

Experience
and
Conduct

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Experience and Conduct



By J. Krishnamurti

The Kingdom of Happiness

The Search

Life in Freedom

The Immortal Friend

Life the Goal

The Path

Now

Experience
and
Conduct

J. Krishnamurti

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EXPERIENCE AND CONDUCT

Every one, through tradition, through habit of thought, through custom, has established for himself a background, and from that background he tries to assimilate and judge new experiences. If you examine yourselves, you will find that you approach life from the point of view of a particular nationality, belief or class. You are all the time translating experiences in terms of the background which you have established. Now the purpose of experience is to discover the true value of all things. But if you are translating experience into terms of yesterday's experience, instead of helping you to grow, so that you become more and more inclusive, it is making you a slave. So do not seek to understand what I am going to say, from the point of view of your various backgrounds. Nor limit experience by terms of temperament. Temperaments are the result of separate individual existences. But that which knows no separation cannot be translated into terms of temperament; you

cannot approach it through a particular temperament. / If you look at it from the point of view of the part, then you do not see the whole, and naturally the whole appears in terms of the part, and you translate that part as temperament. Through a temperament you cannot perceive that which is beyond all temperaments, as from a background you cannot perceive that which is greater than all backgrounds.

Do not, however, confuse individual temperament with individual uniqueness; temperaments depend on birth, involving difference in environment, race consciousness, heredity, and so on. Individual uniqueness is continuous through birth and death, is the sole guide through your whole existence as a separate individual, until you reach the goal. In order to understand the meaning of individuality you must understand the purpose of individual existence. Life is creation, including the creator and the created, and Nature conceals life — that is, everything in manifestation conceals life in itself. When that life in Nature develops and becomes focussed in the individual, then Nature has fulfilled itself. The whole destiny and function of Nature is to create the individual who is self-conscious, who knows the pairs of opposites, who knows that he is an entity in himself, conscious and separate. So, life in Nature, through its development, becomes self-conscious

in the awakened, concentrated individual. Nature's goal is man's individuality. The individual is a separate being who is self-conscious, who knows that he is different from another, in whom there is the separation of "you" and "I". But individuality is imperfection, it is not an end in itself.

Evolution — in the sense of the extension of one's individuality through time — is a delusion. That which is imperfect, which is individuality, even though it is multiplied and increased, will always remain imperfect. Individuality is intensified through the conflict of ignorance, and the limitation of thought and emotion. In that there is self-conscious separateness. Now, it is vain to increase self-consciousness, which is separateness, to the n th degree; it will remain separate because it has its roots in separation. Therefore, the magnifying of that "I am", which is separateness, cannot be inclusive. The evolution of "I am" is but an expansion of that separateness in space and time. The individual held in the bondage of limitation, knowing the separation of "you" and "I", has to liberate himself and has to fulfil himself in that liberation. Liberation is freedom of consciousness, which is not the multiplication of "I am", but results from the wearing down of the sense of separateness. The ultimate purpose of individual existence is to realise pure being in which there is no

separation, which is the realisation of the whole. The fulfilment of man's destiny is to *be* the totality. It is not a question of losing yourself in the Absolute, but that you, by growth, by continual conflict, by adjustment, shall become the whole. Individuality is merely a segment of the totality, and it is because it feels itself to be only a part that it is all the time seeking to fulfil itself, to realise itself in the totality. Therefore self-consciousness involves effort. If you do not make an effort against limitation, there is no longer self-consciousness and individuality. When individuality has fulfilled itself through ceaseless effort, destroying, tearing down the wall of separateness, when it has achieved a sense of effortless being, then individual existence has fulfilled itself.

First you must know towards what this individual life — this existence in which is the beginning and the end — is making its way. You must realise the purpose of existence; otherwise experience has no meaning, creation has no meaning, uniqueness has no meaning. If the individual, in whom there is the consciousness of separation, of subject and object, does not understand the purpose of existence, he merely becomes a slave to experience, to the creation of forms. But if you understand the purpose of existence, then you will utilise every experience,

every emotion, every thought, to strengthen you to wear down this wall of separation.

To the self-conscious individual there is subject and object, and he objectifies a far-off Entity to whom he looks for aid, to whom he gives out his adoration, his love, his whole being. But the end of existence, the fulfilment of the individual, is to realise in himself the totality — without object or subject — which is pure life. So it is in the subjectivity of the individual that the object really exists. In the individual is the beginning and the end. In him is the totality of all experience, all thought, all emotion. In him is all potentiality, and his task is to realise that objectivity in the subjective.

