

# Krishnamurti's Insistence on Pathless Enlightenment: A Critique

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Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986) is famous for his view that mystical quests should not involve any techniques or institutionalized organizations. He is also famous for his dramatic public declaration of this view, on August 3, 1929, in Ommen, the Netherlands. Because he believed that techniques and institutionalized organizations can never lead to what he called Truth, he declared that he was dissolving the Order of the Star, the organization of which he himself was Head, appointed by the Theosophical Society. In the presence of the Order's leaders and 3000 members, Krishnamurti resigned as Head of the Order in an egoless act that showed great intellectual integrity, pointing out that the Order was not fulfilling the function for which it had been established. Some of the most well-known and oft-quoted statements from his address on this occasion are as follows:

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

organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or to coerce people along any particular path ... . A belief is purely an individual matter, and you cannot and must not organize it. If you do, it becomes dead, crystallized.... The organization becomes a framework into which its members can conveniently fit. They no longer strive after Truth ... but rather carve for themselves a convenient niche in which they put themselves.... .

...I maintain that no organization can lead man to spirituality.

If an organization be created for this purpose, it becomes a crutch, a weakness, a bondage, and must cripple the individual, and prevent him from growing, from establishing his uniqueness, which lies in the discovery for himself of that absolute, unconditioned Truth. ...

...The moment you follow someone you cease to follow Truth. ...I want to do a certain thing in the world and I am going to do it with unwavering concentration. I am concerning myself with only one essential thing: to set man free. I desire to free him from all cages, from all fears. (Krishnamurti 1996, 1–2).

Krishnamurti says here that he has a purpose and agenda in life. The goal on which he focuses is releasing people from all limitations and thereby allowing them to reach unconditioned Truth. In another part of the address, he refers to this condition as “enlightenment” (1996, 5). I will use both of these terms in this paper to refer to the condition Krishnamurti aspires for people to attain, as well as the term *mystical condition*, although the latter is not used by Krishnamurti. I take the condition he wants people to achieve, the only one, in his view, in which they are really free from all bondage, to be similar in essence to the mystical

enlightenment sought in traditions such as Zen Buddhism and Sufism and by mystics such as Meister Eckhart and Plotinus.<sup>1</sup>

Krishnamurti declares in the Ommen address that any organization and authority obstructs, rather than helps, being in Truth. People mistake the organization for Truth and become followers of the movement and its leaders instead of followers of Truth. Moreover, Krishnamurti claims, only individuals can attain Truth and as a living occurrence, whereas organized movements work in non-individual ways and present crystallized or stagnated assertions or rites for all to follow. Note that in this address, Krishnamurti is not rejecting only a certain, specific path but rather *any* path. Since Truth is a pathless land, he states, it cannot be reached by way of a path. Likewise, Truth, being limitless and unconditioned, cannot be organized. Hence, no organization can assist in achieving it. Krishnamurti opposes not only organizations that coerce people to follow a particular path (which is trivial) but also voluntary organizations that offer a path for people to follow of their own free will. He presents in the Ommen address the following empirical argument:

... For eighteen years you have organized, you have looked for someone who ... would transform your whole life, ... would raise you to a new plane of life, ... would set you free—and now look what is happening! Consider ... in what way that belief has made you different—not with the superficial difference of the wearing of a badge, which is trivial, absurd. In what manner has such a belief swept away all the unessential things of life? That is the only way to judge: in what way are you freer, greater, more dangerous to every Society which is based on the false and the unessential? ...

You have been preparing for eighteen years, and look how many difficulties there are in the way of your understanding, how many complications, how many trivial things. (Krishnamurti 1996, 4)

Thus, as evidence for his claims, Krishnamurti points out that very few, if any, of the members of the Order of the Star have attained Truth. His criterion of success is the attainment of enlightenment. From the failure—over many years—of the organization he heads to bring about this enlightenment, Krishnamurti infers that the organization is not a good means for this end and, hence, should be discarded. His proof here, then, is empirical: the Order of the Star did not yield the result for which it was created. Note also that Krishnamurti presents the attainment of Truth as the *only* criterion of success, just as he asserts it to be the *only* purpose of his life in the first citation above. Other ends, such as relaxation, increased ability to focus, enhanced energy, or greater success at work and in personal relationships, do not interest him.

