course of these visits the staff at Brockwood were always confronted by his

teachings at first hand and were obliged to face the questions which he continually raised. Was the school doing the right thing? Were people changing? If not why not, what should be done next? One of the deepest impressions he left was of care and affection:

When Krishnamurti was here he had such a terrific concern for everybody, and we wondered if we really had it for the students. Affection and concern for the way they eat, dress, study. Real concern, not a sense of obligation or duty or living up to expectations. It demands an outward going as well as turning inwards.

One important aspect of Krishnamurti's presence, then, was that he occasioned a deep questioning of personal attitudes and behaviour. One teacher told me that above all Krishnamurti insisted on honesty. In a community like Brockwood, it would be easy to leave things unsaid, to ignore potential problems and allow the status quo to continue. It was precisely these things that Krishnamurti would not permit. He raised many problems which would more comfortably have been ignored and never allowed serious problems to go unattended. He provided the constant challenge and questioning that Thapan noted in his visits to Rishi Valley (Thapan, 1986a:215). This questioning was not limited to his relationships with teachers. One finds that in his talks with the students, Krishnamurti always raised questions that would cause adolescents to think over their values and behaviour. As discussed in Chapter Four, he would typically raise a series of questions concerned with their education and their needs as young adults in the process of discovering a personal identity.

In this sense, he strengthened what might be called the spirituality of everyday life in the school. Much of his attention was directed to the details of everyday existence: relationships in the community, personal behaviour, education or work in the gardens. He insisted that these were not secondary issues that could be resolved after more important religious concerns had been settled. Rather, every aspect of school life should be treated as a matter of great importance and treated with the utmost sensitivity and honesty, otherwise all talk of religion was meaningless. One of his great

strengths as teacher was to show by example as well as argument that spirituality is deeply immersed in daily affairs. This aspect of his work made a deep impression on staff, who felt it was one of Krishnamurti's important contributions to religious thinking. A teacher suggested:

If you examine the work of almost any other teacher, as far as I am aware, you will find some suggestion that one part of life is somehow more important, more 'religious' than some other part. Emphasis is laid on a certain practice, a certain activity, or even on certain times, buildings and clothes. This somehow seems quite primitive compared to how Krishnamurti was. For him, every moment and every activity was equal.

Another quality which he brought to Brockwood was the special aura or energy which people felt was associated with him. There is a feeling that Brockwood, like Rishi Valley, has a certain quality of energy arising from Krishnamurti's long presence in the school, although staff were hesitant about defining it or making any claims:

I feel that Brockwood has a special energy, although of course in this area it is easy to imagine things. Krishnamurti himself indicated that Brockwood had become a special place because of his association here. Certainly at times I feel a delightful energy, but I may be wrong. I believe Krishnamurti said it would remain at Brockwood as long as the place runs on the right lines. But if things start to go wrong then it will leave and never return.

This remark of Krishnamurti's was confirmed by other interviewees. One point on which all were agreed, and which coincided with my own observations and also with the feeling at other Krishnamurti schools, was that there was indeed an extraordinary atmosphere in the school whenever Krishnamurti stayed there. Many people commented on how his presence seemed to transform a place overnight. It seemed that personal antagonisms and problems faded and there was a deep sense of commitment to religious inquiry and honesty. Others noted a more mysterious presence, bordering on the supernatural, that seemed to accompany him at times. [8] Many

visitors have commented that Brockwood still retains something of this other-worldly quality.

On the other hand there is little concern for Krishnamurti's alleged occult background. There are no claims that he was divinely inspired or an incarnation of a deity, and Brockwood clearly rejects traditional theosophical speculations about the esoteric in general and Krishnamurti in particular. A typical response to my questions on this point was:

I wouldn't attach much importance to the occult side of Krishnamurti's life. I suppose it is quite fascinating, but really the teachings are far more serious and should be relevant in daily life. You shouldn't try to explore the occult for its own sake. It is the teachings that have a remarkable purity or value or worth.

The principal told me that he had sometimes asked Krishnamurti about this question:

Krishnamurti used to say that the Indians sensed something about him and then fantasised about it to make it fit into their preconceptions. He dismissed all those speculations. The only thing I can say is that there was a deep mystery connected with him. I don't know what else to say.

However, if there is a rejection of specific claims of divinity, there is a general feeling at Brockwood that Krishnamurti is a unique and outstanding religious teacher. One teacher expressed what seemed to be the general view: that Krishnamurti is a major figure who has opened up an entirely new approach to religion and is in some way qualitatively different to others working within various traditions:

He is undoubtedly a major religious figure. In the course of history here have been many remarkable figures - Rumi or Ramana Maharishi for example - who have been reinterpreters and brought new life into Hinduism or Christianity. They were remarkable men in their way. But it seems to me that Krishnamurti has opened up something entirely new, it is a new way of conceiving the religious life. The others may have



stated again the ideas of merging the self into a greater whole, renunciation or many other things. But he redefined the meaning of what is the religious life.

One ex-staff member expressed himself in the Newsletter No. 1 (January 1985):

As far as I have been able to ascertain, Krishnamurti is the only living vehicle of the Truth. This makes any activity that he initiates not just important but in fact essential - not only for the survival of the human race but more significantly for the flowering of eternal values which by definition cut across history because of their transcendence of time.

Some staff members were quite defensive when questioned about Krishnamurti's status and insisted very strongly that he was indeed saying something altogether new. An analogy that two staff members used when they spoke of this was to compare Krishnamurti's work to that of Einstein:

I would make an analogy with Einsteinian and Newtonian physics. You might compare some of the older religions, Buddhism say, to Newton's system. In respect of that, Krishnamurti's insights are like Einstein's, they are in a new dimension.

In terms of ideas, some of Krishnamurti's may or may not be found elsewhere in other teachers, but this masks a fundamental difference. In the same way, within a certain range you have identical results whether you use Einstein's or Newton's physics, but in other areas you will have fundamentally different results. The apparent identity masks enormous differences. The real difference is apparent when you live your daily life with these teachings. Then you find amazing things because of the freedom to inquire at all levels.

The general attitude among staff is not one of devotion, which Krishnamurti himself strongly rejected, but at least one of extreme respect and affection. He was loved and deeply admired by many members of staff and students who felt he had significantly touched their lives. There are several photographs of Krishnamurti in the school and occasionally articles about him or extracts from his work

are pinned up on the school notice board. As we shall see, students are strongly encouraged to watch videos of his talks and the study centre is designed to facilitate study of his works. I found little sign that anyone at Brockwood felt negative towards Krishnamurti. One staff member who had been at the school for four years told me:

I think all the staff here refer back to the teachings constantly. I've very rarely heard anyone here speak disparagingly or cynically of Krishnamurti - and usually such a person would leave quite soon.

Brockwood, then, is clearly inspired by Krishnamurti as religious teacher: much more than at Valley School there is respect and affection for Krishnamurti as a person. Staff at Brockwood were confronted by the challenge of living with a particularly powerful religious teacher who had made a profound impact on their own lives, and yet by the very nature of his teaching they were obliged to maintain a sceptical attitude and not to impose his views on students. Some students and visitors expressed reservations about the way in which importance was accorded to Krishnamurti. One student said she liked Krishnamurti as a person and regarded him highly, but felt uncomfortable about the attitudes of those close to him:

I don't really like the people around Krishnamurti. Many people spent all their energy being devoted to him as a personality, even though they denied it or didn't see it. They weren't actually doing what was asked of them, which was to look at their daily lives. I found this especially with some of those in the Foundation and in the schools. It created a kind of aura of hypocrisy.

Several students felt that there was an element of ideological imposition in the school. In the last resort some members of staff would often quote Krishnamurti's words as the final truth on a topic under discussion, and there was a tendency to present academic work from a 'Krishnamurti angle'. One student remarked that the 'teachings are something which can be taken down from the shelf and

quoted when needed', especially if students raised questions in meetings. Another student told me:

The teachings are something which should really be doubted and studied very sceptically. I have a scientific schooling, so I don't think you should take them on trust. For example in today's class there was a discussion on beauty and I think it was influenced by what Krishnamurti has said on the topic, rather an idealist view, but I don't think people had really seen it for themselves. So in a subtle way it may be that they influence you here, even without knowing it. What they call 'The Teaching' is something of an authority here.

The situation raises some questions that Brockwood will need to answer if it is to avoid the charge of exclusivity: if teachers strongly believe Krishnamurti to have been such a great teacher, will they not try to persuade students to see him that way? Is Brockwood not merely reproducing a traditional pattern, forming an institution dedicated to the transmission of a particular doctrine? Or is there really something of a new departure in the understanding of what it means to live a religious life?

#### 7.4 THE APPROACH TO RELIGION

After Krishnamurti's death and during his absences, the school was faced with the question of how to keep alive the religious spirit which Krishnamurti demanded. There are various aspects to this problem: staff have to maintain a high level of interest themselves and also convey the teachings to students who often have less motivation. The question is approached in three main ways. First, as discussed in 7.2, academic work is used as a vehicle for conveying some of Krishnamurti's ideas and, more generally, to teach ideas that are seen as conducive to maturity and holistic understanding.

