



WIDE AWAKE

Anatomy of Awakening

Understanding the Awakened
Mind through the Experiences
of Eckhart Tolle, Byron Katie
and other Awakened Masters

by Kathryn Jefferies, Ph.D.

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*We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake...
by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not
forsake us in our soundest sleep.*

Henry David Thoreau

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Introduction

This book—an addendum or companion to my book, *Awake: Education for Enlightenment*—looks at the phenomena of mind, self, consciousness and its transformation through those who have gone through it. I go more deeply and specifically here into the creation and dissolution of the ‘I’ identity that I write about in *Awake*. I think of it as a real slowing down and going deeply in; the mind needs to slow down in order to understand. The book also looks at ‘phenomena’ itself. In other words, while I consider this investigation ontological—the exploration of being—I can’t conceive of studying it without studying the things that arise in relation to being, or, “phenomena.” It is being that makes phenomena possible, so looking at one can help explain the other.¹

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As is probably the story of so many, what brought me to these teachers of ‘oneness’ or ‘spiritual teachers’ was what they seemed to so clearly embody: peace, joy. In truth, I think it was more what they *didn’t* exhibit any sign of: suffering, anxiety, fear—any hint of the pain or confusion that seemed my constant companions in life. As life would have it, I’ve now had the privilege of spending considerable time in the presence of one of these teachers, Byron Katie. What I can tell you is that the same held true in person and on a profound level: that is, what struck me when I looked into Katie’s eyes more than anything was what *wasn’t* there. “There was *no one* there,” I’ve

¹ Of course, the experience of being could be considered a phenomenon, yet I think it could be helpful to describe being as the absence of phenomena, or, what allows phenomena to exist.

since described it to others. It was like looking into infinity, in that piercing blue of her eyes—she was all and nothing at the same time.

At the first worldwide convention of The Work in January 2015, I found myself partnered with her for a brief activity as part of a presentation of those moving The Work in the world. Katie turned to me and immediately answered the question the assignment put to us with her quick mind, and there was nothing—no one—else. It's difficult to put into words. It seemed as though there was just no 'one' to hold a story about herself; I could say she exhibited an absence of ego. Only totally. Almost two years before that moment, I had found myself on the small stage next to her amongst the group of people who had acted as staff for her school. We were in the back row. She had melted back to be part of us rather than remain out front. The three hundred or so participants in the room were acknowledging our contribution through applause at the time. And what struck me was her humility, which is perhaps the wrong word since that makes it sound like she had some agency around it. I had my arm around her shoulders and hers was around mine, and yet there was no one there, no sense of her being special. I recall something Katie said about her husband Stephen Mitchell, that he was brave enough to be married to the impersonal. And I really felt I understood what she meant, in those moments I describe above.

There's truly something profoundly alive in this absence—losing her 'self' gave her everything it would seem. It's for this—this peace, this joy, this truth that I write the below, that we may all learn firsthand what it is to be liberated from the self.

Kathryn
May, 2015

Biographies

The true value of a human being is determined primarily by the measure and the sense in which [one] has attained liberation from the self.

Albert Einstein

~

I have chosen the subjects for this exploration because I have personal experience of them and/or they were the first examples of awakened people I encountered². They have clear, direct knowledge of what they are speaking and writing about that is apparent simply by reading or watching them. Their humility—their complete lack of ego—and compassion are also clearly evident. They have all experienced what is known as an ‘awakening experience’ (Taylor, 2005); that is, they went from existing in a state of consciousness that most humans seem to apparently inhabit to a state of consciousness where they were no longer identified with their minds; they

² Other awakened people exist of course; some are well-known and there are perhaps many more who are not. Jeff Foster (lifewithoutacentre.com), for example, has recently attracted notice as a young teacher (Bentinho Massaro is another) who is making generous use of social media to connect with people. Jo Dunning is another. This teaching is really not new at all, of course, though it is relatively new in the West. It has been a part of Eastern culture for ages through many sages such as Nisargadatta Maharaj and Ramana Maharshi. Spiritual awakening was brought to the West through the teachings of Jesus that were eventually turned into doctrine and dogma, through the mistaken belief that the truth was something the mind could grasp. There is evidence that First Peoples (see Steve Taylor’s *The Fall*) in the West and throughout the world exhibited the awakened consciousness of which I write. There seems now to be a real impetus towards this awakening throughout the world: many people seem to be awakening to a new consciousness.

transcended thought and pierced the veil of conditioning to have a direct experience of themselves and life beyond any *thought* about themselves and life. Furthermore, this state of consciousness remained permanent for each of them. Also, all four have become what we could call teachers of awakening—through their words, but mostly through their example. Given this, they often have things to say about communicating the ineffable to others, about the role of a teacher, about assisting others to awaken—the possibilities and the impossibilities—despite not being involved in formal education (with the exception of Krishnamurti).

Krishnamurti, Tolle, and Katie³ are quite well known and have been very prolific in terms of audio, video, and written data by them⁴ so there is a lot of material to draw on. Veltheim is not as well known but I have included her as I found her book, *Beyond Concepts*, to really focus on the specifics of the process of transformation for the individual (her), which is also the focus of this book; she meets the reader where they are in the ‘old’ consciousness, addressing blocks they are experiencing and how to surmount them, based on her own experience. Furthermore, Veltheim’s awakening was a gradual process, perhaps more akin to Krishnamurti’s—which she is able to describe articulately and walk a reader through—unlike the apparently sudden awakening of Tolle’s and Katie’s⁵. I think this diversity proves helpful.

³ In terms of personal contact with the subjects, I have attended talks or workshops with both Tolle and Katie; in addition, I have engaged in numerous processes of doing “The Work” as facilitated by both myself and others.

⁴ In Krishnamurti’s case, while he personally wrote only a handful of books, many more have been created through transcribing his talks, both before and after his death.

⁵ It is interesting to note that although Katie and Tolle seemed to suddenly ‘be awake,’ they also suffered through years of depression beforehand like Veltheim which she actually includes as an essential part of the process because that is how she experienced it. Krishnamurti went through an acute depression before his awakening, brought on by the death of his brother. All of them spent time integrating the awakening experience afterwards.

Krishnamurti⁶

Jiddu Krishnamurti was ‘discovered’ while he was playing on a beach with his brother near Madras (Chennai), India by Charles Leadbeater, a Theosophist, who claimed that Krishnamurti had a “pure aura,” uncontaminated by any selfishness. Together with Annie Besant, then head of the Theosophical Society, they proclaimed Krishnamurti the awaited “world teacher” (or second coming of Christ)—a title that he would famously disavow when at the age of twenty-one he dissolved the order that had been set up to support him to bring his teachings into the world:

I maintain that truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally. Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or coerce people along a particular path. ... This is no magnificent deed, because I do not want followers, and I mean this. The moment you follow someone you cease to follow Truth. I am not concerned whether you pay attention to what I say or not. 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 [humankind] free. I desire to free [humankind] from all cages, from all fears, and not to found religions, new sects, nor to establish new theories and new philosophies. (Krishnamurti, 1929)

Prior to this, Krishnamurti had gone through a three-day intense process of spiritual transformation that resulted in an experience of mystical union

⁶ There are numerous books and articles written about Krishnamurti so I will not go into many facts about him here. I refer the reader to *Krishnamurti's Notebook* which contains his own account of his awakening process. Evelyn Blau's book, *Krishnamurti 100 Years*, gives witness accounts, as well as an overview of his life.

and immense peace (Lutyens, 1975, pp. 158-160). “The process” as he came to call it continued throughout his life but with decreased intensity. In his journal, he wrote that he “...woke up early with that strong feeling of otherness, of another world that is beyond all thought...” (Krishnamurti, 2003, p.38).