Now, if what I mean by individuality is not properly understood, people are apt to make the mistake of assuming it to be selfish, ruthless anarchism, and that is why I am careful to explain that in man lies the entirety of progress. In himself lies the beginning and the end, the source and the goal. In creating a bridge from that source to the end is the fulfilment of man. The individual is the focus of the universe. So long as you do not understand yourself, so long as you do not fathom the fulness of yourself, you can be dominated, controlled, caught up in the wheel of continual strife. So you must concern yourself with the individual, that is, with

yourself in whom all others exist. That is why I am only concerned with the individual. In the present civilisation, however, collectivity is striving to dominate the individual, irrespective of his growth, but it is the individual that matters, because if the individual is clear in his purpose, is assured, certain, then his struggle with society will cease. Then the individual will not be dominated by the morality, the narrowness, the conventions and experiments of societies and groups. The individual is the whole universe, the individual is the whole world, not a separate part of the world. The individual is the all-inclusive, not the all-exclusive. He is constantly making efforts, experimenting in different directions; but the self in you and in me and in all is the same, though the expressions may vary and should vary. When you comprehend that fact, and are fully cognisant of it, you do not look outside for salvation. You need no outside agent, and hence the fundamental cause of fear is abolished. To be rid of fear is to realise that in you is the focal centre of life's expression. When you have such a view, you are the creator of opportunities; you no longer avoid temptations, you transcend them; you no longer wish to imitate and become a machine or a type, which is but the desire to conform to a background. You use tradition to weigh, and thereby transcend, all tradition.

Life is not working to produce a type; life is not creating graven images. Life makes you entirely different one from the other, and in diversity must your fulfilment be, not in the production of a type. Look what is happening at present. You worship the many in the one, you worship the whole of life personified in one being. This is to worship a type, a waxen image, and thereby you mould yourself into this type, into this image; and in such imitation is the bondage of sorrow. But if you worship the one in the many, you will not make yourself into a type. Man, because he is afraid to be kindly, affectionate to the many, gives all his respect, his worship, his prayers to the one — that is, he creates an image. But life does not make types, it has nothing to do with images. To worship the one in the many needs constant recollectedness of thought, constant awareness of the impersonal, constant adjustment of the point of view of the individual to the many, to life itself. If you create a type and merely adjust the balance between yourself and that type, it is not an adjustment to life, it is purely a personal whim. But if you establish harmony between yourself and the one in the many, then you are not creating an image, nor a type, but rather you are becoming life itself. This is the difference between creation and imitation.

Imitation is forced by fear. Through fear also

comes the formation of sects, of narrow groups of individuals who cling together in their imitation. A sect or a collective body comes into being when there are many who are trying to imitate a set type, which is not complete truth but only a segment of truth. A sect, as a body, cannot approach truth, because truth is an individual realisation, through purely inward, individual effort. By clinging to a group, you cannot arrive at the full realisation of being.

A man who would have no fear must realise that, though forms of individual existence may vary, though the expressions of that self-consciousness may differ, though life may express itself in many ways, fundamentally life is one. When you realise that, all fear ceases. To be fearless is to be immortal.

Immortality, which is self-realisation, is not a question of time or of a series of opportunities, but of your discovery of that self which is in you and in all things. Because you are afraid of losing your individuality, you are seeking immortality in the continuation of your individual separateness, but immortality is in the self, the life in all. When there is the desire, the craving for existence and the continuity of separate being, there must of necessity be what you would call "reincarnation". Reincarnation is a theory for many people, but it is no longer a theory for the

man who lives that idea of reincarnation in the present. Reincarnation is a series of opportunities for the spiritual realisation of pure being. Until you realise that pure being (in which is the cessation of all effort), you must have a series of opportunities. But if you, as an individual, are highly concentrated in awareness in the present, then you live that series of opportunities *now*. If the ultimate purpose of individual existence — the realisation of totality, of pure being in which there is no separation — requires a series of opportunities provided by a series of lives, then you must needs have this theory of reincarnation. But if you, as a self-conscious individual, aware of your actions and responsible for them, desire to arrive at that fulfilment of life, then you must concentrate on that series of opportunities in the *now*. The theory of reincarnation is forced upon you, because the individual “you” cannot master all the circumstances of life immediately. So you prolong this individual existence in time, until the “I-ness” is worn down, until the self is realised. If, however, you are living that understanding of truth in the present, the theory of reincarnation becomes unnecessary. To realise the value of that theory in fact, you must live it, not postpone it. It is not a question of time at all, time being a series of opportunities until you arrive at the end. By the theory of reincarnation,

you make life a very easy existence, you postpone your efforts till tomorrow. You want this scar of individuality to continue and to be preserved even in fulfilment. As I said before, individuality is not an end in itself, it is a means to realisation — the immense realisation of being in which there is no separateness, no individuality; pure being which is dynamic, not static, which is neither the annihilation nor the continuity of the individual.