Secondly, students are exposed to Krishnamurti's teachings through videos and discussion. One hour every week is set aside as

'Krishnamurti-time'. During this hour a video is shown or occasionally extracts are read from one of Krishnamurti's books. There is also one meeting a week for the whole school where questions relating to Krishnamurti's teachings may be discussed. These videos and meetings are attended by about three quarters of the school on average. At times the school has had the policy of noting persistent failure to attend and obliging recalcitrant students to explain their absences; at other times participation has been entirely voluntary and unsupervised. Many students I interviewed preferred the direct exposure to Krishnamurti and felt that discussion meetings were often boring or meaningless, although occasionally interesting.

Thirdly, on a less formal level, the spirit of exploring Krishnamurti's questions is kept alive by the staff members most deeply committed, expressing itself in their behaviour and conversation. Many students also have an independent interest in Krishnamurti and read books of their own accord in their free time or discuss his teachings amongst themselves, with teachers or visitors. Most people at the school are interested in a range of world views and philosophies which are explored informally and also in classroom situations. In particular there is a deep concern for psychological understanding apparent at all levels, for example in class, in relationships or even in attitudes towards sports. If it is felt that some person or people are behaving in an aggressive or selfish way they would certainly be confronted and asked to think it over.

Informal discussions between staff and students are an important part of school life. One teacher told me that these often arise spontaneously out of actual situations in the community. For example, if a female student is concerned about a particular relationship, a female teacher may be able to talk over the particular problem, but would also try to broaden the perspective in which it is seen by discussing relationships in the school as a whole and relating them ultimately to the life of society. In this

way some of Krishnamurti's ideas about the importance of relationships and the causes of difficulties can be introduced.

One important difference compared to Valley School is the far greater emphasis at Brockwood on exposing students to Krishnamurti as directly as possible. There is a feeling that however carefully teachers explain his ideas, the teachings will not have the same impact and significance as when heard directly from Krishnamurti. The practice of strongly encouraging direct contact certainly had Krishnamurti's own approval as it was started during his lifetime. Student response to Krishnamurti's teaching over the years has been mixed. A few teachers felt that the majority of students were only superficially interested, but on the whole there was a more optimistic assessment. One teacher who has spent many years at the school suggested:

I would say about half the students are seriously interested in Krishnamurti. They read books, watch videos, talk about it. I am sure they also think about their own lives and backgrounds. Maybe a quarter just don't understand a word - it's Greek to them. The other quarter reject it as propaganda or because they don't want any guidance, they want to do everything by themselves.

A student told me that a fundamental thing to understand about Brockwood was that it only 'worked' for those who wanted to be there. He felt that when students were sent by parents without any real commitment of their own, life at Brockwood could easily become a rather shallow experience. However, when a young person was attracted to the ideas and saw their significance in his or her own life, the opportunities provided by the school were tremendous. There was time and space for private study, conversation with sympathetic adults, the beauty of the countryside and a supportive environment.

From my conversations with those students who felt deeply interested in Krishnamurti, I gained the impression that his teachings do indeed have much to offer to a sensitive young person. Above all,

students appreciated the fact that they were expected to face questions on fundamental areas of human existence. One girl of sixteen said that listening to Krishnamurti she was constantly reminded of the need to explore questions of life, death and love. She felt that these topics were raised piecemeal in her studies of literature and casual conversations but that Krishnamurti provided an overall view.

A slightly older girl suggested that one could not take one part of Krishnamurti's work and say: 'this bit suits me'. It is a whole approach to life and it all belongs together. She was attracted to it because it is so simple and honest: 'I never get the feeling he is playing with words like some philosophers'. Further, it is possible to study the teachings at Brockwood in a way that would be impossible outside. In Brockwood, 'people respect themselves and respect each other. As far as I can see it is honest and there is not much hypocrisy. I don't see how you could study the teachings in an angry or violent environment.'

Altogether Krishnamurti's teachings seem to provide an adequate framework and stimulus for considering essential questions about human existence. The questions include the psychological, human aspects of life and extend to those which are more associated with religious inquiry: the transcendence of time, the nature of love and the sacred. For those students who want to participate in the full scope of Brockwood's spiritual life, the opportunity is open. One ex-student reported:

Perhaps the most important thing which was given to me, and which I discovered, during my stay at Brockwood, was a deep sense of inner equilibrium...I often feel that Krishnamurti's teachings and my education at Brockwood led me to understand life's movement, not as something to be feared, but as something to be both observed and embraced...It would be no 'psychological whitewash' to say that my time at Brockwood gave me the necessary tools for living with self-reliance and nourished a fiery energy for confronting the challenges

of existence, together with a sense of life's sacredness. (Krishnamurti Schools Newsletter, January 1985, p.3)

Testimony from other students confirmed that a period at Brockwood could be an extraordinarily significant experience. However, it should be said that Brockwood lends no support to the idea that a young person could undergo a transformation in consciousness. Many students undoubtedly leave Brockwood with enhanced sensitivity and awareness, particularly concerning the demands of relationship and responsibility. But it is certainly not thought that any of them have undergone the psychological revolution that Krishnamurti envisaged. I was informed by Professor Bohm that towards the end of his life Krishnamurti stressed that staff had to generate a high level of clarity:

I think in the beginning [Krishnamurti] thought people would find some very young children who were relatively unconditioned. But they don't seem to exist. They come just as badly conditioned as anybody, and they create serious problems with that conditioning...It became clear as time went on that the key lies with the staff, if the staff cannot get it clear amongst themselves then they cannot do much with the children. You can't hope that the children will have some unusual quality that will make up for the staff. (Bohm, 1986:10)

Staff do not see their duty only as encouraging spirituality among students. On the contrary, they must discover for themselves also what it means to live a religious life in the context of Krishnamurti's teachings and how the demands of school life can be integrated with the demand for solitude and meditation. This apparent contradiction, between the demands of school life and the time, silence and dedication required for a contemplative religious life, has led to many discussions at Brockwood:

It really raises the question: if you are deeply interested how do you live? For example one visitor here was disappointed because he wanted to talk about Krishnamurti and approached a member of staff who was busy at the time. The teacher didn't put down his tools and stop working, he just carried on. The

visitor thought this was wrong: if you really are interested the teachings should take precedence over everything else. Maybe he was right!

On this topic, an ex-member of staff wrote a short article entitled 'What is a religious life?' (unpublished) which discusses the question of how meditation or prayer are relevant in the context of Krishnamurti's teachings. He noted that the atmosphere of the school is conducive to a high level of sensitivity and that there are excellent physical and psychological conditions for the development of awareness in daily life and relationships. However, he argued that there is also a need for periods during the day when the body should be held perfectly still and the mind alert and receptive. If daily activities are orderly, there will be a beneficial relationship between periods of quiet and periods of action:

For most of us it is extremely difficult to maintain a refined level of awareness even when sitting still, much less during our busy daily activities. However there seems to be an organic relationship between our moments of physical stillness and our physical activities. The more order we can bring into our physically active life, the more chance our minds have of slowing down whilst sitting still - which in turn can reflect on the quality of our activity.

In practice, however, there are no clear guidelines about meditation, or sitting still, at Brockwood. Overall, it is considered wrong to practise formal meditation techniques. As understood at Brockwood, Krishnamurti was negative towards the idea of formal meditation and there was opposition to the idea of setting aside a room specifically for this purpose. Some staff members did initiate quiet periods for meditation in certain rooms but this activity never became widely accepted or practised in the school. One teacher told me:

Meditation is a hot potato here. Krishnamurti said different things at different times, mostly anti-meditation, and so there has grown up a kind of tradition that one should not sit and meditate. I



prefer to sit in my own room and I believe that others may do that also. Most people would consider meditation as a benediction, a state which might come of its own accord wherever you are or whatever you are doing.

One teacher who came with a background of formal meditation practice felt that this has been detrimental to the religious spirit in the school:

All that is going on here is very good, I can see that, education, archives, study centre and the people are very kind, gentle, generous. But somehow I feel the quality is all a bit thin. Nobody goes really deep in the sense of exploring in meditation. Maybe they are going deep in a way I am not aware of.

In fact, the question of meditation highlights the more general question raised above: what is a religious life, as far as Brockwood is concerned? If there is no formal meditation, and such practices as ceremonies, rituals and singing devotional songs are absolutely excluded by the very nature of the school's philosophy, where is the religiosity? Is it possible to combine a contemplative life with the demands of the school?

Nobody suggested to me that Brockwood was the only, or even the best, place to lead a religious life. Staff pointed out various drawbacks inherent in the situation. For example, they were usually busy and it was hard to find solitude. The young students needed a great amount of attention and much energy was taken up simply in running the community and teaching. The students seemed to be interested in religious questions for short periods of time, but tended to fluctuate in their interest and did not have the capacity for continuous or sustained enquiry. Brockwood is an institution, albeit a very free and relaxed one, and so one was obliged to conform to its rhythms and demands. However, on closer examination, teachers understood that these disadvantages could also be an excuse:

Everyone here has come to understand that it is not quite true that there is no time for studying the teachings, really it is a question of attitude. But people may be frightened to spend quiet time by themselves, to really stay with themselves.

It is true that people are continually busy, but that is probably the result of their attitude and the fear of confronting themselves. It is hard to refuse attention to youngsters, but that may just be an excuse. Most people aren't really alert, aware and attentive. They prefer to carry on with the routine, which is stronger.