Because the main issue at the Ommen meeting was the dissolution of the Order of the Star, Krishnamurti emphasizes in his address his rejection of mystical *organizations*. He denounces such organizations throughout his other writings as well (see, e.g., 1956, 24; 1996, 257). But the resistance to any path implies also the rejection of any mystical *technique*. Accordingly, many of his writings emphasize this point too. For example, in a dialogue with the researcher and scholar Allan W. Anderson, Krishnamurti says,

[Krishnamurti:] If we could totally discard all that, their [Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, etc.] methods, their systems, their practices, their disciplines. Because they are all

saying, truth, or God, or whatever they like to call it, is something *over there*. You practice in order to *get there*. ... If I keep practicing in order to get there, that must be static.

Anderson: Yes, of course.

Krishnamurti: But truth isn't static. It isn't a dead thing. (Krishnamurti and Anderson 1991, 239)

Likewise, he argues that “there is no means, no method to put an end to experience; for the very means is a hindrance to experiencing.”<sup>2</sup> Krishnamurti stresses that he is opposed to paths altogether in other contexts as well (see, e.g., 1971, 99–102). He wants people to just realize the blissful condition. He was frequently asked about the ways of arriving at the right condition or the efforts necessary to be made for that purpose. His reply was always that if one makes an effort, one is not in the true condition itself. One should not engage in effort to achieve enlightenment; rather, one is instantly enlightened if one sees the true nature of one's condition. For example, Krishnamurti explains,

You say, “I must practice being good, I must show love to my parents, to the servant ... to everything.” That means you are making an effort to show love—and then love becomes very shoddy, very petty ... . But if you see the truth ... and let that truth work upon you, let that truth act, then you will be brotherly without making any effort. (1970, 244; see also 1975, 66–70)

Krishnamurti does approve of meditation, but he employs the term differently than others do. For him, meditation is *not* a way or technique for achieving realization: it is the realization itself, the state of being enlightened, reached by

understanding correctly the true nature of the condition in which one is (1956, 67–69; 1970, 216–221). His form of meditation, or realization, which he calls *choiceless awareness*, is not a means to something else; it is the acceptance of Truth itself. “Search, which is choiceless awareness, is not *for* something; it is to be aware of the craving for an end and of the means to it. This choiceless awareness brings an understanding of what *is*.” (Emphasis in original, 1956, 89; see also 1967, 81; 1996, 316) Krishnamurti does not seek a means; he seeks the end (which is, in fact, the condition in which the notions *means* and *end* are irrelevant). Means, for him, do not facilitate the realization of the end but, on the contrary, *obstruct* this realization. People get stuck in the means or confuse them with the end (Krishnamurti 1996, 261; Krishnamurti and Rinpoche 1996, 236–240).

We have here, then, a mystical movement (that is, a movement that calls on us to realize the condition that many mystical traditions aim for) that seems very enticing and, perhaps, also much better than other mystical movements. What Krishnamurti proposes seems to be enviably devoid of what, in other traditions, appears to hinder the spontaneous, authentic, and fluid condition in which there are no distinctions. Because he focuses on the enlightened condition itself, and not on the alleged means to achieving it, he seems to relate only to what is really essential and important, free of any corruption of the mystical condition and the diversions and barriers to realizing it, such as local symbols, fixed hierarchies, tedious rituals, rigid structures, and power struggles. The option that Krishnamurti offers seems to bypass the unnecessary, or even disruptive, means (and the whole means-end distinction) and go straight to the