When you, as an individual who knows separation, have conquered this separation, all delusion ceases. In this conflict of the awakened individuality which knows separateness, in this struggle, in this fight, there is, naturally, delusion and sorrow, and out of these is created the desire for comfort. Comfort is the outcome of fear. When you are afraid, you seek shelter from the conflict of life, away from life, and hence you model yourself after an established standard, you take refuge in a religion or a philosophy. The other delusion is the craving for the continuity of one's individuality, and from this delusion innumerable problems arise: What happens to man after death? Will he continue? Will he return in another body, and in what manner? Will he be united after death with his loved ones? The sorrow caused by death is but another way of being aware that you, as an individual, are a separate being; hence there is loneliness. That loneliness is caused

because you give your love to another who is equally aware of his individuality; and so, when that person dies — as he must — there is sorrow. If someone dies, you want to be united with that individual on another plane of consciousness, on another plane of phenomena. You should look at it from the point of view of the continuity of life, irrespective of whether there be phenomena or not. You look at love — in which is involved hate, greed, and all the opposites — from the point of view of self-conscious individuality, and you want that individuality to be prolonged through time; that is, you want the continuous expansion of individuality. Because in your consciousness there is separateness and the cognisance of individuality, of “you” and “I”, there *must* be sorrow. When you are aware of separation, it is a limitation, and in its wake must come suffering. If you love but the external, which is only the manifestation of the real, there must be suffering. But if you love the reality in all things, there is continuity of love. You no longer ask to be united with that which you love as a separate entity. Love is its own eternity, its own continuity.

Individuality grows in the soil of love, hate, jealousy, greed, action, inaction, loneliness, the desire for company. But the man who depends on *any* one of these knows separation and is in the clutches of sorrow. Whenever there is sorrow

there is the seeking for comfort, and for the persistence of individual existence. When one realises that this craving is a delusion, then in its place is born faith — faith not in another person, not in another individual, however highly evolved, however superior, but faith in that reality which exists within oneself. That is what I call true faith — the realisation that within you lies the potentiality of the whole, and that your task is to grasp and to realise that totality.

From this realisation comes the certainty of individual purpose, the aim of individual existence, which is to be united with the totality in which there is no separation, no subject and object. Naturally, life, the totality, the summation of all life, has no purpose. It *is*. That life is of no particular temperament or kind; it is impersonal. But between that life and the understanding of it by the individual, lies individual existence, this scar of suffering. The purpose of individual existence is to wear down this individuality, this ego of reaction, by recollectedness, by constant awareness, by concentration in all that you are doing with this purpose ever in mind. Then action is spontaneous; it is your own desire which is constantly urging you more and more to purify your conduct, as the result of purity of emotion and thought. Conduct is the outcome of a clear understanding of the purpose of individual

existence. If conduct is born out of purity of emotion and thought, out of understanding, such action will not entangle, will not act as a cage but as an instrument for realisation.

The majority of people gathered here, have freed themselves from many cages, such as philosophies, religions, social conventions, and so on. As a result they have developed, naturally, a very critical attitude. But criticism can be either superficial or profound. If your criticism goes to the root of things, you will discover, not a new cage, but an instrument which will lead you to the fundamental living reality. I am speaking of that reality which lies hidden in the heart of every one, which can be realised by every individual, and which I maintain that I have realised and am living. It is that reality which you should criticise. But do not criticise merely intellectually; approach the subject of your criticism with affection. There may be many here who are vitally and anxiously — not merely superficially — concerned to put into practice what they have understood, to express it in conduct. If you examine, analyse, criticise with affection, then the idea will become practical and can be translated into daily action. So you should exercise criticism all the time, through observation as to whether you are living that reality. Criticism is of value only in training your observation, so that it can be eventually turned

upon yourself. That is the true purpose of criticism. When you turn the light of criticism upon yourself, you begin to grow and to destroy the unessential.