Krishnamurti spent his life traveling and giving talks and writing. He also founded eight schools: six in India, one in England, and one in California. His concern was psychological freedom:

All authority of any kind, especially in the field of thought and understanding, is the most destructive, evil thing. Leaders destroy the followers and followers destroy the leaders. You have to be your own teacher and your own disciple. You have to question everything that [humans have] accepted as valuable, as necessary. (1969, p.21)

Eckhart Tolle

Eckhart Tolle is fairly well known currently as a spiritual teacher and the story of his awakening experience is well documented. In brief, Tolle recounts how he had suffered terrible depression for years and during one painful night, he thought to himself, ‘I can’t live with myself any more,’ feeling that he must end his life. That thought was followed by another in which he wondered who was the ‘I’ and who was the ‘myself’—that is, how there could possibly be two of him. In that moment, his mind suddenly let go and he heard a voice in his head telling him to “resist nothing.” He fell into sleep and when he awoke, he was in a deep state of peace. Although he didn’t realize it then (because he had no way of knowing what had happened, not having a context for what he experienced), his continuous flow of thinking had stopped, enabling him to feel at peace. He has described an immense silence and knew that he was experiencing his real self, and that everything before this moment was life as experienced through *ideas* of his self and life.

In the subsequent two years, he said he mostly sat on a park bench, completely in awe of the experience of pure being. He has since said that

he was integrating his experience at this time—without any idea, literally, of himself or life, and no idea of a past or future, he was content to just ‘be’ and did little else. In trying to make sense of what he was experiencing, he turned to books. He has said that he “quickly realized academia did not have the answers I was looking for” and turned instead to the great wisdom traditions and/or religious texts where he began to piece together what had happened to him. Eventually, as people came to him for help with their personal suffering, he began to host groups of people in his home, giving talks. In time, he had the sense that he was to move to the west coast of Canada (he was living in Europe), which is where he wrote his first book, *The Power of Now*. He has acknowledged that there was a field of consciousness on the west coast (in the United States as well) that enabled the book to come “through” him. He has also written *A New Earth* and *Stillness Speaks*.

Byron Katie

Byron Katie has a similar story to that of Eckhart Tolle. She had been in a deep depression for several years, the last two of which she rarely left her bed, despite being a working mother to three children. She had checked herself into a halfway house and recounts how the women there were all terrified of her because she was so volatile and angry. One morning while there, she awoke on the attic floor (where she had been sleeping because she was too dangerous to share a room with another and her self-hatred had her believe she did not deserve a bed) when a cockroach ran over her foot. Like Tolle, she found herself in a deep state of peace. “Then the mind hit,” she has said, and she immediately realized that with thought, there is stress, while without thought, there is no stress⁷. She describes this moment as when what she calls “inquiry” was born in her. Essentially, this is the

⁷ To be clear, the equation is: believing stressful thoughts causes the suffering. Believing thoughts that are kind does not cause suffering; this works for us. The question of their truth is another matter—one, incidentally, that *The Work* also accesses.

questioning of what we think we know to be true—questioning the mind—as a bridge into the unknown and psychological freedom.

Katie describes how, shortly after this dramatic awakening she would enter other people's homes, knowing they were hers—as her experience that she was one with everything was so complete—and experience with delight how the people in them would “lie” and say that she did not own this home. Her family would get her and take her home. And so, slowly she learned “how not to alienate people” when she expressed disbelief in their stories. For example, she describes going along with her family and friends' assertion that she was a “Katie” because although this had no meaning for her and was therefore not true in her experience, she had no reason not to let them have their story; it was causing no harm.

She has said that she realized that everyone was entitled to have this ability to question their mind through inquiry and willingly helped people who came to her. She describes her early interactions with people, after her awakening experience:

People used to ask me if I was enlightened, and I would say, “I don't know anything about that. I'm just someone who knows the difference between what hurts and what doesn't.” I am someone who wants only what is. To meet as a friend each concept that arose turned out to be my freedom. (2007, p.30)

Esther Veltheim

Esther Veltheim's transformation began with her experiences with Reiki where she experienced that “thoughts cut off during it” (p.216). In 1989, Esther founded, with John Veltheim, the Reiki Network, which still exists today and cofounded PaRama, a “school of philosophy and life sciences.”

Veltheim describes her process of awakening in detail in the final chapter of her book *Beyond Concepts* (2000) called “Satsang: What is Enlightenment?” in the traditional question and answer form. In it, she recounts

how, she too, spontaneously emerged from a two-year depression like Katie and found herself (also spontaneously; that is, not as a decision), again like Katie, “investigat[ing] every concept that people think of as significant, such as control, sin, enlightenment, illusion⁸” (p.200). She did this by writing a book (though she never published it): “The writing was, I guess, the mind’s way of finding explanations and processing the dissolution of dualistic thoughts” (p.200). This investigation of concepts she calls “jnana yoga” (pp.200, 216) which she undertook in her own way.

She describes what has also been my own personal experience, that “I figured that my mind was too active to meditate....Other than Reiki, I didn’t relate to other forms of meditation. As my mind was sharp, I decided to use the power of discrimination constructively. I investigated and unraveled concepts and beliefs” (2000, p.216).

At the end of her transformation, Esther describes how she felt/feels in identical terms to that of Tolle: “Very natural and absolutely ordinary are the best way of describing it. All desires to be other than I am have gone. The desire to become special has dissolved in ordinariness” (p.206). Esther’s answer to the question, “So, is your mind still active?” gives us a sense of the mind post-awakening:

When I’m writing, it’s active: but very peaceful and thinking is effortless....But I am noticing that when interaction is necessary, it’s often rather like coming up to the top of a deep ocean. The mind is really very peaceful—that is its nature after all. You weren’t born with a stressed-out mind. So sometimes, it’s almost hard to interact. (p.215)

Esther developed something she calls the “BreakThrough System”—“a dynamic process of self-investigation.” She conducts advanced workshops internationally and in the U.S. as well as gives instructor training programs for BreakThrough.

⁸ Katie has also noted that stilling the mind requires writing the thoughts down, at least for considerable time initially.