heart of Truth, to what is quintessentially mystical and, accordingly, also universal and non-sectarian.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Krishnamurti's alternative seems preferable to other mystical ways, which employ various means to attain enlightenment. The latter seem not only inferior to Krishnamurti's alternative but also utterly counterproductive. According to Krishnamurti's explanations, insofar as realizing Truth is concerned, using means disrupts rather than helps to achieve what the means are intended for.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find critical assessments of Krishnamurti's thought in the literature. The literature on his teachings is devoted, for the most part, to presenting and clarifying his views, applying them to various fields (such as education), or comparing them with the views of other luminaries, sometimes taking an explicitly admiring stance and barely considering whether his teachings are correct or not (see, e.g., Methorst 2013; De la Cruz 2005; Martin 2003; Wingerter 2003; Vedaparayana 2002; Agrawal 2002; Sanat 1999; Aberbach 1993). One of my aims in this paper is to help redress this situation. In what follows, I offer a critique of the alternative Krishnamurti presents in his Ommen address and to which he adhered for the remainder of his life. My point in this paper, however, is not only historical but also thematic: I will suggest that, in general, it is unhelpful to reject all mystical techniques and discard all types of organizations in mystical movements.

## 2

One argument against Krishnamurti's assertion that Truth, or enlightenment, cannot be achieved through any technique is that this is empirically false. Many mystical movements regularly employ techniques, including meditation, recitation,

images, prayer, and Sufi whirling, and for many generations, these and similar techniques have helped some of their practitioners to near the condition Krishnamurti talks about. Hence, Krishnamurti's claim is simply wrong. Some techniques are, as a matter of fact, helpful, at least for some people or at certain stages of the mystical quest. Perhaps the alternative Krishnamurti offers is also helpful—more on that below—but his declaration that its competitors, that is, mystical techniques, are always useless, even obstructive, is factually erroneous. I find it hard to understand how Krishnamurti persisted in this claim throughout his life despite the considerable evidence against it, of which, I am certain, he must have been aware.

What I have said about techniques also holds true for institutionalized organizations. Some who join these organizations for their mystical training do, as a matter of empirical fact, attain what Krishnamurti called Truth.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to what Krishnamurti asserts, not all those who seek training in institutionalized mystical organizations “no longer strive after Truth ... but rather carve for themselves a convenient niche in which they put themselves.” (Krishnamurti 1996, 2) Again, I find it difficult to grasp how Krishnamurti could hold this view given the ample evidence contradicting it.

Krishnamurti justifies his views with a number of arguments. Some are empirical or factual. One such argument, presented in the Ommen address and cited above, relates to Krishnamurti's experience as Head of the Order of the Star, namely that none or very few of the followers of this institutionalized organization had realized Truth. His argument, then, is based on empirical data and induction. But relying on induction to infer from the one specific organization with which Krishnamurti was familiar to all

mystical organizations is, of course, problematic, especially in light of the great number of counter-examples.

Another argument rests on the empirical claim that methods such as mediation dull the mind and make it mechanical rather than alert, fluid, and alive. Thus, for example, Krishnamurti asserts,

... some others have experienced and they lay down the method or the system to practice what they have achieved. So there are probably thousands of schools of meditation ... meditate three times a day; think on a word, a slogan, a mantra. ... [A]nd you repeat, repeat, repeat. Then there are all the people who practice various forms of breathing or who practice Zen. And all that is a form of establishing a routine and a practice that will essentially make the mind dull. Because if you practice, practice, practice, you will become a mechanical mind. (Krishnamurti and Anderson 1991, 238–239.)

Yet many would dispute this factual, empirical claim and argue that, in their experience, some techniques do not dull the mind or, alternatively, do dull it in some instances but not in others. Overall, they would assert, certain techniques help to lead the mind not to dullness but, rather, to the type of enlightenment Krishnamurti talks about. Surprisingly, after claiming that such practices essentially make the mind dull, Krishnamurti reveals that he has never tried them first-hand: “So I have never done any of those things, because personally, if I may talk a little about myself, I have watched, attended groups of various kinds just to look. And I said: ‘This isn’t it.’ I discarded it instantly” (Krishnamurti and Anderson 1991, 239). But if Krishnamurti never attempted meditation himself, it is unclear on what he bases his bold claim.