On the contrary, working in a school environment was seen as having a number of advantages. Students were lively and always ready to question, and one could not become absorbed in a dreamy mystical state. Living in such close contact with a hundred people there were constant confrontations and wider possibilities than in a nuclear family or alone:

It's quite easy to feel holy when you live alone. After you have been alone for some time you feel quiet, maybe serene, in touch with your body or with nature. But very often it is a form of deception. If you come out of that into the real world you may get disturbed very easily. Of course living alone is one way of leading what is called the religious life, and for some people it may be the best way. I'm not saying that what we are doing is any better, but we are doing something different.

One teacher had an interesting observation to make on the effect of school life on new teachers:

It very often happens that a new person here has been spending a lot of time alone studying the teachings. Often they have thought about them a great deal and they may have some interesting insights. When they come here they often find things very different from what they expect. They are often introverted and uncommunicative when they arrive - I was myself and they turned me down the first time. Here you can't spend long hours by yourself meditating or whatever. You really are responsible for about sixty young people and for everything that is going on here.

Despite the absence of formal meditation, there are various activities which relate to the more meditative, reflective and contemplative side of Krishnamurti's teachings. One room, perhaps the most beautiful in the house, is used exclusively for watching Krishnamurti videos, reading religious literature and holding serious conversations. The nearest approach to formal meditation as a group is in the morning meeting, when those of the school who want to attend sit in silence for about ten minutes. However, it was interesting that there was no agreement about the purpose of the meeting. I asked many teachers and students about it and was given various explanations. One teacher maintained that it produced a sense of harmony in the community, another that people prepared themselves for the coming day and that it built up energy. One student said he used it as an opportunity to remember what he had to do during the day and another liked the feeling of slowly waking up and returning to life. In the article 'What is a religious life' quoted earlier, the author maintains that the significance of the meeting is to cultivate a subtle level of awareness which would be diluted by even the gentlest of physical activities.

As a whole, it would seem that Krishnamurti's teachings, as understood at Brockwood, reject all forms of formalised meditation with the application of any technique such as breathing or the use of mantras. They do, however, suggest that it would be fruitful to spend time sitting quietly. This may be done alone, or with others as at the morning meeting. There is no precise indication of what the purpose of this sitting quietly is, although it is clearly a period for introspection and observation. It is certainly not suggested that it is necessary for people to spend long periods of time doing this.

There is therefore a total absence of communal and formalised religious practice at the school, unless one includes as such the weekly tape and the discussion meeting. On the other hand the staff have an intense personal religious life, in a broad sense, which gives an understanding of how one can pursue an inquiry into

fundamental religious questions without adhering to any traditional or institutional practices. A certain amount of solitude is necessary: time to be alone in one's room, or walking in the countryside. There should be a high standard of morality, which extends to care for one's body and the environment and abstention from drugs and meat. There should be regular study of religious literature and participation in discussions about behaviour and attitudes. As was quoted earlier, Krishnamurti refused to distinguish between 'religious' and 'non-religious' periods or activities. Eating, teaching, talking, sitting still or playing music must equally be a part of a religious life. At Brockwood, consequently no extraordinary significance is imputed to any particular activity in distinction to any other.

This way of life is generally shared by the students, although most are probably less consistent in their approach than teachers and tend to spend more time in casual discussions and less serious pursuits. But many students had inquired deeply into meditation as well as participating in the more active side of the community. One student gave the following account of his approach to inquiry:

I very much like having quiet time and sitting quietly. Sometimes I also find it impossible...my brain is going on and on and on, images coming like a complex chain. So I give myself space to watch that process. I don't like to go to bed without having been quiet. Same thing in the morning meeting. But then I like listening to the birds. If you are quiet and close your eyes you suddenly start to hear the birds. They were singing all the time but you hadn't heard them. Listen and you start to hear.

Sometimes when you are quiet you feel, or you think you feel, something - some intelligence or whatever. But I am very wary. I always think one can so easily deceive oneself - this is truth or love or something - we are very quick to set up some entity which is guiding, protecting, which is doing something - I'm very wary of that, setting up a belief.

Krishnamurti's style of discourse, like any other, has its advantages and disadvantages. We have seen that his teachings on

meditation and religiosity were not explicit or prescriptive. This leads to some vagueness, but it also means that each individual must find his or her own approach to these questions. Many find that his teachings reverberate with a deeper meaning than would be possible with cut and dried definitions. For example, in the following talk to teachers in India, Krishnamurti uses the terms 'religious' and 'meditation' to convey the depth of his passion rather than to give instruction:

Are you religious people? In you is there love, compassion, the activity of that compassion which is intelligence?...

One constantly wonders why the human being does not have the sense of dignity, the dignity of a mind that has thought a great deal, meditated a great deal, lived.

What is necessary is to bring about a mind in the school that is moving in meditation. (Krishnamurti *Foundation Bulletin*, Autumn/Winter 1982, no.43:11)

It was part of the original intention of Brockwood to be a centre for adults who wished to study Krishnamurti's teachings. For many years this function was only partially fulfilled. Visitors were welcomed at the school, but there were limitations on space available, and staff did not always have the time for discussion with them. Towards the end of his life, Krishnamurti began to insist that the Krishnamurti Foundations should also construct and run study centres for adults. I was told that this suggestion came as a complete surprise when Krishnamurti suggested it to a group of friends, explaining that he felt that the schools had already done something towards helping young people and that now he wanted to help adults who wished to study his teachings.

A large sum of money was donated to construct a centre at Brockwood and in spring 1986 work began on the construction of a new building which was opened in December 1987. Krishnamurti himself was very closely involved with the project and spent much time with the people who would be responsible for the construction and running of the centre, particularly the principal of Brockwood and his wife.

He carefully explained his intentions and wishes, and extracts from these conversations were published in a booklet *The Krishnamurti Centre* (1987). The main aim was to create a retreat for adults living a normal life in society. They should be able to come to the centre for a short period, perhaps one or two weeks, and devote themselves entirely to inquiry in the context of Krishnamurti's teachings, without the distractions of family or business affairs. The atmosphere should be conducive to serious study of his works and allow for solitude, quietness and reflection, as well as discussion.

With regard to the study of his teachings, he characteristically insisted that the study should not be primarily for information purposes or for conceptual philosophizing. The important thing would be to discover if the teachings could provide an insight into existential problems:

I would be reading not just to memorize, I would be reading to learn; to see what he is saying and my reactions to it, whether it corresponds or contradicts, whether he is right or I am right, so that there is a constant communication between what I am reading and what I am feeling. (TKC:2)

When discussing the Centre, Krishnamurti explicitly used the word religious, for example: 'The first stone we lay should be religious' (ibid:6). His emphasis is apparent in the following extract:

It [Brockwood] is the only centre in Europe representing the Teachings, which are essentially religious...In the very old days an ashrama - which means retreat - was a place where people came to gather their energies, to dwell and to explore deeper religious aspects of life (ibid).

In this context he emphasized the need for quietness and incorporated a quiet room in the new building. The room is soundproofed, of an elegant circular design, perfectly suited for meditation:

There should be a place there, a room where you go to be quiet. ...That should be like a fountain that is filling the whole place...It is like a furnace that heats the whole place. (ibid).

Another point upon which Krishnamurti was adamant was that the architecture and building of the centre should be to the very highest standards, regardless of cost. Many architects were interviewed and their proposals carefully examined. Krishnamurti himself, although by then seriously ill, gave immense care and consideration to this aspect of the building, even down to details of design. The centre does indeed provide a retreat from the stresses of contemporary society. Visitors have simple but comfortable rooms and are served three vegetarian meals a day, all for a reasonable price. There is a small library which contains Krishnamurti's books and a selection of religious texts including the Upanishads, Brother Lawrence, The Cloud of Unknowing and various Buddhist and Taoist works. Video and audio tapes of Krishnamurti's talks are available and there is also a computer-based index to Krishnamurti's work. No demands are made on guests: they are free to discuss with other visitors or members of staff, to watch videos or read books, to sit in the quiet room, to go for walks or simply to stay in their own bedrooms. In accordance with the spirit of Krishnamurti's philosophy, there is no attempt to guide their activities, although behaviour that disturbed other visitors would not be permitted.

Staff at Brockwood hoped that the centre would reinforce the religious, meditative and studious aspect of life at Brockwood, which is sometimes in danger of being lost in the daily business of running a school. Krishnamurti himself, in his poetic language, expressed a similar view:

The Study Centre will enhance, enrich, bring a new colour, a new perfume to the school. (ibid).

The centre marks the transition of Brockwood from being primarily a school to being a full centre for the study of Krishnamurti's works, and increases the emphasis on the more overtly religious or spiritual aspects of his approach: solitude, study of the teachings, quietness. In many ways the centre epitomizes Krishnamurti's life-work as religious teacher. It is an immense practical achievement to have obtained the funds and the skills to create such a retreat, which is now a facility open to any individual who feels the need for a period of quiet reflection in a beautiful environment, with the opportunity of serious discussion and companionship. On the spiritual level, it is a reaffirmation of a non-formalised and non-institutional approach to religion: there is no ideological imposition and the visitor is free to make use of the centre to the best of his ability. Krishnamurti and those working at Brockwood have thus created a centre which may be of great significance to individuals at certain periods in their lives.