The Nature of Thought

*The highest form of human intelligence is to observe yourself
without judgement.*

J. Krishnamurti

~

This first section examines the nature of thought—how it works, its origin, its function, its relationship with emotion, and consciousness, what it is both capable of and not capable of, how and why it puts together the “I” identity and the external world we experience with our senses, etc. This exploration takes place in the context of perceiving education as primarily a developer of thought (as the paradigm currently exists, as explored in *Awake*) and questioning whether this is ultimately a helpful or harmful orientation for education. This section is the largest because once the nature of thought is understood then the major hurdle (i.e. being identified with thought) has been overcome.

Inability of the Mind to Know the Whole

The base nature of the mind is “the desire to know, understand, and control” (Tolle, 2003, p.15); in short, to be right. Given that this is so, it develops “opinions and viewpoints” which it “mistakes...for the truth” when in reality, this is an *interpretation* of life and only “one of many possible perspectives.” By definition, thinking cannot apprehend reality because

“reality is one unified whole, in which all things are interwoven, where nothing exists in and by itself” whereas thinking’s task is to fragment reality—“it cuts it up into conceptual bits and pieces.” Veltheim (2000) uses different language to describe the same phenomenon, describing Tolle’s “whole” as “an absolute” and referring to his “opinions and viewpoints” as “concepts,” agreeing with Tolle that concepts/thought/the mind will never contain the truth: “Because all concepts are dependent on the existence of their contradiction, no concept is an absolute. When the paradox of life is deeply understood, duality no longer poses a problem” (p.3).

Veltheim introduces the concept of *duality* here—the existence of something only in relation to its opposite. So the paradox comes, then, when we begin to entertain the idea of ‘both/and’ instead of ‘either/or’—something that the mind is not capable of.

Byron Katie describes the same “no concept is an absolute” in recounting her “awakening” experience: “I saw that nothing was true...” She goes on to explain a bit about the function of the mind, that it was never a vehicle meant to capture reality: “Then the mind hit and I saw that the mind wasn’t true and I saw that people *believed* their thoughts...because the mind immediately is giving them all the proof and all the images; that’s how the mind works” (Katie, 2008).

In her awakened state, Katie initially had no thoughts, she had no beliefs operating through which she was mediating her experience. Then thought began operating within her again but she did not identify with it, she observed it. In other words, the reason nothing can be *true* is because things known are in the realm of knowledge, which as we’ve explored is only thought taking a position on something—one perspective out of many possible perspectives.

The second part of Katie’s statement describes, however, what the mind is excellent at: picking out of all previous experience the things that line up with this position, by way of making this perspective stronger, and more stable. This definition of mind is in line with Krishnamurti’s description of the mind being made up of the past, whether through one’s personal

experience (in actuality, thoughts interpreting the experience) or through someone else's stored knowledge and experience transmitted through teaching—none of which can be said to be true.

Krishnamurti refers to this information gathering process as *conditioning* the mind. The mind, in other words, is incapable of seeing what is true; to access reality, we must go to somewhere other than the mind/thought.

The Mind Does Not Think, It Is Thought

In terms of the relationship of *consciousness* with the mind: it has become a habit of the mind to absorb all human consciousness, that is, to make humans believe that thinking and themselves are one and the same. We don't leave room for consciousness to observe thought. (Eckhart Tolle)

The gravitational pull of the old mind structures and the mental habit of absorbing all your consciousness into thinking is very strong and old. So there is a momentum there or a heaviness, old pull of the mind that is used to possessing your entire consciousness and continues transforming your entire consciousness into thinking and it wants to come back in there. It wants you to give your total attention to thinking, become one with the thinking. (www.eckharttolle.com, August 2011)

So, Tolle points out both the tremendous habit of absorbing consciousness into thinking, and also that humans *are not* that thinking but instead *the consciousness* that has been absorbed into the thinking; they are not one and the same. This point might seem obvious to you, yet this is how most of us live, and think that it's normal—i.e. at the mercy of thought. Katie describes the phenomenon of “becom[ing] one with the thinking mind” in a simple way: “Most people think that they are what their thoughts tell them they are” (http://thework.com/downloads/little_book/English_LB.pdf).

Veltheim agrees that one of our biggest impediments is misunderstand-

ing the mind as a distinct source of intelligence itself—that is, believing that when we access the mind, we are accessing a distinct entity that is capable of insight. “What needs to be understood is that the mind does not think—it IS thoughts. To most, the mind is considered the enemy and something to be battled with. But your involvement with thoughts and identification with them are the only ‘problem’” (p.36). This is a tremendously important point.

So humans, then, in being identified with the mind and unable to see the whole (of life and/or any aspect of it) forego a lived experience of their connection to all life and their place in it.

Or, as Tolle describes it, “a sense of the miraculous...was lost a long time ago when humanity, instead of using thought, became possessed by thought.” (Dec. 2011, www.eckharttolle.com)

The implications of losing a lived experience of this sense of the miraculous in life are astronomical and involve all aspects of someone’s experience; in short, it is what is responsible for allowing people to be capable of hurting themselves, one another (both on a small and grand scale), other creatures, and what we call the environment or the ‘natural world.’ (I outline the implications more fully—especially as they relate to education—in the final chapter of *Awake*.)

Inability of Controlling Thought

In the following quotation, Krishnamurti uses the word “awareness” to describe a state where one’s consciousness is not entirely absorbed in thinking and is thus able to witness thought, alleviating the impulse to try to control it:

And it is only in silence that you can observe the beginning of thought *not when you are searching, asking questions, waiting for a reply*. So it is only when you are completely quiet, right through your being, having put that question, ‘What is the beginning of

thought?” that you will begin to see, out of that silence, how thought takes shape⁹.

If there is an awareness of how thought begins then there is no need to control thought. We spend a great deal of time and waste a great deal of energy all through our lives, not only at school, trying to control our thoughts—“This is a good thought, I must think about it a lot. This is an ugly thought, I must suppress it.” There is a battle going on all the time between one thought and another, one desire and another, one pleasure dominating all other pleasures. But if there is an awareness of the beginning of thought, then there is no contradiction in thought. (Krishnamurti, 1969. pp.103-104, italics mine)

In addition to pointing out how and why we try to control thought, Krishnamurti also here offers a great description of how perception or insight—an aspect of his definition of “intelligence”—occurs for someone through something other than through thought. It’s more like an *observation* of the answer. (I’ll come back to this further on.)

Byron Katie also points out that while one might logically conclude that if we could control thinking (as in the belief in the efficacy of using positive affirmations as popularized by the self-help movement) that this would be the solution to the problem of being mind-identified, this is not possible. “...you can’t stop mental chaos, however motivated you are. But if you identify one piece of chaos and stabilize it, then the whole world begins to make sense,” and, flying in the face of convention, Katie suggests that not only is it futile to control thought, but to actually meet one’s thoughts with awareness turns out to be a path to their freedom. I have found the same thing: doing The Work relieves suffering *and* insights are revealed to me I couldn’t see otherwise.