Other arguments Krishnamurti makes are less empirical. One such argument, which also appears in the Ommen address and is cited above, is that since Truth is a pathless land, it cannot be reached by any path (Krishnamurti 1996, 1). Likewise, since Truth is not organized (since it is limitless, unconditioned, etc.), the way to attaining it also cannot be organized. But the parable of the pathless land is problematic even if considered on its own, without any referent: it cannot be inferred from the claim that a land is pathless that the way to that land is also pathless. Those who enter this land-of-no-paths indeed inhabit a pathless terrain once they are there; but the way to the pathless land may or may not be pathless. If that way is indeed pathless, this is not *because* the destination is pathless. Similarly, it cannot be deduced that because an end is not organized, the way towards it is also not organized. There are many cases in which the ends and ways (or means) towards these ends differ in important respects. For example, some people can play an instrument elegantly and harmoniously, but the way towards that end often involves many non-elegant and non-harmonious drills. The same can be true of dancing gracefully as opposed to learning to dance, having a clean house as opposed to cleaning it, standing on a mountain top as opposed to climbing the mountain, and almost any other case of means and ends. Means and ends often differ radically, making Krishnamurti's inference of the qualities of the means from the qualities of the end problematic.

A possible objection to my criticism of Krishnamurti's argument is that I distinguish between ends and means, whereas in the enlightened mystical condition no such distinction (or any distinction at all) holds. When enlightened, the means and the end, the way and the end of the way, are

one and the same and the categories ends and means become completely irrelevant. In response, I acknowledge, of course, that this is how things are in the mystical condition itself, when one has attained Truth. But this is not how things are on the *way* to Truth, where the distinction between the means and the end exists. Of course, in order to bring to a close the process of being on the way towards the end destination and achieve the end itself, one must overcome the distinction between means and end, perhaps just “let it go.” In a sense, then, one should not try to achieve the end (since trying only bolsters the means-end distinction and therefore is an obstacle). But certainly in the initial and, often, middle stages on the way towards Truth, the distinction holds.

The argument that “there can be no paths to a pathless land” appears elsewhere in Krishnamurti’s writings as well, in relation to more specific aspects of enlightened Truth. For example, in the dialogue between Krishnamurti and Allan Anderson (noted above), Krishnamurti maintains that when one employs a method to attain Truth, one aims at Truth as a goal to be reached, “something over there,” and as such, as something static. However, he notes, Truth is not static. Thus, such an effort and method are obstructions to realizing Truth (Krishnamurti and Anderson 1991, 239). Likewise, Krishnamurti concurs with Anderson that a mantra or prayer is unhelpful for reaching Truth since they are finite, whereas Truth, or “the permeation of my total being,” is not (Krishnamurti and Anderson 1991, 241). Similarly, Krishnamurti claims, when one is enlightened, one is absolutely free. But when one uses a mantra or is part of an organization, one is not absolutely free (Krishnamurti and Anderson 1991, 245). When one makes an effort, there is a division between what one has or is and what one wants to

achieve. Truth, however, is undivided (Krishnamurti 2003, 180–181). We, too, could easily formulate additional arguments of this type. For example, one is operating in a temporal mode when employing a technique or part of an organization, while Truth is not temporal. Hence, employing the former obstructs the realization of the latter. Likewise, when employing a technique or being part of an organization, one is part of the fragmented world in which things are taken to be distinct from each other, whereas in the condition of Truth, there are no distinctions. Accordingly, employing techniques or belonging to an organization obstructs the realization of Truth. As we can see, then, any quality of enlightened Truth that differs from our regular mode of being can be used to argue against *working* in one's regular mode of being in order to be released from the latter and become enlightened. Since the regular mode of being differs so greatly from the enlightened condition, anything done in the former condition, even if for the sake of eventually achieving enlightenment, seems, to Krishnamurti, to block, rather than open, the way. But again, this seems to conflate means and ends. Krishnamurti insists that the means be similar to the end or, in fact, to be the end itself. But means often differ from ends. There are, of course, stages and times in which methods obstruct Truth and should be discarded. But there are also stages and times during which methods can help. Techniques can be compared to the ladder in Wittgenstein's famous parable, used to reach a high place; when the high place is reached, the ladder becomes a liability, rather than an asset, and is therefore dropped (Wittgenstein 1922, 6.54). A centuries-older but similar parable from Buddhist thought was presented to Krishnamurti by Walpola Rahula: "[I]f you want to cross the river and there is no bridge, you build a boat and cross with its help. But if, on the other shore, you