Brockwood, then, is a fascinating and important creation both as school and religious centre. There can be few places in Britain today which are exploring spirituality, in a broad sense, with such openness and freshness. Perhaps the one reservation that remains is the question raised earlier: could there arise an uncritical sense of finality or acceptance of Krishnamurti's thought? Will there soon be a new orthodoxy? At present, at least, there seems little danger of this happening. The principal at Brockwood is adamant that such a thing would be totally unacceptable: Krishnamurti is seen as an outstanding and brilliant teacher, but the old theosophical role-model and speculations are firmly rejected. Likewise, his teachings are of extraordinary value, but they are to be constantly examined, reassessed in the light of each individual's experience.

Will Brockwood be a private affair for a few thousand people or will an impact be made on a much wider group of educationalists, parents, teachers, young people and religious seekers? In a recent essay entitled *Metaphors in Educational Fiction*, Raymond Wilson reminds us



that statements about the nature of reality are always provisional, determined by the nature of the language in which they are expressed:

What people say is 'true' or 'real' has no ultimate reality or truth. Homer's stories, the Bible, the Church, Ptolemaic astrology, Newtonian physics, Marx's *Das Kapital* have all been sincerely considered repositories of truth at one time or another by intelligent people. (Wilson, 1984:117)

However revolutionary, illuminating and well-founded new 'truths' are, they tend to be absorbed into the wider context of human understanding and after some generations, as Wilson puts it, 'pass into the realm of what is considered fanciful or mythical or metaphorical by our successors' (ibid). It seems a reasonable assumption that when judged from the perspective of history Krishnamurti's thought will suffer the same fate as other teachings and philosophies: its insights will be cherished and developed, and its historical, linguistic and social limitations will become clear. Perhaps the continuing vitality of Brockwood and its future impact on society depend on avoiding the dangers of exclusivity through constant dialogue with other points of view.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

#### 8.1 LESSONS FROM THE KRISHNAMURTI SCHOOLS

In this final chapter I will summarize my observations on the Krishnamurti schools and conclude my discussion on Krishnamurti as religious teacher and educator. I will also point to some possibilities for future research.

In Chapters 6 and 7 I identified a number of successful areas and also some problems at two Krishnamurti schools. One weakness was a consequence of the fact that many staff were strongly attached to the ideas of a particular individual, Krishnamurti. Krishnamurti's views were sometimes presented in a favourable light without sufficient justification. I gave examples of this in the culture classes in Bangalore and in some approaches to academic work in Brockwood. I suggested that there was some risk that pupils might have their opinions moulded by these subtle pressures. On the other hand there is no attempt at consistent or bigoted indoctrination and one can not observe anything like the classic brain-washing techniques adopted by some cults. On the contrary, pupils are strongly encouraged to maintain a critical and sceptical attitude. No student from any of the Krishnamurti schools, as far as I was able to ascertain, eventually became uncritically devoted to Krishnamurti or regarded his work unsceptically. So I believe there is justification for saying that the indoctrination, such as it is, is not deep or destructive.

Academic work at the schools has many interesting features, but so far at least is not outstanding in comparison with other private schools. There are various factors which contribute to this.

First, competition and ambition are discouraged by Krishnamurti's philosophy. Second, the intention of the schools is to cultivate other areas of human experience, for example introspective thinking and appreciation of nature, which would not necessarily be reflected in high achievement. It appears that the lack of outstanding achievement is a natural consequence of the more relaxed and open style of education.

Finally, the orientation of Krishnamurti's philosophy and educational thought was essentially individualist. In the first part of the thesis I discussed some of the reasons for his rejection of immediate political action. Nevertheless it could be argued that his focus on the individual and relative lack of emphasis on social questions reflects an indifference to concrete social issues which might lead to a sense of isolation and superiority. At Brockwood the two consequences of this approach are evident. On the one hand there is a tranquil and beautiful environment which is highly conducive to appreciation of nature and meditation. On the other, there is a slight sense of isolation from the main stream of society, of being in a place set apart.

These seem to be the three major problem areas. The difficulties are not insurmountable, but one of the efforts needed to overcome them would be an honest and careful on-going assessment of Krishnamurti's work. It is easy for a small and non-formalised movement to pay little attention to criticism from outsiders: the soft option is to ignore or exclude people who hold different views rather than enter into dialogue with them. An indicator of the vitality of the Krishnamurti schools in the future may well be the extent of their willingness to re-examine their attitudes and assumptions.

On the positive side there are several areas where the Krishnamurti schools have made contributions to our understanding of what could happen in education, with particular reference to fostering young people's spiritual awareness. The schools operate from a coherent

philosophical basis which gives them a sense of unity of purpose and clarity about their basic intentions and orientation. Most members of staff in the schools which I visited seemed to be in basic agreement about how things should be approached, while in cases of disagreement there was room for discussion. The schools are based on a high moral standard which insists on respect for all life and for the environment as well as encouraging spirituality and reflection among staff and pupils.

This point is closely linked with the first problem area raised above. Because the Krishnamurti schools are founded on one person's philosophy, problems of exclusivity may arise. But it would be much more difficult for a group of people to work together from a more eclectic philosophical base and without common guiding principles. Other alternative educational activities usually have a unifying philosophy in the background: for example the Waldorf educational system is based on the ideas of its founder Rudolf Steiner; Summerhill was almost entirely the creation of A.S. Neill; and the Montessori schools refer back to the work of Maria Montessori. Nor should it be thought that other schools are free from indoctrination: on the contrary much research in the past two decades has focussed precisely on the problem of value indoctrination through the so-called hidden curriculum. A school necessarily reflects ideological positions held by teachers, administrators and parents. Given that it is impossible, even if it were desirable, to offer a value-free education, the most important consideration is that the values espoused should be life-enhancing, open and moral rather than lacking in these qualities. From the testimony of teachers and pupils I concluded that Krishnamurti's philosophy could indeed be a guide and a stimulus for people interested in a non-formal approach to spirituality.

A second important achievement of the Krishnamurti schools is the extent and quality of staff-pupil interaction. It has been shown in the schools that young people can become interested in discussions about a wide range of topics including questions such as the meaning

of life and death, religion and meditation. The schools also show that it is possible to run a school without resorting to disciplinary measures and that pupils can learn to play an important role in being responsible for their environment. A large measure of credit for these successes must be given to Krishnamurti personally. In his discussions with students he raised serious questions which, as discussed in 4.1, show some similarities with the concerns of contemporary educationalists. He insisted that it was possible and valuable for teachers to hold serious conversations with young people, and reports from pupils at Brockwood and Valley School suggest that they value these discussions. Some pupils felt that the talks had influenced their approach to life or made them more aware and sensitive. Of course there is a certain level of such communication in all schools, but in the Krishnamurti schools it is in a sense the very essence of what teachers are trying to achieve, and thus more time and energy are devoted to it.

Thirdly, many teachers commented on the importance of dialogue and the sense of equality between teachers. Of course teachers in other schools have some kind of relationship with each other and perhaps create supportive and valuable relationships. But again, at Krishnamurti schools the importance of relationship is made explicit. This is reflected in decision-making processes. In Bangalore no decision was taken by the imposition of a majority on a minority, all questions were talked through until a consensus was reached and there was no sense of hierarchy. Here too credit is due to Krishnamurti. First he made the formal proposal that a school should be run on democratic and non-hierarchical lines. In a more fundamental sense he facilitated the process of dialogue by his illuminating comments on how rigid opinions are built up and defended. All teachers involved with the Krishnamurti schools I interviewed had a strong awareness of this aspect of Krishnamurti's work: they realised that their view was only one possible view and that they should be constantly ready to revise it in the light of suggestions from others. Because of the open dialogue, spirituality is not an individual or isolated pursuit at the Krishnamurti

schools. It is true that there is very little that could be called communal religious practice, but experiences in the communities are shared and explored. Instead of the more formal, routinized and institutionalized procedures which are more familiar in many other religious contexts, the Krishnamurti schools use the informal and spontaneous medium of dialogue.

Finally, the Krishnamurti schools represent an attempt at fusion between education and spirituality. One of the frustrations of teaching religious studies in contemporary society is the prevalence of the secular, almost anti-religious ideology. As discussed earlier (4.1), the determining metaphors of modern consciousness are largely derived from anti-religious thinkers while there is widespread emphasis in society on consumerism and material gratification with little effort being made, generally, to further the search for spiritual values. In this context the Krishnamurti schools are important as places which stand outside the prevailing trends of cynicism and consumerism.

## 8.2 SEEDS OF TRUTH

I have used the phrase 'seeds of truth' as the title for my thesis because it seems to me to indicate the best spirit in which to approach Krishnamurti. In a series of discussions with Professor David Bohm published in *Truth and Actuality* (1977), Krishnamurti used the analogy of a seed to describe his teaching:

You plant in me the seed that, "Truth is a pathless land". Also a seed is planted in my consciousness that says, "There is a way to truth, follow me". One is false, one is true. They are both embedded in my consciousness...You say to me, "There is a mystery

which passes all understanding"...the truth of that mystery makes the mind completely empty doesn't it - ? it's completely silent. Or because it is silent, the truth of that mystery is. (TA:44ff)

At about the same time he used the same metaphor when talking with staff at Brockwood:

A student comes here, terribly conditioned, or the family is broken up - this and that...Now I am asking myself: is there a way of doing something which will bring about the seed to be born naturally in the person? ... Can we produce a miracle? (BL:211)

The seed is an image of growth and transformation, and in my own experience this is the lasting benefit of contact with Krishnamurti. In the first years of listening to Krishnamurti's talks I became much more aware of how social influences, images of other people, images of myself and various emotions were affecting my life. His talks helped me to observe and examine these assumptions and images, which I believe had a therapeutic effect. One thing that certainly emerged from the process was a scepticism about ideologies and a deeper understanding of the psychological processes that dominate our responses to other people. Another important lesson was Krishnamurti's insistence on one's responsibility as a human being and the importance of values such as honesty, non-violence and co-operation. I also appreciated his teaching on meditation, namely that it is a mistake to adopt particular techniques with the hope of achieving a meditative state. I came to realize that when one is living in an orderly way, without overwhelming anxieties or frustrations, the brain will naturally start to function in a wordless dimension and have periods of spontaneous silence.