⁹ What Krishnamurti describes here, which could be called a process, is also the process of the Enlightenment Intensive and The Work of Byron Katie that I describe in detail, through my own experience of it, in *Awake*. It is a process of observing rather than entering the thinking mind and analyzing through thinking.

For me, thoughts are the beloved. Thoughts are not to kill or avoid or dodge or meditate down or medicate down; they're to be met with unconditional love, as though they were children just screaming to be understood and that's what The Work brings us to...the mind...to a complete understanding of itself and...enlightened to itself—mind enlightened to itself, mind in love with itself, the love affair with itself. You know, terms like self-love...when the mind loves the mind it loves everything it sees. (online interview with Bill Harris)

And:

People try to “let go” of their thoughts. That's like telling your child you don't want her and kicking her out onto the street....Of course, I would never ask people not to believe their thoughts. Not only would that be unkind; it isn't possible for people not to believe what they believe. We can't help believing our thoughts until we question them. That's the way of it. (2007, p.29)

So Katie here makes a clear distinction between *thinking* and *believing*; while we may think something, the important thing to realize is that we do not have to believe it. This distinction points to the origin, that in fact we are not doing the thinking because it is not a personal act of agency; thoughts just happen. It would be more accurate to say we are being thought. Whereas believing requires personal agency, by default we are our thoughts.

Katie explains how one *does* get free of thought: “No one has ever been able to control his thinking, although people may tell the story of how they have. I don't let go of my thoughts—I meet them with understanding. Then they let go of me” (http://thework.com/downloads/little_book/English_LB.pdf).

So, having the experience of seeing for oneself the reality or truth of a situation, through inquiring into it, allows the thought to complete itself and it then is free to leave; before, it seemed to have unfinished business with a person. The thought was there to cause pain until questioned; it

was there to wake one up to reality. I recently found myself describing the experience of The Work to my daughter as like unwrapping a present, that people think The Work is for alleviating suffering by getting rid of the unwanted thoughts, but that this is not my experience. Inquiry actually comes bearing gifts.

It would seem that the very nature of thought is to arise and fall away, *if we allow it*. In addition, it would seem that thought can be used by us as a tool once we have the experience that we are not it. Tolle recounts how, since his awakening, he has long stretches of his days where no thought crosses his mind. Then, if he requires the use of it, he uses it. He is not *controlling* thought, as there is no thought there to be controlled. This is in dramatic contrast to how most of us feel imprisoned by our thoughts, unable to *not* be used by thought. Indeed, for most of us, it is an unfathomable experience—to imagine no-thought.

Impersonal Nature of Thought

Esther Veltheim (2000, p.45) offers a succinct description of our experience of thinking: “No thought arises because of you, and you don’t know how thoughts happen, or where they come from” and “...you have no idea how thoughts appear in your mind, or where they come from. Despite this you take delivery of them, think they are personal to you, and you act on them. Does that make any sense to you?” (p.95).

That thoughts are not personal is really a paradigm-altering statement, since it seems that our education paradigm hinges on the belief that thoughts *are* personal—that is, that they can be generated, controlled, and manipulated by the individual; indeed, we consider those the most intelligent who have the most detailed and sophisticated thoughts, the greatest amount of knowledge, and the highest ability to manipulate concepts.

Yet, Katie has said that no one is wiser than anyone else; we all have the same amount of intelligence—indeed, the same intelligence (2006b). So, the difference between her and others, for example, could be explained

by saying that she is ‘awake’ to the true nature of life and thought while most of the rest of us are ‘asleep’ to our true nature and our reality as aware beings separate from thought. That is, we are just not *aware* that we have access to the same wisdom.

Katie explains how one might notice that thoughts cannot possibly be personal; that is, not generated by an individual person:

One day I noticed that I wasn’t breathing—I was being breathed. Then I also noticed, to my amazement, that I wasn’t thinking—that I was actually being thought and that thinking isn’t personal. Do you wake up in the morning and say to yourself, “I think I won’t think today”? It’s too late: You’re already thinking! Thoughts just appear. They come out of nothing and go back to nothing, like clouds moving across the empty sky. They come to pass, not to stay. There is no harm in them until we attach to them as if they were true. (http://thework.com/downloads/little_book/English_LB.pdf)

We believe that the thoughts that cross our paths are true—which we do, I believe, because we feel we have had agency in generating them. The fact that we don’t know we’re doing this is what causes all the harm in the world, to ourselves and to others. We have simply to observe what happens when we are acting as if a stressful thought is true for us to see it.

Katie also alludes here to what we could call a passiveness or receiving experience where she is not the ‘doer’ but, rather, is *being done*. This is a hint at what Krishnamurti refers to as intelligence that is not of the mind. It is the beginning of being willing to consider that ‘we’—this idea we have constructed of individual identities and individually generated intelligence—are not in charge. At base, it requires only a simple recognizing or noticing that if we cannot control thinking, if it just appears unbidden by us, then perhaps there is an agency or source of intelligence *different from thought* as Krishnamurti, Tolle, Katie, Veltheim and others claim.

Thought and Emotion

Finally, a discussion of thought would be incomplete without also discussing emotion, for they are intimately connected. I would argue that the common understanding of emotion is that it arises separately from thought—in the sense that one would say a given experience *just makes one feel a certain way*. However, Tolle and others posit that emotion almost always follows thought: “Be aware that what you think, to a large extent, creates the emotions that you feel. See the link between your thinking and your emotions. Rather than being your thoughts and emotions, be the awareness behind them” (Tolle, 2008, p.5). Katie explains the link between thought and emotion:

A feeling is like a mate to a thought appearing. It's like a left and a right. If you have a thought, there's a simultaneous feeling. And an uncomfortable feeling is like a compassionate alarm clock that says, “You're in the dream.” It's time to investigate, that's all. But if we don't honor the alarm clock, then we try to alter and manipulate the feeling by reaching into an apparent external world. We're usually aware of the feeling first. That's why I say it's an alarm clock that lets you know you're in a thought that you may want to investigate. If its not acceptable to you, if it's painful, you might want to inquire and do The Work. (Katie, 2006b, p.15-16)

The re-framing of emotion as something that can change, based as it is on thought and not independent of thought, has important implications for self-experiencing and self-understanding, which in turn has significant ramifications for interactions between individuals.

In brief, if people are not governed by their thoughts and emotions they are free to choose peaceful interactions: they can be capable of real listening, which is real empathy and real compassion. (The consequences of this sort of freedom are discussed further in *Awake*.) While Tolle advises

Rather than being your thoughts and emotions, be the awareness behind them, this isn't so simple, in my experience, without some guidance given that it is not an intellectual exercise but an actual experience one is after.