Conduct is the way of life, the way to that supreme, serene reality which every one must realise. Through discernment you will come nearer and nearer to the source of things, so that you, as an individual, will be living this reality. When once you have grasped that central reality, that fundamental principle of being, when you have criticised, analysed and examined it impersonally, and are living it — even partially — then through your own effort you are illuminating the darkness which surrounds the life of every human being, the darkness which I call the “unessential”.

Now, to find out for oneself what is the essential and what the unessential, one must have the understanding vision of the ultimate purpose of individual existence. From that you can always judge for yourself what is the unessential and what the essential. Whenever there is no inward resistance towards an unessential thing, that lack of resistance may be called “evil”. There cannot be a strict demarcation of evil and good, since “good” is but the capacity to resist the unessential. You discover the essential by a process of continual choice based on the understanding of the true purpose of existence. Choice is the continual

discovery of truth. Choice means action, which is conduct, the manner of your behaviour. All conduct must ultimately lead towards pure being, so that we must concern ourselves not only with that ultimate reality but with the practical way of translating that reality into conduct. Everyone wants to be practical, to understand life practically. The liberated man is the most practical man in the world, because he has discovered the true value of all things. That discovery is illumination.

Life is conduct, the manner of our behaviour towards another, which is our action. When that behaviour becomes pure, then it is unimpeded life in action. Life, that reality which I have been trying to describe, is balance, and this can only be gained through the conflicting forces of manifestation. Manifestation is action. To arrive at that perfect balance which, to me, is pure being, pure life, one cannot withdraw from this world of manifestation; one cannot, out of the weariness of conflict seek that balance away from the world. Liberation is to be found in the world of manifestation, and not away from it; liberation is *into* manifestation rather than out of it. When you are free in the sense of knowing the true value of manifestation, then you are free of manifestation. It is in *this* world that you must find balance. All things about us are real. Everything is real, and not an illusion. But each one

has to find the essential, the real in all that is about him — that is, each one has to discern the unreality which surrounds the real. The real is true worth. Directly you discern what is the unreal, reality is beginning to assert itself. Through choice of action, you discover the true value of all things. Through experience, ignorance is dissipated — ignorance being the admixture of the essential and the unessential. Out of the unessential is born delusion. In order to discover what is the essential, one must look at desire. Desire is all the time trying to free itself from delusion. So desire goes through various stages of experience in search of this balance, and can either become a cage or an open door, a prison house or an open way to liberation. One must therefore understand this fundamental desire within oneself — control it, not repress it. Repression is not control. Control is the domination through understanding, self-discipline through the understanding of what life is, of the purpose of individual existence.

When you, as an individual, have discovered for yourself the true basis of conduct, you will establish order about you, that true understanding which will break down the barriers between yourself and others. That is why my emphasis is on conduct. True conduct is self-realised conduct, not based on any complicated philosophy but

on one's own experience. True conduct is the translation of one's realisation into activity. In this there is no longer an attempt to *become*, there is always the attempt to *be* — the striving after being, not becoming. When you realise through experience, through continual examination, observation, impersonal analysis, that life is one, that you are part of that all-inclusive life, then you have removed the fundamental cause of fear. When you have removed that fear, there is the clear, strong, purposeful striving after being. The cessation of fear is the beginning of being, and being is harmony, perfect balance in all its expressions. Being does not demand imitation, nor the formation of a group or sect — the coming together as an army under leadership in the world of chaos.

Being, then, is inclusiveness, in which there is no awareness of "you" and "I". When you are aware of "you" and "I", there is disharmony and hence becoming, in which fear is involved. Separation is caused by that ego or that "I-ness" which is but the self-conscious existence of the individual. When there is this separateness of self-conscious individuality, there is the craving for personal immortality, there is illusion. As I said before, individuality is not an end in itself; it is in the process of becoming until it arrives at being. Becoming is effort, being is the cessation of effort. Whenever there is effort it is self-conscious and

hence it is imperfect. Being is pure awareness, effortless consciousness. The difference between self-consciousness and consciousness is, that self-consciousness is the outcome of the realisation of separateness, in which there is conflict between individuals, in which there is individual existence; whereas consciousness is that selfhood in which all individual consciousnesses exist and in which all effort ceases, which is beyond time and space although time and space are in that consciousness. That consciousness is positive being, is true being. To arrive at that being, one must watch over desire caused by self-conscious existence. When you understand desire, from whence it springs and towards what it is going, its aim and purpose, desire becomes a precious jewel to which you cling, which you are continually chiselling and refining. Then that desire is not an imposed discipline, but becomes true discipline, which varies progressively until you arrive at pure being. Desire is its own discipline.