Similar experiences were described by many people I met who had come into contact with Krishnamurti. I would not suggest that one could not learn similar lessons from other thinkers, or perhaps from one's personal observations, but certainly his teachings can provide guidance for those who are interested in an introspective inquiry into their own lives. He offers a framework for understanding human

behaviour. At the same time the spirituality which permeated his life and teaching led to a sense of mystery and transcendence rather than to cynicism or materialism. In this sense the metaphor of the seed is deeply appropriate. Krishnamurti was concerned to provide the basis for growth and transformation, but without imposing a detailed system of beliefs or behaviour. He never dictated what one should eat or wear or think. There was no lifestyle to adopt or organisation to join. One was provided with the seeds of ideas and observations, but it was the responsibility of each individual to develop as a mature human being. It seems likely that Krishnamurti will continue to have a positive influence in the spread of a new spirituality. There are many thousands of people who have found his books and talks interesting and helpful, even if they did not become involved with the Krishnamurti schools or with his vision of the world. He contributed to a general awareness of religion and in particular was a forceful advocate of non-formal and non-institutionalised religious thinking.

On the other hand, there are those who for various reasons regard Krishnamurti as a uniquely important teacher, someone with a totally original and illuminating philosophy. For this group of admirers, the Krishnamurti schools will undoubtedly play an important role in the future. The ethos that evolved around Krishnamurti - vegetarianism, contact with nature, emphasis on relationships - will be maintained and the spiritual aspect of the schools will be further emphasized by the adult study centres. Brockwood, for example, will certainly remain a point of reference for anybody in Europe who wishes to study Krishnamurti's tapes and writings and to interact with people who knew Krishnamurti personally.

It is impossible to predict how enduring this group will be. At present there are many people who were attracted to Krishnamurti, who were close to him personally and wanted to work with him. Most of these people clearly regarded him as a teacher of outstanding significance. Although there was no overt adherence to the world



teacher doctrine there was nevertheless a strong feeling among this group that Krishnamurti was in some way qualitatively different from the rest of humanity and that his teachings are of extraordinary significance. It is too early to say whether this group will expand and find new adherents or whether it will dwindle to a band of eccentrics devoted to the memory of a dead giant. On this question, I feel, the long term future of the schools depends. If the teachings do indeed prove to have a vitality and coherence that makes them of great value to large numbers of people then probably the schools will continue to flourish for many years. If not, one could envisage that in the long term they will suffer the fate of many independent schools and slowly decline into insignificance.

Krishnamurti's thought will eventually be absorbed into the wider stream of human thinking, and it seems probable that any who regard Krishnamurti's work as a final revelation will be an isolated minority. Perhaps the most fruitful way to consider Krishnamurti is as one amongst several contemporary thinkers from very different backgrounds who perceive a need to stimulate individual creativity and in particular to resolve the problems that can arise in relationship. For example, some ideas similar to Krishnamurti's, although more sophisticated in language and style, were recently put forward by the Nobel prize-winner in biology Maurice Wilkins (Wilkins, 1987:338-360). Wilkins suggests that the psychological dynamics of conflict are very similar whether between individuals or nations:

The main characteristics of confrontational conflict are as follows. Each party in the conflict of course regards his own behaviour as reasonable, but the behaviour of each mutually reinforces in the other the unreasonable and psychologically regressive tendencies which...develop in difficult and threatening situations. There is a lack of ability to observe the opponent objectively...Each party forms a fixed image of the other. (Wilkins 1987:355)

The argument, even down to the use of the term 'image', is very similar to that of Krishnamurti, with whom Wilkins held several discussions. Moreover, Wilkins' proposals for transforming fixed patterns of thinking also resemble Krishnamurti's:

One of the greatest barriers to creativity is the existence in the mind of firmly embedded conventional patterns of thought from which one cannot escape...Thought patterns are very important because they can provide real practical security; but they can also provide illusions of psychological security...When the leaders in the governments of the US and USSR face each other with the almost unimaginably destructive threat of nuclear war hanging over them, it might seem too much to ask of them that they should play around freely with ideas. None the less, this is what has to be done if the future of the world is to be made safe. We need to escape from the clear, but somewhat limited, thinking which takes place in the cortex and to let the mind regress creatively into intuitive and imaginative activity. (Wilkins, 1987: 352 - 359)

Wilkins suggests that many approaches to problems, for example the application of technology to improve living standards in the Third World, reflect a tendency to operate from fixed and unexamined assumptions. He concludes his essay by noting that the Russell-Einstein manifesto stated that to avoid nuclear doom, humanity needed a 'new kind of thinking'. 'In facing this gigantic and horrific challenge let us have courage. If we have the courage to make creative dialogue between East and West, we may then achieve a 'new kind of thinking'' (Wilkins 1987:359).

The importance of avoiding rigidity in dialogue is another idea of Krishnamurti's that has been discussed by other thinkers, for example the psycho-analyst David Shainberg. In an essay published in 1987 he suggested:

Often...when individuals come together in a group they try to justify their identities and they repeat themselves endlessly...they express and defend the opinions with which they came into the encounter...The vitality in human relationship is drained of its dramatic presence and it becomes a dulled encounter in which the talk is meaningless drivel given over to

continuing in the vortex of relationships which the fixed images have created. (Shainberg, 1987:409)

As a final example of similiarity between the ideas of Krishnamurti and those of a contemporary scientist, it is interesting to note that Ilya Prigogine, the 1977 Nobel prize-winner in chemistry, attributes a large part of humanity's suffering to a misapprehension of the nature of human rationality:

The idea of classical science with its determinism, implying the possibility of absolute knowledge, leads to intolerance and finally to violence...I think that the overestimation of the power of human rationality may be one of the reasons for...a mythological view of the world which is probably one of the reasons behind ideological struggles. (Prigogine, 1986:194)

Prigogine postulates that people will have to accept that human rationality is inherently limited and that only awareness of its limitations will produce a more open, receptive and creative way of being in the world.

The examination of Krishnamurti's teachings in Chapter Two showed that Krishnamurti was similarly concerned with freeing the mind from fixed patterns of thought. A new creativity might be released by recognising the limited nature of rationality. He felt that humanity is blocked in an impasse and needs to generate a new mode of consciousness if there is to be a chance of survival and happiness. Perhaps the most important difference between Krishnamurti and the writers just quoted lies in the use of language: Krishnamurti used language derived from theosophy and religious philosophy rather than science. He consistently stressed that the new intelligence of which he spoke was essentially to be understood in religious terms, and his outlook and life-style were clearly influenced by theosophical ideas and Indian religious traditions, for example vegetarianism and the valorisation of introspection and meditation. His dedication to the role of religious teacher explains why he did not participate in politics and did not initiate social movements, although the examples of Gandhi

and Vinoba <sup>Bhave</sup> suggest that, given Krishnamurti's charismatic personality, he might well have made a great impact in India at least as a public figure.

It would be mistaken to attribute his behaviour to indifference towards social problems. As discussed in 4.4, Krishnamurti was not reactionary or uncaring, but rather totally committed to the idea of evolving a 'new way of thinking', in Russell's terms, or 'the awakening of intelligence', to use his own. Therefore instead of social activism he chose the career of public speaker, author and educator, reaching audiences that probably numbered hundreds of thousands, but in the attempt to change their consciousness or awareness rather than to mobilize them around a particular form of action. Krishnamurti was adamant that the transformation of consciousness was the only thing which could save humanity from self-destruction. It represents an element of faith and optimism in the otherwise gloomy picture he painted of humanity's future. If he was right and a transformation occurs among those closely involved with his work, his assertion will clearly be justified. Unfortunately, the evidence at the moment suggests that the idea is unfounded, a particular example of transformative philosophy with roots in western occultism and Mahayana Buddhism; however, it may still be more fruitful than a hopeless pessimism.

Despite Krishnamurti's bizarre youth and the difficulties of breaking away from theosophy, his spirituality was not rigidly enclosed in a traditional or institutional framework, but tended to be dynamic, international and trans-cultural. His talks and writings were accessible to any individual who had an interest in his work: they were successfully translated into many European and Asiatic languages and do not seem to depend on a particular cultural background. In a sense Krishnamurti fulfilled the old theosophical ideal of a world teacher and moreover of the non-sectarian transcendentalism that is to be found in the background of his upbringing. His teachings can act as a seed of truth. They are not perfect in every respect and criticism can elucidate weaknesses of

argument and presentation. Research may establish the extent of the debt owed to theosophy and other currents of thought: in particular we have seen that much of his educational thought derived from the New Education Movement. However, as Krishnamurti suggests:

If a seed of truth is planted it must operate, it must grow, it must function, it has a life of its own...The seed is functioning, it's growing, it isn't dead.  
(TA:44)

As I noted earlier (see 2.4) it seems that for those who were affected, Krishnamurti's words operated at a deep level. A few of his ideas would take root and flourish, often deeply influencing a person's outlook on life. There was a sense of being involved in a process of transformation.