think, oh, this boat has been very useful, very helpful to me, I can't leave it here, I will carry it on my shoulders, that is a wrong action.” (Krishnamurti et al. 1996, 21; for the Buddhist original see *Majjhima Nikāya* 1995, 228-229) Unfortunately, Krishnamurti does not reply to Rahula's point.

I have discussed here various arguments in Krishnamurti's writings for rejecting organized movements and techniques, as well as reasons to question these arguments. But to a significant extent, this discussion of his arguments is redundant. If it is clear that some of those who employ techniques and develop spiritually within institutional organizations do, in fact, succeed in realizing Truth, speculative arguments to the contrary become, in my view, irrelevant even if they are very difficult to criticize.

### 3

As we have seen, Krishnamurti discards all techniques and methods for realizing Truth because, according to him, they do not—moreover, cannot—lead to such realization. Instead, he suggests an alternative that should succeed where, in his view, others fail. But is there indeed an advantage to his alternative relative to others? Considering this question allows us to see whether Krishnamurti's ambitious program, as well as the goal he set for himself in life, as he declared in the Ommen address, has been accomplished. As noted above, he asserts as follows: “I want to do a certain thing in the world and I am going to do it with unwavering concentration. I am concerning myself with only one essential thing: to set man free. I desire to free him from all cages, from all fears ... .” (Krishnamurti 1996, 2) Now that several decades have passed, it is interesting to examine how successful Krishnamurti's grand vision was. Did he, indeed,

set humanity free? And if not all humanity, then at least the followers of his teachings or even most of them?

It is difficult for me to offer a response to this question because I lack the reliable empirical, statistical data necessary to do so. I have asked quite a few Krishnamurti followers whether they have realized Truth or know or have heard of other Krishnamurti followers who have realized Truth. They all responded that they themselves had not realized Truth, as Krishnamurti describes it, nor had they heard of any other follower who had done so. But of course, those with whom I spoke could well be an unrepresentative sample of the population of Krishnamurti followers in its entirety. Further empirical research is thus necessary to respond to this question. If it were to emerge that only very few followers succeed in realizing Truth in the fashion Krishnamurti presents, this would make his complete rejection of techniques and organizations problematic in yet another respect. Moreover, the bold, revolutionary program he set out in the Ommen address, albeit very exciting, would be problematic as well.

Although, as mentioned above, I have no reliable, empirical data on the success rate of realizing Truth among Krishnamurti followers, it is noteworthy that in the years following the Ommen address, Krishnamurti himself referred, on many occasions, to the great difficulty of reaching enlightenment and that he too recognized that many in his audience are unlikely to attain it. His lecture "On Radical Change," for example, opens with the statement "Man has not changed very deeply" (Krishnamurti 1971, 126). When discussing the right kind of education, Krishnamurti says, "[I]f you are really keen to be educated in the way we have been discussing, then you will help to create a school with the right kind of teachers ... But most of us do not really

want that kind of education ... ." (1970, 213; see also 1970, 198–199, 206). An important Krishnamurti biographer, Pupul Jayakar, reports him as saying, "To be a real revolutionary requires a complete change of heart and mind, and how few want to free themselves. ... There seem to be few ... the rest labor in vain" (Jayakar 1986, 255–256). And Mary Lutyens, a lifelong faithful adherent of Krishnamurti's teachings, recounts in her biography of Krishnamurti how, following four important lectures in Santa Monica, he told another prominent student and assistant, the actress Mary Zimbalist, that he felt as though he were singing to the deaf (Lutyens 1983, 169). Although Krishnamurti and his work were very dear to her, Mary Lutyens also comments as follows in the aforementioned biography:

[W]hy 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? Is it that the possibility he holds out of an almost instantaneous psychological transformation in each one of us which will end sorrow and solve all our problems is so irresistible that when we find we have not changed, we believe we only have to hear him once more to discover a clue we must have missed? Are we not continually on the tail of an understanding that is only just outside our grasp? As someone recently said to me, "Krishnamurti leads one to the door of truth, opens it and just as one expects to walk in he gently shuts the door in one's face."<sup>5</sup>

But these comments also cannot be a substitute for hard empirical data regarding the success of Krishnamurti's agenda. What we need is an empirical study that rigorously compares the effectiveness of different programs for attaining mystical enlightenment and, in particular, the effectiveness of Krishnamurti's teachings relative to the effectiveness of various techniques and organizations, which he so sweepingly and categorically rejects as obstacles to realizing Truth. Such data have yet to be collected. However, I think that for the meantime, we can at least say that it is not at all clear that Krishnamurti's rejection of all organizations and techniques was a wise step. Moreover, it is not clear that he succeeded or failed in realizing the goal he set in his Ommen address. These questions are relevant, of course, not only historically. They are also very pertinent for anyone aspiring to realize Truth or mystical enlightenment and deciding whether to follow Krishnamurti's teachings or join one of the institutionalized mystical movements and employ one or more of the mystical techniques Krishnamurti so decisively dismissed.

## 4

I believe that Krishnamurti's outright rejection of all organizations and techniques is also problematic in additional aspects, one of which relates to sectarianism. As mentioned above, one of the seeming advantages of Krishnamurti's theory is its apparent non-sectarianism. Indeed, many feel uneasy upon hearing that members of one mystical organization represent other organizations as wrong instead of seeing them all as different ways of arriving at the same goal. It may appear that since Krishnamurti's teachings focus

on the mystical condition itself and thereby discard techniques and organizations (which are always embedded in particular traditions), his teachings are less likely to lead to sectarian rejection of other mystical movements. However, Krishnamurti's teachings are, in fact, sectarian. Krishnamurti does *not* suggest that there are various ways of reaching Truth and his is merely one such way. On the contrary, he takes all other organizations and techniques not to lead to Truth, *rejecting* almost all other mystical alternatives. In essence, Krishnamurti says that it is impossible to attain Truth in the ways proposed by, among many others, Sufi teachers, Buddhist Lamas, and Christian mystics; they got it all wrong, at least insofar as the way towards Truth, or mystical pedagogy, is concerned. Moreover, Krishnamurti's view entails that all followers of other traditions, if they seek to attain Truth, are simply wasting their time. His view is that other ways fail where his succeeds. This is clearly a very non-pluralistic, sectarian stance.

Another difficulty with Krishnamurti's teachings is that they are merely theoretical or academic in character for many followers. Krishnamurti did not, of course, want his teachings to have only a theoretical or academic impact; he wanted them to be practical in the sense that they change the way people live, function, and see the world and themselves. He did not want people to know more *about* Truth; he wanted them to *know* Truth (Krishnamurti 1956, 124; 1975, 123–124). But for those of his followers who do not in fact realize Truth, his teachings remain, at the end of the day, largely theoretical and academic. The teachings *describe*, time and again, what it would be like *if* one were in the mystical condition, but they do not lead people to be in that condition.

This brings us to another disadvantage of Krishnamurti's teachings, relating to authority. Krishnamurti was, of course, opposed to the acceptance of views on power of authority (see, e.g., Krishnamurti and Anderson 1991, 49; 1999, 62). He regarded authoritarianism as one of the negative qualities typical of the institutionalized mystical organizations that he shunned. He wished people to experience things directly and judge for themselves. But those of Krishnamurti's followers who do not realize Truth end up accepting his views as authoritative, without ever being in a position to examine those views for themselves. If his assertion in the Ommen address that "[t]he moment you follow someone you cease to follow Truth" (1996, 2) is correct, then even during his own lifetime, his followers ceased to follow Truth.