Katie's *The Work* gives this consistently and reliably, in my experience. When one disengages from their current thoughts, the emotion created from these thoughts also lets go, and what remains is "the awareness behind them." Katie gives a good summation of the process below:

Through inquiry, we discover how attachment to a belief or story causes suffering. Before the story there is peace. Then a thought enters, we believe it, and the peace seems to disappear. We notice the feeling of stress in the moment, investigate the story behind it, and realize that it isn't true. The feeling lets us know we are opposing what is by believing the thought. It tells us that we're at war with reality. When we notice that we're believing a lie and living as if it were true, we become present outside our story. Then the story falls away in the light of awareness, and only the *awareness* of what really is remains. Peace is who we are without a story, until the next stressful story appears. Eventually inquiry becomes alive in us as the natural, wordless response of *awareness* to the thoughts and stories that arise. (Katie, 2006, p.10-11; italics mine)

The Work allows us the experience of awareness rather than keeping it as an intellectual exercise, something that has never changed anything, ever.

Construction and Destruction of the 'I' (The 'Knower') or Thought Becoming Identity

Esther Veltheim (2000) touches on something that I think the holistic education paradigm, progressive as it can be, is still susceptible of falling prey to and that is taking all this information on the mind and self and presenting it to students conceptually rather than allowing them to have their own

experiences of self and the mind (etc.). The point, then, is to continually point students back to their own experience by reminding them that anything that is said about the self is meant to act as a theory until it is tested *by them*. “You think you are a body, a mind, and perhaps a spirit and a soul” (p.3) writes Veltheim. “You weren’t born with a mind full of concepts. Before they entered your mind, no limitation was experienced. There was simply the pre-personalized awareness of being.... Before you learned to describe yourself as “I am some-one,” “I am this,” “I am that,” there was awareness only of being” (p.9).

Veltheim describes here the birth of the “I” identity that is so compellingly real for most of us that we never think to question or verify its reality. And yet, as Veltheim describes, it is merely an image put together by thought; it doesn’t exist in reality. Furthermore, the belief in its existence prevents knowing the true or actual Self. “This self-image is the only thing inhibiting you from knowing who you really are” (p.17).

At this point, the mind, still actively trying to know, tries to see oneself then outside its (the mind’s) filters. Veltheim explains clearly why this is impossible:

You cannot think of yourself in terms of a non-concept, because the mind IS conceptualization. If you understand this deeply, you will realize that via the mind you can never know who You are, in reality. Via the mind, you can only discover who you are not. (p.98)

Krishnamurti also advised that we not try to know things but to unknown; that is, approach the reality of things by determining what they *are not*. Others have dubbed this approach of his as *negation*.

Seeking the Feeling of ‘Safe’

Why we seek psychological security is because this “I” believes it is real (i.e. that it’s alive, an entity unto itself) and therefore that it can perish (die). So it identifies with whatever it can identify with: a body as identity is an

easy one; a mind is another. It seeks constant reassurance of its existence through observation of contrast (ex. I'm *this*, not that; we're *us* not them). It's easy to see how this is the root of violence based on race, religion, nationality, ideology, gender identity, etc.

But what is this "I" who seeks security because it feels threatened? What is that entity? And what happens when we question it? In my experience, it is possible to experience myself outside of thought *but not through thought*; that is, thought is outside of this experiencing. Which is to say: thought cannot apprehend reality. Veltheim (2000) confirms that this quest for "intellectual understanding" of the Self to "fall away" (p.5) as a natural result of seeing what the mind is.

Peter Ralston¹⁰ (1991) points out the subtle path of transformation of consciousness and how we initially try to make this happen within our "I" identity:

...we notice with overwhelming and devastating clarity that absolutely nothing we do or achieve, no matter how apparently powerful or happy it is, changes our fundamental condition at all, not even slightly. This is so because the essential context is not even touched. All that we do is done within the context of "self," so the sense of "I" always remains. "I" may identify with different things, and this identity may change radically, but don't be fooled into thinking that this has changed the existence of "I" in the least. The true practice of Being is to understand this, and recognize that "I" does not exist;

¹⁰ In 1978, Peter Ralston became the first non-Asian ever to win the World Championship full-contact martial arts tournament held in the Republic of China. Consistent with Zen studies, his investigation into martial arts also came to include a questioning of reality. Long periods of intense contemplation resulted in many enlightenment experiences regarding the nature of self and reality, which greatly influenced his study. To communicate his understanding, Ralston founded the Cheng Hsin School in 1975. In 1977 he opened a centre called "The Cheng Hsin School of Internal Martial Arts and Center for Ontological Research" in Oakland, California. His main focus in his facilitation work is to uncover the truth of things, to break through assumptions and beliefs, and to assist others in having a direct, authentic, and experiential increase in Consciousness. (chenghsin.com)

then the dissolution of “I” occurs simply through the direct-experience of the nature of Being. (p.74)

So, the “I” cannot be gotten rid of, but dissolves naturally upon seeing clearly, which is to say, seeing reality, ‘what is.’ What this means is that there is no longer a ‘thinker/knower’—one is not *doing* anything, not *trying*, not *thinking*—the central “I” disappears, as there is now nothing holding it together. Thought was the mechanism that was holding the idea of an ‘I’ together and thereby keeping a separation between itself and anything else (—this is the “optical illusion of separation” that Einstein refers to that I mentioned in *Awake*).

Creation of External Reality

Just as the mind creates the “I” for each of us, it also creates external reality, or the world of form. Byron Katie describes how this manifests, how powerful our minds are, and what happens when we are identified with ‘the thinker’:

The world is your perception of it. Inside and outside always match—they are reflections of each other. The world is the mirror image of your mind. If you experience chaos and confusion inside, your external world has to reflect that. You have to see what you believe, because you are the confused thinker looking out and seeing yourself. You are the interpreter of everything, and if you’re chaotic, what you hear and see has to be chaos. Even if Jesus, even if the Buddha, were standing in front of you, you would hear confused words, because confusion would be the listener. You would only hear what you thought he was saying, and you’d start arguing with him the first time your story was threatened. (Katie, 2006b, p.28-29)

And:

When you do The Work, you see who you are by seeing who you think other people are. Eventually you come to see that everything

outside you is a reflection of your own thinking. You are the storyteller, the projector of all stories, and the world is the projected image of your thoughts. (2002, p.12)

If this is the case, then it follows logically that in order to experience things as they are (which we call reality) then we would need to step outside of thought. Krishnamurti famously said, “You are the world.” I believe that this is what he meant—that is, that we project our own beliefs out and create the world of form, including everything we see in everyone else. I also believe this is what Krishnamurti meant when he said, “All life is relationship.” That is, we encounter ourselves—who we are—through our relationships with others; they literally mirror us back to ourselves. Krishnamurti, too, points out that thought is matter—that is, that there is a form that results from it, that it is not neutral or inert:

Those who think a great deal are very materialistic because thought is matter. Thought is matter as much as the floor, the wall, the telephone, are matter. Energy functioning in a pattern becomes matter. There is energy and there is matter. That is all life is. [like Eckhart’s “There is space, and there are things in space.”] Thought is matter as an ideology. Thought has set up this pattern of pleasure, pain, fear, and has been functioning inside it for thousands of years and cannot break the pattern because it has created it. (1969, pp.101-102)

In this, I see a reframing of what I might call the ‘status’ of thought from its position on a pedestal in education (i.e. “*There’s no such thing as thinking too much*”) to thought as ‘being caught up in *things*’ as one is whom we call “materialistic.” Furthermore, Krishnamurti makes the same case as Katie when he claims that our unawareness of our attachment to thought makes us attempt to use thought to cut through the patterns created by thought—an obvious impossibility.