### 8.3 NEW DIRECTIONS

In 3.4.4 I suggested that it would be possible to monitor the psychological health of people who had studied Krishnamurti's work. A detailed indication of how this could be approached is available in *The Religious Experience: A Social-Psychological Perspective* (Batson and Ventis, 1982). The authors analyze a large number of empirical studies on the behaviour and attitudes of 'religious' and 'non-religious' individuals, having adopted a functional definition of 'religion':

We shall define religion as whatever we as individuals do to come to grips personally with the questions that confront us because we are aware that we and others like us are alive and that we will die (Batson and Ventis 1982:7)

In particular the authors focus on three questions, what effect does religion have on personal freedom, on mental health and on social responsibility? They argue that the use of social science techniques such as time-series design permits a scientifically sound

assessment, based on empirical data, of individuals' responses to religion.

Their preliminary findings are interesting in the context of this thesis. The authors find it necessary to make a distinction between three kinds of religion: as an extrinsic means to self-serving ends, as an intrinsic end in itself, and as a quest (ibid.:137ff). The effects of these orientations are dramatically different in the three areas of personal freedom, mental health and social responsibility. In the concluding chapter they summarize the available evidence:

The quest orientation involves an open-ended readiness to confront ultimate, existential questions, coupled with a skepticism of definitive answers to these questions...the evidence suggests that this orientation does not provide the same sense of freedom from existential concerns that an intrinsic, end orientation does, but neither does it produce the same bondage (Chapter 6). Moreover it is positively related to several conceptions of mental health: open-mindedness and flexibility, personal competence and control, and, perhaps, self-actualization (Chapter 7). At the level of social consequences...it has been found to relate both to reduced prejudice and to increased responsiveness to the needs of the distressed. (ibid.:309)

Religion as 'quest' is closely related to the ideas we have been considering in this thesis: 'an approach that involves facing existential questions in all their complexity, while resisting clear-cut, pat answers...it involves the individual hammering out his or her own stance on religious questions' (ibid.:150). It would provide an interesting perspective on Krishnamurti's work to examine the behaviour and attitudes of people influenced by his thought.

In the field of education, it seems probable that the seven Krishnamurti schools will continue to flourish. The study centre and school at Brockwood will probably attract an increasing number of visitors and new students. In India also the schools are well established and ready to continue into the twenty-first century.

Looking towards the future, I would hope that the ideas and practices that have proved successful in these schools will be of interest to researchers in the fields of education and religious studies and in the area where these disciplines overlap. One research project that would clearly be valuable would be a longitudinal study of staff and students from Brockwood or other Krishnamurti schools. Brockwood has now been operating for some twenty years and it would be possible to trace a significant number of ex-students and teachers. It would be interesting in particular to examine their evaluation of Krishnamurti's teachings as a guide to spirituality in contemporary society and their assessment of their educational experiences in the school.

Another important question is whether some of the features of the Krishnamurti schools might be of value in other educational contexts. Would Krishnamurti's teachings seem meaningful to staff or students in secondary schools, for example? How would teachers of religious education regard the questions which he felt suitable as topics for discussion? Would teachers be interested in seminars on thought processes, conditioning, images or dialogue? Would schools experiment with a democratic management structure where all teachers participated in decision-making?

In this context I would like to point to three new initiatives which testify to the vitality of some of Krishnamurti's ideas. The Krishnamurti Foundations have a clear policy not to found more schools. They feel that the seven which were established by Krishnamurti represent his legacy and are the only schools which they can be responsible for. Consequently, people who wish to create new schools on the basis of Krishnamurti's educational philosophy will be obliged to operate entirely independently of the Foundations. There are already signs that this is beginning to happen and in the course of my research I have discovered three recent educational initiatives which have strong ties with Krishnamurti's philosophy.

In England a group of people are hoping to start a new, non fee-paying school which will operate within the perspective of Krishnamurti's philosophy. The project is still in the process of discussion and formation but will hopefully take shape in the near future. Among the educational aims are 'the developing of an underlying philosophy based upon the discovery of truth and right action in living' and 'to develop independent thought and action, and an understanding of the necessity of co-operation in living'.

Secondly, a small group of people who had been working at or connected with Brockwood started an unusual school in Europe in 1985. The school educates young people of school leaving age for a period of one year. Instead of remaining in one place, the school is mobile, students and teachers spending time in different countries pursuing a variety of activities. These have included drama, film making, pottery, farming and dance. The teachers at the school are influenced by Krishnamurti's philosophy and pay careful attention to the psychological aspects of relationships among the group of students as they travel.

Finally, in Nepal a group of people have started a small school outside Kathmandu. The founders of this school have clearly been influenced by Krishnamurti's work and have also received help and guidance from the Krishnamurti school in Varanasi. The intention is to keep the school small, to avoid institutional complexity and formality, to hold regular meetings between parents and teachers, and to pay attention to the question of relationship between staff and pupils. In one of the documents circulated by the group before the school was founded we find ideas and language that are similar to those of Krishnamurti:

To cultivate a quality of education which nourished sensitivity in everyday living, the teachers, the parents and people who care, in any society, ought to be aware of the vitality of intelligence in human beings...The role of the teacher demands a deep interest to discover clear perception in himself. This requires great sensitivity to perceive the conscious and unconscious responses of himself, and those of the



infants...The danger of teaching lies in the lack of attention paid to the necessary communion between pupil and teacher. (undated) [1]

I have argued that much of Krishnamurti's philosophy and work in education has its roots in the past. In particular we have seen the influence of romanticism and Indian religious philosophy on his ideas. However, this should not lead us to dismiss his contribution to education. I would like to conclude by suggesting that the processes of anomie, fragmentation and rapid change in values are in all probability likely to escalate at an alarming pace. There seems no slowdown of industrialisation or the application of technology to almost every area of human existence. The political face of the world may be changing with centralisation in Europe, far-reaching changes in the communist world and resurgence of religious fundamentalism in many countries. There is evidence that the ecosystem of the planet may be suffering irreparable damage with unpredictable results. The future is uncertain and precarious. It seems likely that the present generation of school children will inhabit a confused world which may have great potential for creativity, but also great dangers. They need education which can foster a deep inner security and clarity in the midst of a world which is perhaps heading for ever greater chaos.

APPENDIX

Below are references to passages in Krishnamurti's works where the major topics discussed in this thesis are to be found. Brockwood Park is producing a comprehensive analytical index to Krishnamurti's works in the form of a database which can be consulted at the Krishnamurti Study Centre.

Holistic approach

need for holistic outlook	PKR:153; EI:190; IQ:41
common consciousness	SPKR:272; NT:10,29,52; EI:185
feeling for totality	PKR:133; FE:22,76; AI:107; NT:29

Conditioning

in general	AI:524; FK:10; FE:9,57; IQ:63
national divisions	IQ:45; FE:60
divisions in consciousness	FK:29; AI:386; FE:22
causes of conflict	FE:23; AI:67; BL:231
by education	PKR:131; BL:230
brain similar to computer	EI:89; NT:8
mechanical living	IQ:65; FK:42
beliefs	PKR:34; NT:8
knowledge as factor of	
conditioning	PKR:146; CL1:169; NT:26
prejudice	FE:54; FK:25; NT:13
conditioned action	FK:66,101; TA:94; FE:115

Thought

in general	FK:99; PKR:47
as material process	AI:510; FK:101; ET:118
movement in time	FK:44; NT:21; AI:512
response of memory	FK:36, 43; CL1:139; CL2:188
rooted in past	FK:16; PKR:141; FE:15
mechanical	IQ:65; AI:514
useful thought	FK:44,99; NT:15,88; AI:345
factor of confusion	FK:24,101; IQ:43; NT:88
in desire	FK:35; NT:48
in personal relations	FK:58; FE:33; AI:334
self-image	AI:335; NT:60
in religions	FK:102; AI:347
cannot solve problems	PKR:82; IQ:43; AI:345
ideas as conditioning	FK:100; AI:232; PKR:28; CL2:64

Self-interest

in general	FK:39; AI:241; NT:86; AI:246;
creates chaos	AI:459; IQ:13; BL:186

Inquiry

free inquiry	FE:9; EI:27; PKR:164; NT:15
includes own teachings	NT:11,74
in daily life	FK:33; AI:239; PKR:51,76
self knowledge	FK:48; PKR:21; EI:14
awareness	PKR:67; FE:84,126; SPKR:164
sensitivity	AI:210,476; BL:171
order	AI:127; PKR:64,118 .
creative living	IQ:27; PKR:123

Psychological revolution

in general	FE:26; FK:118; AI:51
individual and social change	FE:53; AI:109; PKR:14; FE:35
impact on society	NT:28,71; AI:450; PKR:18; ESL:98
and political revolution	AI:51; PKR:28; SPKR:315
insight	FE:55; AI:130; SPKR:300; LS1:49;
intelligence	NT:30; PKR:69; AI:361,375,412;
harmony, effortlessnes	PKR:42; AI:449,467
meditation and psychoanalysis	AI:320; CL2:169; FE:39; IQ:74
mind as the sacred	AI:216
sacred in life	CL2:242; CL3:92; SPKR:145,202
religion	OT1950:44; LAT:166; SPKR:201