I have criticized above Krishnamurti's flat rejection of all mystical organizations. But note that if his denunciation of all mystical organizations were to be accepted, it would apply also to the organization he headed. Thus, he did not practice what he preached. Both during his lifetime and today, an organized Krishnamurti movement has flourished. The movement runs schools, employs workers and managers (and, therefore, has hierarchies), has money and bank accounts. The movement had a living leader—Krishnamurti himself—and it now has a venerated deceased leader. There has also been division between the exclusive circle of those who were close to Krishnamurti and helped manage the organization and all other followers (again, creating thereby a hierarchy). The movement has some sacred or semi-sacred texts that are consulted, almost recited, regularly, namely the tapes and transcriptions of Krishnamurti's talks. There is also stagnation in the movement, which Krishnamurti expressly warned against in his Ommen address, for Krishnamurti's writings, which have achieved the status of canon in the

movement, cannot be changed or updated. And judging by the extremely hostile and angry reactions the thoughts set out in this paper aroused among many Krishnamurti followers with whom I talked, the movement also has its fair share of intolerant zealots who emphasize, with great annoyance, that they are not annoyed at all but, in fact, are very open to criticism. Admittedly, Krishnamurti's organization has been less structured than many other mystical movements; but an organization it nonetheless is, and Krishnamurti's rather radical rejection and criticism of all of types and degrees of organization seem to apply also to his own movement.

I am not certain, however, that Krishnamurti can be similarly accused of not practicing what he preached when it comes to his censure of all methods for realizing Truth. As explained above, Krishnamurti argued that because all methods relate to the fragmented, temporal, etc., world, using methods blocks, rather than enhances, the realization of Truth. Admittedly, on the one hand, he too could be criticized for presenting a method for realizing Truth that relates to the fragmented, temporal, etc., world. As described in section 1, Krishnamurti recommends adopting an attitude that he calls "choiceless awareness," whereby one examines the fragmented, temporal, etc., world and then, upon clearly apprehending its limitations, slips instantaneously and effortlessly into the enlightened mode of being. (Krishnamurti 1956, 89; see also 1967, 81; 1996, 316.) Thus, since Krishnamurti also employs a method and since this method also is anchored in the fragmented, temporal world, it seems that his censure of other alternatives undermines also his own. However, on the other hand, perhaps Krishnamurti would respond that his method does not actually work in, or with, the fragmented, temporal world, but only

acknowledges the wrongfulness of the fragmented, temporal world in order to instantaneously transcend it. Thus, his method is not, in fact, temporal, nor does it apply distinctions (as between means and ends), nor hinders the realization of Truth in other ways. Hence, although it is true that, in a sense, Krishnamurti also presents a method, his criticism of methods does not apply to his own. Although, as shown above, several of his arguments against other alternatives do rule out also the alternative he advances, his argument relating to methods and techniques does not do this.

A possible objection to the last points could be that they are unfair: How could Krishnamurti disseminate his teachings without the aid of some kind of a movement or organization? Why would people come to hear him and try to learn from him if he were not considered a figure of some authority? Does some of the criticism set out above not demand of Krishnamurti the impossible? I partly agree with these points. It is, indeed, impossible to guide and help people reach mystical enlightenment without some kind of authority and organized movement. But that is precisely what is at issue here. Krishnamurti's rejection of almost all other movements and techniques, I propose, was indeed excessive and unrealistic. It was based on overly rigid and unfeasible standards that no one, including Krishnamurti himself, could fulfill. Hence, some of his arguments against other mystical methods, if cogent, undermine also his own method.

## 5

Some may object to my criticism in this paper by claiming that it completely misses the mark in that it discusses its subject-matter in a rational, philosophical manner whereas Truth, which is what Krishnamurti discusses, transcends

rationality. Moreover, some may protest, the discussion in this paper took examples from everyday life (such as learning to play an instrument and cleaning a house) to prove claims about mystical realizations. The differences between everyday behavior and mystical realizations, they might contend, are too acute, and therefore we cannot infer from the former about the latter. Hence, it might be objected, the criticism presented in this paper is unhelpful.