Thought Transcended

To leave home is half the Buddha's teaching.

Milarepa

~

There has to be at least a bit of willingness to leave the known—that is, one's dearly held beliefs. There has to be at least a tiny openness to consider that what one feels one *knows* could perhaps be incorrect. This is what it is “to leave home.”

Going *Through* Thought: Self-Inquiry/Experiencing

Moving beyond thought to an experience of oneself as the *awareness* behind thought happens experientially (that is, not conceptually):

If you can recognize, even occasionally, the thoughts that go through your mind as simply thoughts, if you can witness your own mental-emotional reactive patterns as they happen, then that dimension is already emerging in you as the awareness in which thoughts and emotions happen—the timeless inner space in which the content of your life unfolds. (Tolle, 2003, p.14)

Tolle distinguishes here between the content of one's life and “the timeless inner space” or “awareness” that is life itself—that is, who we are. We have confused the two, and therein lies the problem. Yet when we are able

to witness or watch emotions arise within us as reactions to thoughts, then we can start to be able to pull the two (awareness and content) apart and the result is a natural identification with the witness, or timeless inner space, as who we truly are. Using oneself as the means of inquiring into the truth is not only a valuable tool, it is the only way through to direct experience, given that the only thing we are sure of is our individual experiencing (i.e. that we, as an individual, are here, experiencing):

Catholic Saint Francis: “What we are looking for is who is looking.”
If you have ever wondered if you really exist, close your eyes, direct your attention within, and ask yourself, “Who wants to know?”

The power of asking “Who wants to know?” as a way of knowing God is called self-inquiry. Vedanta teachers say that all religious practices for knowing God are postponements, because no ritual or activity will bring you closer to what you already are. The teacher Gangaji describes self-inquiry as “an intense concentration of attention on the *source* of this attention and awareness itself.” (Katra & Targ, 1999, p.153)

Katra and Targ use the word “God” whereas Katie says she refers to God as “reality because it rules” (personal communication, 2012). So when we say we want to know God, what we are really saying is we want to know reality; we know intuitively that this is where our minds can rest, in this truth of how things are, how life is. The source or witness of attention can (only) be experienced/known outside of any ideas or thought (about the source or witness).

Seeing that the mind is not who we are, then, leads us to find the freedom we are in continuous search of; we are no longer trapped by the limits of what we think. Furthermore, in my experience, when I realize who I am and that it is not my mind, I realize my true nature is love, peace, kindness, compassion, etc. In this is the “choiceless awareness” that Krishnamurti speaks of, as well as Byron Katie. Freedom, ironically, comes from real-

izing that we do not have a choice when it comes to who we really are; we do not need to choose, we just ‘be’ who it is that we are, which is the great truth and freedom we are all searching for. This is what the ancient Tao Te Ching means, as well as Tolle, Katie, Krishnamurti and others, when they talk about being in harmony with life, with The Way things are—perceiving ‘what is.’ Tolle sums up the human condition as “lost in thought” and its salvation as “One with life” (2003, p.13). In my experience, there is a great freedom in not having to choose and great suffering from believing I can—and must—make choices, when in fact on one hand I am ruled by what it is I believe and on the other hand I am being lived—the paradox of life. In neither do I actually have agency. So action springing from this state of consciousness—where one is not ruled by thought—is much different than action springing from a state of consciousness where one is completely mind-identified.

When we believe our thoughts, we must act as a result of our beliefs; but if we can realize that we do not have to believe our thoughts, we are free. Most of us don’t realize we can attach or unattach to thoughts and beliefs (actually, as we have seen above, we cannot let go of thoughts, but they can let go of us). The simple way to realize this is to ask yourself, ‘Who would you be without <a given> thought?’ Since it is possible to answer this question, then we must not be our thoughts.

In other words, if we did not have any thoughts, we would still exist. The only way to know this for ourselves, though, is to inquire into it *experientially*. This is why Krishnamurti, at the beginning of every one of his talks, implored his listeners to *inquire into* the subjects under discussion *with him*. The words are useless unless each person takes the journey. Otherwise, it remains in the realm of the conceptual—a fantasy world of the imagination that we mistake for the real. Both Tolle and Katie have echoed this and I have experienced it for myself. Katie puts it, “I cannot wake you or my friend up with my words...you both can do that” (blog post, <http://www.byronkatie.com/> April 9, 2011). If words do not teach then, but only life (i.e. personal experiencing), then we need to take a good, hard look at

what we think we are doing with education. For in our current paradigm, we certainly believe that words can and do teach; I would argue that this premise forms the basis for our current education paradigm, that's how pervasive and dominant is this belief. To reiterate what I've said earlier, this is not to say that forms of knowledge are not communicated through words, but that the most essential understandings cannot be; and through our current education system, we are perpetuating the belief that all things can be understood (or accessed) through thought, because of course, the paradigm believes this to be the case.

This self-experiencing, or, self-inquiry is crucial—in fact, is the source of all learning—as Katie makes clear in this remarkable claim: “*Teacher* implies that we all don't teach equally or have equal wisdom. And that's not true. Everyone has equal wisdom. It is absolutely equally distributed. No one is wiser than anyone else. There's no one who can teach you except yourself” (Katie, 2006b, p.32). There is a correlation, then, between experience (or ‘experiential education’ we could say) and transcendence of thought/non-conceptual intelligence—i.e. not accepting others' beliefs and ideas but experiencing the truth for yourself. Consider Veltheim: “Unless all concepts have fallen away, your investigation of self must continue. There are no levels of progress and no degrees of enlightenment. Either you know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you are not a concept, or you are identified with a concept” (p.130). So concepts, then, have nothing to do with the experience of reality. You cannot *think* yourself into knowing.

Finally, Krishnamurti explains it in the following way:

...any amount of seeking truth, of talking valiantly and in most scholarly ways, or interpreting the innumerable sacred books has no value at all. So you might as well just throw away all the sacred books and start over again, because they, with their interpreters, their teachers, their gurus, have not brought enlightenment to you....So you might just as well put them all aside and learn from yourself, for therein lies truth, not in the “truth” of another. (1971, pp.97-98)

What Krishnamurti says here (along with Veltheim and Katie above) could be very provocative for many people, as it certainly goes against our current paradigm for gaining intelligence. In essence, he is saying that 1. Each of us contains the truth (or ‘answers’) of life 2. Scholarship cannot bring you to truth, and 3. The belief in the efficacy of this scholarship is a severe impediment to real learning. Instead, Krishnamurti says, look within:

You must ask questions, not only of the speaker but of yourself, which is far more important. Ask yourself why you believe, why you follow, why you accept authority.... Question that and find out the answer; and you cannot find out the answer by asking another. You see, you have to stand alone, completely alone.... Therefore you must endlessly ask questions. And the more you ask of yourself, do not try to find an answer but ask and look. (1971, p.109)

So, we learn about life through ourselves—not as a personality, but as a generalized ‘self’ (as in, *What is this thing we call a ‘self’?*). Self-inquiry is the portal, the way through. What is meant by *questioning* or *inquiry* is covered in the next section.