Critique of education

conventional education	ESL:9,17,80; LA:163
alternative education	ESL:22; LS1:65
parents' indifference	ESL:35,80; BL:261; LA:11; LS1:56
pressures to conform	ESL:31; KE:32,83
reward and punishment	ESL:32,35; KE:58
overemphasis on intellect	ESL:19,66; BL:226; KE:57; LS1:89

Religion and education

religious perspective	ESL:10; KE:18; LS1:84; LS2:11
intelligence	LA:7; KE:20; LS1:33,89
inquiry	ESL:108; KE:14,85; LA:14
flowering	KE:101; LS1:7,39
relationships	KE:92; BL:253; LS1:11
regeneration	KE:53,70; LS1:24,39,65

Teachers

no methods	ESL: 21, 107, 113, 115; KE: 92
indifference of teachers	ESL: 101, 110; BL: 237
need to transform	ESL: 100; TM: 85
teaching as vocation	ESL: 111, 115; LS1: 39

Students

state of the world	KE: 11, 37; LA: 63; BL: 186
pressures to conform	KE: 41; BL: 161
discipline/freedom	KE: 26; LA: 96; BL: 65
living together	KE: 46; BL: 68
conditioning	KE: 22; LA: 48
conflict	KE: 41; BL: 84
sensitivity	KE: 28; BL: 117
meditation, religion	KE: 18; LA: 98; BL: 100

Schools

size of school	ESL: 86; LS2: 35
finances	ESL: 86
structure	ESL: 87
physical welfare	LA: 16; LS1: 29, 63
leisure	LS1: 23, 56
examinations	LA: 155, 166; KE: 58
behaviour	BL: 52, 65; LS1: 97
rebellion	BL: 53; LS1: 101
co-operation	LS1: 87; LS2: 14
sense of place	KE: 11

The following is a list of the major topics discussed by Krishnamurti in talks with students published in the three volumes *Life Ahead*, *Krishnamurti on Education* and *Beginnings of Learning*:

- LA: Purpose of education. Freedom from fear.  
Imitation and freedom. Social conditioning.  
Authority, ideals, discipline and intelligence.  
Enquiry. Awareness of poverty.  
Conditioning.  
Security.  
Envy and cruelty. Disintegration. Contentment.  
Direct understanding. Memory. Simplicity.  
Truth. Duty and cooperation. Killing  
Peace.  
Religion and belief.  
Intelligence.  
Purpose of education. Fear. Intelligence.  
Religion and fear. Intelligence.  
Growing older. Simplicity.  
Facing society after leaving school.
- KB: Education. Beauty of nature. Meditation.  
Scientific and religious enquiry  
Knowledge and intelligence. Education. Conditioning.  
Listening. Freedom and order. Society.  
Sensitivity. Fear.  
Fear. Authority, Understanding life.  
Violence. Creating a new culture.  
Images. Self-concern. Boredom. Self-knowledge.  
Care and affection. Learning. Love.

BL: Responsibility in relationships and for the school.  
Affection.  
State of the world. Purpose of education.  
Cooperation. Yoga.  
Living together intelligently. Freedom and  
intelligence.  
Orderliness.  
Education. Sex. Affection.  
Order, discipline and learning. Living together  
without authority. Responsibility in relationships.  
Meditation.  
Physical and nervous energy. Self-observation.  
Conflicting desires. Evaluation and prejudice.  
Purpose of sitting quietly. Meditation and religion.  
The sense of beauty.  
Learning about the self. Being hurt. Attention  
awareness and sensitivity.  
Watching thoughts. Identification. Habits of  
thought and behaviour.  
Life in modern society. Educating for psychological  
maturity.  
Influences on the psyche.  
Fear. Conditioning and dependency. Creativity.  
Sensitivity and beauty.  
State of society. Education and intelligence.  
Demand for security.  
Violence and its causes. Understanding one's  
own life.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. See *American Transcendentalism, 1830-1860* (P. Boller, 1974. New York: Putnam) and *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America* (R. Ellwood, 1979. Chicago: University of Chicago Press) for details on this period. *Ancient Wisdom Revised: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (B.F. Campbell, 1980. Berkeley: University of California Press) is a study of theosophy which includes references to the 'world-teacher' and Krishnamurti.
2. The term 'theosophy' is derived from a late Greek word meaning divine wisdom which was used with particular reference to speculative systems allied to Neoplatonism. Later it was used to refer to occult teachings associated with the Kabala and the writings of Agrippa and Paracelsus.
3. 'Theosophy is the body of truths which form the basis of all religions...it illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings' (*The Theosophist*, March 1986:202).
4. Theosophy introduced eastern ideas to the west, but it was also instrumental in taking western ideas to India. Mrs Besant was particularly active in spreading western ideas about politics, social service and education in India.
5. She defined the Teacher's position in the occult hierarchy as: 'Among the mightiest of the hierarchy is His place, Teacher and Guide, whom even the Masters call their ROCK OF AGES...They bow before Him and yet He will deign once more to tread our mortal ways' (quoted in *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, A.H. Nethercot, 1963. London: Hart-Davis, p.128).
6. The controversial figure of Leadbeater features prominently in Nethercot's biography of Mrs Besant, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (A.H. Nethercot, 1963. London: Hart Davis). Nethercot clearly regards him as a complete charlatan.
7. Krishnamurti's family background, birth and infancy are described in Chapter One of *The Years of Awakening* (M. Lutyens, 1975. London: John Murray)



8. There are two full accounts of Krishnamurti's youth, in *The Years of Awakening* (M. Lutyens, 1975. London: John Murray) and *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (A.H. Nethercot, 1963. London; Hart-Davis). They agree in all essentials, although Nethercot writes with far more scepticism. The German philosopher Keyserling settled for a while at the Theosophical Society in Adyar, near Madras. He reported: 'what fascinates me most in the atmosphere of Adyar is its expectation of a Messiah. Among the residents is a young Indian of whom it is said that the Holy Ghost will one day use him as a vessel...He is to be the Saviour of the coming age' (in *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, H. Keyserling, 1925. London: Jonathan Cape, p.150).
9. Krishnamurti knew an Indian language, Telugu, in his early childhood, but completely forgot it in later years. Almost all his teaching was in English, although he did give a few talks in French, which he spoke well. He also spoke some Italian and Spanish.
10. The young Krishnamurti was quite outspoken about the Theosophical Society. In a letter written in 1920, he said he wanted to 'stir up the b-- Theosophists! I do hate this namby-pamby affair we are at present...what rot it all is'. Quoted in *The Years of Awakening* (M. Lutyens, 1975. London: John Murray, p.121).
11. Krishnamurti's experiences in Ojai are described at length in Chapter 18, 'The Turning Point' of Lutyens's *The Years of Awakening*. The sources are papers, mostly letters by Krishnamurti and his brother, in the possession of Mary Lutyens.
12. The Irish mystic and poet George Russell wrote about Krishnamurti: 'He sought for something simple and lovely and sweet in his heart, something altogether different from the church which was being organised for him, and the bishops who were being nominated as his apostles, and the worshippers who waited in expectation of wonders and miracles' (G. Russell in *The Living Torch*, 1937, London: Macmillan, pp.167-8).
13. These values are emphasized in, for example, *Letters to the Schools* written towards the end of Krishnamurti's life.
14. A brief description of the Krishnamurti schools was published in the *Krishnamurti Foundation Bulletin*, No. 50, Spring and Summer 1986.
15. Interview with Samdong Rinpoche, Director of the Tibetan Institute, Sarnath, India, February 1987.

16. Further information available from Brockwood Park Krishnamurti Education Centre, Bramdean, Near Alresford, Hants. and from the Krishnamurti Foundation of America, P.O. Box 1560, Ojai, California 93023.
17. Dialogues between Krishnamurti and David Bohm are published in AI, TA and ET.
18. This account of his behaviour in India is based on interviews I held in India between December 1986 and March 1987. My informants were teachers at the Krishnamurti schools, members of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India, and other people who had known Krishnamurti personally.
19. Information from teachers at Brockwood Park and Rishi Valley School. Krishnamurti referred to a rather obscure text in a dialogue published in *Bulletin of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India*, 1986 no.3:5.
20. Interview at Brockwood, June 1987.
21. Many of his early poems were republished in *Poems and Parables* (1981).
22. Some of the better known admirers of Krishnamurti were Aldous Huxley, Claude Bragdon, Henry Miller, Indira Gandhi and the Dalai Lama. The collection *The Mind of J. Krishnamurti* (edited by L. Vas, 1971, Bombay: Chetna) contains some personal reactions to his work by different authors.
23. Thapan's paper distinguishes between 'professional' teachers who do not subscribe to Krishnamurti's world-view and 'ideologue' teachers who do. She suggests that movement across the two categories is rare.
24. Details of video tapes currently available can be obtained from Brockwood Park.

## CHAPTER TWO

1. It is also the form of discourse favoured by certain philosophers who are primarily interested in transformation of consciousness, for example Heidegger. This is further discussed below, 2.3.
2. I have made a selection of passages in Krishnamurti's works which illustrate the points discussed in this and the next chapters. They have been kept separate from the text to facilitate reading and are to be found in the Appendix, arranged by topic.