I have several responses to these objections. First, most of this paper did not discuss the mystical condition itself but, rather, the way towards it. While rational discourse is perhaps unhelpful for discussing the enlightened condition, this is not the case with regard to the *way* to this condition. The way, unlike the enlightenment itself, is, in most of its stages, part of the regular temporal, fragmented world and, accordingly, amenable to rational discussion.

Second, I am engaging with Krishnamurti on his own terms; I discussed the issues he discusses in the way that he does. Krishnamurti himself takes examples from everyday life and employs rationality. For instance, when explaining that, to become enlightened, people should conceive what makes them unenlightened rather than make efforts reach this condition, Krishnamurti presents an example of a violent person who needs to reform his behavior (1970, 216). Likewise, he employs rationality when arguing, as cited above, that techniques should be refrained from since they differ so much from the end result and, hence, necessarily obstruct, rather than facilitate, the attainment of mystical realization. The same is true for the empirical, statistical evidence Krishnamurti presents in the Ommen address, when he points out that none or only very few of the followers of the Order of the Star have realized Truth. Thus, he himself employs rational and empirical arguments and thereby opens

himself up to rational, empirical criticism. It would be odd not to engage with Krishnamurti's discussion on its own terms, that is, not to consider rationally or factually the rational and factual arguments he advances. Note that it would also be inconsistent, for Krishnamurti followers, to employ rationality and empirical data only insofar as they substantiate his views and resort to a stance of "all this is beyond evidence and reason and we cannot really understand it" when rationality and empirical data refute his views.

But third, maintaining a critical attitude guards us from idol-worship as well as from the tendency to accept arguments on force of authority. In the case at hand, namely, that of Krishnamurti, this is all the more crucial, since already at the Ommen address, he was radically critical of idol-worship and of accepting pronouncements as authoritative. Indeed, he supported genuine, free examination. In some ways, then, this paper, although critical of Krishnamurti's teachings, is more consistent with their spirit than an admiring acceptance of them would be.<sup>6</sup>

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## NOTES

1. In a dialogue with Krishnamurti entitled “Are You Not Saying What the Buddha Said?” the Buddhist scholar (and monk) Walpola Rahula points out many affinities between the Buddha’s and Krishnamurti’s teachings, presenting eleven important points of similarity. Surprisingly, Krishnamurti avoids the topic. He neither confirms nor denies Rahula’s claim and moves to another question, that of the necessity of comparisons. (Krishnamurti et al. 1996, 18–21)
2. Krishnamurti 1956, 32. In this context Krishnamurti employs the term “experience” to refer to the condition in which most of us usually are and the term “experiencing” to refer to the enlightened condition.
3. For Krishnamurti’s rejection of sectarianism see, e.g., 1970, 187; 1984, 9.
4. Perhaps this is the reason why Krishnamurti did not follow up on Walpola Rahula’s examples of the many central similarities between Buddhist thought and Krishnamurti’s teachings (see n. 1 above). If what Buddhists attain is so similar to what Krishnamurti pursues, and if Buddhists employ mystical techniques that are taught and practiced in mystical organizations (such as monasteries), Krishnamurti’s dismissal of all mystical techniques and organizations emerges as erroneous.
5. Lutyens 1983, 167. See also the essay “Why Is Your Teaching So Difficult to Live?” (Krishnamurti and Weber 1996, 217), as well as the entire essay “Why Don’t We Change?” (Krishnamurti 2003, 167–219). The latter essay is Krishnamurti’s answer to a question directed at him: “After having listened to you for so many years, we find ourselves exactly where we were. Is this all we can expect?” (2003, 167). I failed to find in the essay a specific, clear response to this frustrated, but very appropriate, question.
6. I am grateful to Amir Freimann, Zohar Maliniak, and Ariel Meirav for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.