Questions versus Answers: the Open Mind

“Unless the individual is abiding at least 51 percent in that state of not knowing the mind it will be impossible to affect any degree of perfection, which is the true expression of the ultimate source of being..”(Cohen, 1997, p.27)

In the dominant education paradigm, *answering* is deemed particularly important: finding the right answers, knowing the right answers, etc. However, in my experience finding the right *questions* serves to open the mind and lead to insights; the “truth” (see Ralston below) presents itself in response to penetrating questions. Peter Ralston sums this up beautifully in the following:

Questioning serves to lead us to the truth. It is always appropriate. The truth is what is. Directly experiencing this, no question needs to be asked. If there is a question then something is still unknowing, isn't it? And there is always something still unknown. The goal is to be conscious of what's true; the goal isn't to be certain about some conclusion or other. (Winter 2012 Cheng Hsin Newsletter, p.16)

By distinguishing between being conscious of what's true and being able to be certain (or know), Ralston points to the difference between *seeing* or *knowing directly* rather than through the mind, for only the mind can feel it's sure about something. The Tao Te Ching explains the paradox this way: "When they think that they know the answers, people are difficult to guide. When they know that they don't know, people can find their own way" (Mitchell, 2009, p.65).

So, essentially what this says is: One must find her/his own way, and it starts with asking, not answering—with not-knowing, not knowing. According to Byron Katie (2007),

To think you know something is to believe the story of a past. It's insane. Every time you think you know something, it hurts, because in reality there's nothing to know. You're trying to hold on to something that doesn't exist. There is nothing to know, and there is no one who wants to know it. It's so much easier to know that you don't know. It's kinder, as well. I love the don't-know mind. When you know that you don't know, you're naturally open to reality and can let it take you wherever it wants to. You can drop your identity and be who you really are, the unlimited, the nameless. (p.236)

So, of course, Katie is speaking from her experience of this. To adopt this as a belief does no good. Test it. This leaving of the known is such profound opposition to the very foundation that our education paradigm rests on. In the following, Katie offers a good description of the mind by

metaphorically creating various ‘parts’ of the mind (which I’ve highlighted in bold) in order to help describe how it functions when it is allowed to question what it thinks it knows¹¹:

As we question what we believe, we come to see that we’re not who we thought we were. The transformation comes out of the infinite **polarity of mind**, which we’ve rarely experienced, because the **I-know mind** has been so much in control. And as we inquire, our world changes, because we’re working with the projector—mind—and not with what is projected. We lose our entire world, the world as we understood it. And each time we inquire, reality becomes kinder.

The part that is doing the questioning is the **neutral part of the mind, the center**, which can take one polarity of mind to the other. The neutral part offers the confused, stuck, I-know mind the option to open itself to the polarity of mind that holds the sane, clear, loving answers that make sense to the I-know mind. The neutral part doesn’t have a motive or desire, a *should* or a *shouldn’t*; it’s a bridge for this polarity to cross over. And as the I-know mind is educated, it dissolves into the polarity of wisdom. What’s left is absolutely sane, undivided, and free. Of course, all this is just a metaphor, since there is only one mind. The bottom line is that when the mind is closed, the heart is closed; when the mind is open, the heart is open. So if you want to open your heart, question your thinking. (2007, pp.25-26, bold mine)

Katie’s final statement here about the open mind is a profound reversal,

¹¹ It’s appropriate to note that to anyone reading the following quote, it’s unlikely to make sense unless one has experienced this for oneself. In my experience, the “polarity” to which Katie refers, is essentially the opposite point of view; when the mind starts to see something from multiple perspectives, as it does through inquiry, it realizes it can’t rest in just one perspective any longer and becomes flexible or unstuck.

I would argue, from what we now commonly believe: normally we understand (and therefore teach) that if someone is not being kind, for example, there is something they *don't know*—as in, they don't know to be nice; yet Katie is saying the opposite, that it's precisely because they firmly believe they *know* something in relation to that situation that they are being unkind. Their mind, in other words, is closed. So, for example, Katie doesn't say, "So if you want to open your heart... "...become kind," or "...try to be nice," or "...see the other as yourself" which is how in our current education (and generally speaking) we usually try to 'teach' children to be kind and compassionate. (This is the modus operandi of what's called Character Education.) In other words, Katie explains that an open heart—kindness, compassion, presence, empathy, a desire to help, give, understand, and comfort—is our natural way but is covered over by thinking that would cause us to act otherwise, and therefore can only be uncovered by investigating this thinking, not by piling on more concepts such as "be nice." I have experienced this over and over in my experience of inquiry, that my true nature is pure love and this is self-evident. Veltheim (2000, p.127) says, "Your mind can't conceive of neutrality because it's locked into dualistic thinking. Either there is peace or there is strife. Either there is freedom or there is limitation." And yet, questioning serves to allow the mind to experience this elusive neutrality. So, continuing the example above, the mind might say, "I am not kind" and the pain of this causes one to act unkindly. However, through questioning this, one can see for oneself that one can be both kind and unkind which begins to loosen the duality (either/or thinking); questioning further, one can discover that without any painful thinking, one is always kind.

Attention (Listening, Seeing) as Intelligence

In this section, I go into the nature of attention so that we can see what is meant by it and discover what its function and capability is, in assisting awakening. Nisargadatta Maharaj (the Vedanta sage) said, "Intelligence is

the door to freedom, and alert attention is the mother of intelligence” (in Katra & Targ, 1999, p.136). So, attention is required for intelligence to be present, but what is it exactly?

Krishnamurti (1969) goes into detail on the nature of attention. Firstly, he distinguishes it from concentration: “Attention is not the same thing as concentration. Concentration is exclusion; attention, which is total awareness, excludes nothing” (p.31). Furthermore, he equates “whole attention” with awareness, saying that anything can be seen and understood if this is present. Finally, he maintains that only in authentic caring is one able to give full attention:

If you want to understand the beauty of a bird, a fly, or a leaf, or a person with all his complexities, you have to give your whole attention which is awareness. And you can give your whole attention only when you care, which means that you really love to understand—then you give your whole heart and mind to find out.

...Such a state of attention is total energy; in such awareness the totality of yourself is revealed in an instant.” (1969, pp.31-32).