Liberation is not an impossibility. But it is difficult to maintain a concentrated, sustained effort towards liberation, and hence the few who attempt it. That which is in all things is not difficult to achieve, or difficult to realise, but there are many things between you and that realisation which, through continual effort, continual choice, discernment, you must eschew and put aside. That requires intense faith, recollectedness, con-

centration and continual energy, but that is not limited by outward conditions, by time or by age. Life has no age limit. The body wears out, as a coat wears out, but young and old, at any time, may achieve, may realise, if they are willing to concentrate, if they have this intense faith. As I said before, do not misunderstand what I mean by faith. It is not the faith in something external, but the certainty that within yourself lie the potentiality and the totality. That liberation every one can achieve; it is not reserved for the few. So, achievement does not depend on age or environment, but on your effort, on your interest, on your desire — of which you alone can judge.

There is no such thing as failure. Failure is merely the lack of strength to achieve. You develop strength gradually; and if your real desire is to achieve, then the strength to fulfil becomes ever greater. Find out what you are interested in, on what you are laying your emphasis, to what you are giving your strength. Find out towards what purpose your secret desire is tending. You can either strangle that desire and make it narrow, or you can make it all-inclusive, free, unlimited. So you have to find out on what you are laying your emphasis in life. For the man who is uncertain and doubting — for him there is no positive being. The wise man is he who

knows how to lay the emphasis on the essential.

You can only find out whether you are laying your emphasis on the essential or the unessential, by putting into practice what little you have understood of reality. In putting that understanding into practice, you will soon find out how much desire there is in you to conquer the whole. In olden days, those who desired to find truth relinquished the whole world and withdrew to a monastic or ascetic life. If I were to form a narrow, exclusive body of ascetics, you would perhaps join it — but that would be merely a superficial acknowledgment of what you want to realise. The effort to realise must come where you are, within yourself, surrounded by all manner of confusions, contradictory ideas, and what you would call temptations. (From my point of view there is no such thing as “temptation”.) Throwing off one dress and adopting another is not going to strengthen you in your desire. What strengthens you is desire itself. In watching, in guiding that desire, in being self-recollected in your conduct, in your thought, in your movements, in your behaviour, in adjusting yourself to that which you realise to be the purpose of individual existence, you have the positive test of self-realisation — not in belonging to sects, societies, groups and orders. Then you utilise experience; you do not become its slave. Therefore pure conduct demands purity

of thought. By purity I mean the purity brought about by reason, not through the sentimentality of belief. Reason is the essence of your experience — or of the experience of another examined impersonally, without the desire for comfort or authority — which you have analysed and criticised with detachment. This is the only way to test values in life.

In listening to what I have said about pure action, realisation, pure being, do not get lost in abstractions and metaphysics and forget ordinary conduct, the way to live, the way to *be*. You may theorise about pure being or happiness or liberation, but if you are jealous, envious, greedy for possessions, cruel, thoughtless, inconsiderate, of what value are your theories? To arrive at that reality you must be rid of *these* things, and to be rid of them you must have an understanding vision of that reality, and put your vision into practice. Otherwise you are caught in mere expressions.

So I say again, conduct is the way of life. It is the way to that supreme, serene reality which every one must realise because in every one it potentially exists. For that realisation there need be no discussions on metaphysics. Wherever there is sorrow, it is the outcome of this struggle to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential. All men have the desire to fight sor-

row, to escape sorrow, and to treat it as a terrible thing. But sorrow and pleasure alike are the soil in which to grow, in which to diminish this sense of separateness, and this diminution is true growth. So there must be born within each one the faith of certainty. This is not come at by reason alone, but by the continual groping through experience, urged on by desire, in its search for the ultimate reality.

So, I say again, spiritual realisation is for all — because that reality exists within all. But it is only the few who are willing to concentrate, who will be continually aware, constantly watchful in their choice of the essential, and will in this way realise more and more of that effortless existence, effortless being, which is serene, supreme. Those few, when once they realise, by this continual effort through understanding, through this recollectedness every moment of the day, shall know that of which I speak. Because they are desirous of finding that reality, because they have put aside all unrealities, they are no longer in the clutches of illusion; they are seeking that certainty and are not called away by uncertainty, doubt, by the unessential things of life.

My purpose has been to show, to those who are willing to see, that truth lies hidden within themselves. The happiness which they are seeking is hidden within their own limitations,

within their own hearts, within their own minds.

Seek then, the ultimate truth which is of no person, of no sect, of no path. In the fulfilment of your individuality is the totality of life.

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