3. This is a common theme in several groups in the area of new religious movements, for example Transcendental Meditation and Soka Gakkai (see for example R. Wallis *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*, 1984, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.24). There are also similarities with Aurobindo's conception of social transformation being initiated by the individual transformation in his disciples.
4. Several of Krishnamurti's books, for example *The Impossible Question*, are transcriptions of public talks from which it is possible to see the structure of the whole series.
5. Robert Powell, the American philosopher, discusses this in his article *An Approach to Krishnamurti* in *The Mind of J. Krishnamurti*, (L.Vas, ed., 1971. Bombay: Chetna, pp. 30 - 40).
6. Krishnamurti discussed this question at length with David Bohm, see for example AI:536ff., ET:163ff.
7. Krishnamurti did not teach a doctrine of reincarnation. Rather, he speculated that these traumas may have been transmitted from one generation to the next. He never discussed the mechanism that might have been responsible for this.
8. Krishnamurti held discussions with several psychoanalysts, including a seminar in Brockwood in 1976. Some of his discussions with one of them, Dr Shainberg, were published in WL:9-138. Some aspects of psychoanalysis that Krishnamurti rejected were: its ideological basis; reference to intellectual authorities; division of consciousness; assumption of superiority by one party; the process of analysis; turning to another person for help; its time-binding quality. Krishnamurti's writings on meditation were prolific, and he discussed this topic in almost every series of talks.
9. Professor David Bohm discusses the problem of fragmentation from a similar standpoint in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 1-26).
10. For Krishnamurti's comments on Vedanta, for example, see his discussion with Swami Venkatesananda (AI:132-186).
11. The Indian scholar Dr R. K. Shringy suggests in his *Philosophy of J. Krishnamurti* (1977, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, p.277): 'his concept of intelligence resembles, though not in every detail, the concept of Brahman as Saccidananda (i.e. Truth, intelligence and bliss absolute) in the Vedanta'.

12. It may be noted that he did not denigrate the founders of religions, but maintained that religious organisations had totally abandoned the original teachings: 'organised religions have nothing to do with the sayings of the great teachers. The teachers have said do not kill, love your neighbour, but religions of vested interest encourage and support the slaughter of humanity' (LAT:166).
13. Kaufmann (*Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, 1958, London: Faber, p. 292) also notes the transformative aspect of Plato's work: 'Plato's central importance for a humanistic education ...is due to the fact that a prolonged encounter with Plato changes a man'.
14. A good example in the European tradition of philosophy as something to be *lived* is Stoicism, e.g. in the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus.
15. Krishnamurti himself understood that his teachings were not new in the historical sense: 'There is nothing new under the sun. Everything has been thought out...every point of view has been shown' (EWIII:131). However, he felt they were original and authentic, in the sense that they were the outcome of his direct personal understanding: 'If there is a desire to get beyond the mere illusion of words...beyond all philosophies and sacred books, then, in that experiment, everything becomes new, clear, vital' (ibid.).

### CHAPTER THREE

1. For a discussion on the concept of 'indoctrination' see *The Philosophy of Education* by H. Schofield, London: George Allen and Unwin, pp.174-83.
2. Information from the Director of Studies, Rishi Valley School.
3. By 1987 there were study centres at Brockwood, Rishi Valley and Rajghat.
4. However he frequently made detailed comments about particular aspects of school life when he visited his schools, for example regarding pupils' behaviour, diet or even clothes. Occasionally some teachers criticised him for making impossible demands when he himself did not have to cope with the day to day business of school life.
5. *Darshan*, a Sanskrit term derived from the root *drs*, to see, is also used to mean a view-point or philosophical position.

6. An example in contemporary India is the educational work of Sai Baba devotees. One of their programmes is called Education for Human Values and aims to 'inculcate the facets of Truth, Righteous Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence in our day-to-day living...These five values contain the essence of life and are the pillars of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's message' according to an undated pamphlet circulated by the movement.
7. Information from three women who were students and teachers at Krishnamurti and Theosophical schools in Varanasi, interviewed in December 1986 and February 1987.
8. In *The Republic* Plato proposed a period of two years (from eighteen to twenty) for physical training and military service, ten years for mathematics and related disciplines, and five years for dialectic as a suitable educational programme.
9. A review of the literature about schooling as cultural transmission is provided by K. Wilcox in 'Ethnography as a Methodology and Its Application to the Study of Schooling: A Review' in G. Spindler, ed., 1982, *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, pp.459-487.
10. In *The Open Door* (Mary Lutyens, 1988. London: John Murray, p. 148) Krishnamurti is reported as saying at the end of his life that nobody had undergone the transformation he had hoped for. Nonetheless all who knew him insisted that he never became disappointed or despondent about his life's work.
11. In Chapter 8 I suggest the possibility of using social science techniques to evaluate the effects of exposure to Krishnamurti's teachings.
12. Krishnamurti held several dialogues with the biologist Sheldrake who has proposed that learning in some members of a species is spontaneously communicated to other members. The argument is presented in R. Sheldrake (1981) *A New Science of Life*, London: Blond and Briggs. Krishnamurti seemed to believe that the transformation of consciousness in one individual would spontaneously affect others.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

1. For example in the works of Kafka, existentialist philosophers or the theatre of the absurd. There is a discussion of social change resulting from rationalisation, and its possible implications on the growth of new religious movements, in R. Wallis (1984) *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp.40-57.

2. Erikson postulated that the main task of adolescence is to acquire a sense of identity instead of identity confusion. This may lead to the phenomenon of 'personality-shopping' with dramatic shifts in dress, attitudes, moods and behaviour.
3. A similar argument has been put forward by P. Berger (1979) in 'The Devil and the Pornography of the Modern Mind' in *Facing up to Modernity*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp.253-57.
4. Brockwood, for example, has a number of 'agreements' to regulate acceptable behaviour. The measures adopted to enforce them are discussed in 7.2
5. There is a discussion on the topic of discipline in Grimmit (1987: 52ff) who also argues that the use of rewards and punishments is detrimental to the autonomous development of the personality.
6. An example is to be found in the doctrine of *ahimsa* (non-violence), expressed in the Mahabharata as:

That mode of living which is founded on a total harmlessness towards all creatures or in the case of actual necessity upon a minimum of such harm, is the highest morality. (Mahabharata (1894), edited by P.C.Roy, Calcutta: Oriental Publishing Co, Vol.12, p.262)
7. There is further discussion of this point in *The Hindu Quest for the Perfection of Man* by T.W. Organ (1970), Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. It should be noted that the tendency was by no means universal: for example King Asoka promoted social welfare policies on a large scale long before they were contemplated in any western country.
8. There is an excellent account of Romantic attitudes in W. Stark (1965) 'Literature and Thought: The Romantic Tendency' in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Vol.8. pp.55-80).

#### CHAPTER FIVE

1. A pamphlet by R. Herzberger, director of studies at Rishi Valley, entitled *Krishnaji at Rishi Valley* (1986) describes Krishnamurti's connection with the school.
2. This proposal for the curriculum is discussed in the Krishnamurti Schools Newsletter no. 2, pp.2-7.

3. Well-known visitors to his schools included Professor Alan Anderson, Professor David Bohm, Indira Gandhi, Ivan Illich, Iris Murdoch, Samdong Rinpoche and Rupert Sheldrake.
4. A detailed comparison between qualitative and quantitative methods of research is given in R. Rist, 'On the Relations among Educational Research Paradigms: From Disdain to Detente', *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 1977 Vol.9 No.2, pp.42-49.
5. The visit was to have lasted one month but was curtailed because of illness.

#### CHAPTER SIX

1. Staff told me that the lack of aesthetic appeal was due to lack of funds. All available money was used for essential upkeep.
2. Work done by employees on the estate was accounted separately from the main business of the school.
3. The great majority of children came from Hindu families. There were also a few Moslems but no Christians.
4. Staff who lived on campus also had board and lodging provided at a nominal cost.
5. The feminist literature included sexually explicit material which was considered quite radical by Indian standards.
6. The contrast with the Sai Baba ashrams, for example, which are also close to Bangalore is remarkable. Sai Baba is regarded as a god and receives the utmost personal devotion.

#### CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The founding of Brockwood is discussed at some length in *The Years of Fulfilment* (Lutyens, 1983. London: John Murray), but the biography pays little attention to the operation of the school in later years.
2. In the year 1986/87, budget estimates were that income from fees would be about £160,000. Scholarship donations would be about £45,000 and other donations about £30,000. Building and general maintenance alone was expected to cost around £45,000.
3. Between 1983 and 1985 the school was run by a committee of four teachers.

4. There have been a considerable number of students asked to leave: approximately one in twelve students leaves Brockwood by the decision of the school (according to statistics between 1979 and 1985).
5. Staff and students have been to India, Nepal, Brazil and Kenya. The trips are designed to complement coursework.
6. Cf. the studies on motivation referred to in Chapter Six.
7. Information from Brockwood archives.
8. Both Lutyens and Jayakar give several accounts of this 'supernatural' element in their biographies.

#### CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Further information about the new initiative in England and the travelling school is available from Brockwood Park, and details about the new school in Nepal from Mr Prakash Bom, P.O. Box 2009, Kathmandu, Nepal.



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