So then, the wholeness of something is “revealed” when total attention is given—it is not a ‘doing’ by the observer; in other words, thought is not present. So it is attention that reveals the self, not thought. Not only is true perception only possible outside of thought, but the ‘self’ idea also disappears in a state of complete attention: “Have you ever noticed that when you are in a state of complete attention the observer, the thinker, the centre, the ‘me,’ comes to an end? In that state of attention thought begins to wither away” (1969, p.102).

Since it is thought holding together the “I” *and* preventing clear seeing, then in a state of total attention where there is *only* seeing, there can be no “I” and no thought; there can’t be total attention and thought simultaneously. As Krishnamurti says, “Verbally we can go only so far: what lies beyond cannot be put into words because the word is not the thing. Up to now we can describe, explain, but no words or explanations can open the

door. What will open the door is daily awareness and attention...” (1969, p.33)...i.e., more knowledge cannot “open the door” to clear seeing, or awakening; only total attention, which is awareness, can do that.

In the following, Krishnamurti explains that learning comes from observing and seeing clearly, not from accumulating knowledge, which is thought. This is so essential to understand in light of our education’s focus on accumulating knowledge.

If we can observe very clearly, that in itself is a form of discipline. We are using that word *discipline* not in its orthodox sense. The very meaning of that word is “to learn.” The root of that word means “to learn”; not to conform, not to control, not to suppress, but to learn and to see very clearly what is happening outwardly, to see that this is a unitary movement, not a separate movement; to see it as a whole, not divided. (p.118)

If discipline means to learn, what is the **quality of mind** that is capable of learning? **Attention is the essence of learning.** Attention means hearing, listening; hearing with the ear as well as “behind” the ear. Attention is a natural function of the nervous system; it cannot be so much cultivated as denied. It is denied when the brain, or mind, is occupied with a problem, a goal, or with any prolonged particular object of attention. (Krishnamurti in conversation with David Moody, 2011, p.254; bold mine)

Interestingly, the word *disciple* has the same root word and meaning, which is *to learn* and not, “to follow” as the word seems to have become in common usage. And especially in light of what Krishnamurti says below, we seem to mistake following what someone else says (whether that is a teacher, a parent, a textbook, etc.) for learning; indeed, in my view of our current education paradigm, we equate the two. Krishnamurti explains that, not only *can* we learn from/through ourselves, but that we must—that *that* is the true learning:

First of all, I would like to say how important it is to find out for oneself what learning is, because apparently all of you have come to learn what somebody else has to say. To find out one must obviously listen, and it is one of the most difficult things to do. It is quite an art, because most of us have our own opinions, conclusions, points of view, dogmatic beliefs and assertions, our own peculiar little experiences, our knowledge, which will obviously prevent us from actually listening to another. All these opinions and judgments will crowd in and hinder the act of listening.

Can you listen without any conclusion, without any comparison and judgment, just listen as you would listen to music, to something you feel you really love? Then you listen not only with your mind, with your intellect, but also with your heart; not sentimentally—which is rather terrible—or emotionally, but with care, objectively, sanely, listen with attention to find out. You know what you think; you have your own experiences, your own conclusions, your own knowledge. For the moment at least, put them aside. (1969, pp.116-117)

Krishnamurti says at least three important things here:

- 1) That one can discover independent of others' knowledge by asking oneself
- 2) That listening (and therefore real learning, as opposed to say, memorizing) can only happen outside of thinking/knowledge
- 3) That the heart has something to do with real listening/learning¹²

Finally, in the following, Tolle agrees with Krishnamurti that the 'self' or in Tolle's case, the "perceiver" dissolves in a state of total awareness, and that the clear seeing or "knowing" happens because the "I" is *united* so to speak with that which she/he is giving her/his full attention to:

¹² I go further into the nature of the heart in the next section on pure intelligence.

Wisdom is not a product of thought. The deep *knowing* that is wisdom arises through the simple act of giving someone or something your full attention. **Attention is primordial intelligence, consciousness itself.** It dissolves the barriers created by conceptual thought, and with this comes the recognition that nothing exists in and by itself. It joins the perceiver and the perceived in a unifying field of awareness. It is the healer of separation. (Tolle, 2003, p.16; italics mine)

Again, this 'knowing' that we call wisdom is not a result of thought.

World Beyond Thought

Non-Duality, the Absolute, Unity Consciousness

There is no approximation in direct experience.

Jane Katra & Russell Targ

~

The Direct Experience of Pure Intelligence

In this section, we look at the experience of intelligence that one is able to have once it is understood that thought has nothing to do with true intelligence and that its presence at all can only stop one from encountering the intelligence that is innate to each of us, that is, who we are. Likewise, it also explains why staying on the level of thought (which includes logic) in an effort to either validate or invalidate someone's words (including this book) can never penetrate to the truth, for it rests *beyond* thought.

In his book *The Living Universe*, Duane Elgin references our direct experience¹³ and its reliability as “knowingness,” as “wisdom.”

The wisdom of creation is directly accessible to us as the hum of knowing-resonance at the core of our being. When we relax into the center of ordinary existence, we penetrate into the profound intelligence out of which the universe continuously arises.

¹³ A reminder to the reader that *direct experience* is that which is encountered, we might say, unmediated by concepts. It's experiencing the phenomena directly, as it.

If we look within, we will discover immense wisdom within our direct experience....The direct experience of life carries its own meaning and requires no intellectual explanation....When we allow our ordinary experience of knowing to relax into itself, we find a self-confirming presence. When we rest in the simplicity of “knowing that we know” without the need for thoughts to confirm our knowing, we directly enter our stream of being. The nature of the soul is knowingness itself; when we rest within our soulful knowing, there is no distance between the knower and that which is known. (2009, pp.108-109)

Elgin, as Tolle above (“...joins the perceiver and the perceived”), echoes Krishnamurti’s probably most famous idiom here, “the observer is the observed.” It seems like the meaning of this is such a puzzle, which it is for the intellect: it certainly cannot be understood by the rational mind but only by experiencing it. However, I can explain through logic that if there is a ‘knower’ and ‘that which is known,’ it stands to reason that there is a space there; that is, until they are unified, there is distance. So in other words, there is separation or what Krishnamurti calls “fragmentation,” and thus what we are calling ‘the known’ is not really known at all but *thought* (‘thought’ being used here as a verb). Katra and Targ explain the illusion of separation between knower and known, or observer and observed, in the following way:

...self-knowledge comes from experience, not books, authority figures, or religious dogma. When we directly experience who we are, from the spiritual perspective of consciousness, we realize that the perception of ourselves as a separate entity has no real independent existence, because our consciousness has no boundaries. (1999, p.23)

Byron Katie is also referring to the illusion of separation below, and describes then how a mind that is not attached to any idea can “go anywhere”

or, in Krishnamurti's terms, it can give its *total attention*; that is, it can unite with anything and *be that*. This is what it means to *know directly*:

As the mind realizes itself, it stops identifying with its own thoughts. This leaves a lot of open space. A mature mind can entertain any idea; it is never threatened by opposition or conflict, because it knows that it can't be hindered. When it has no position to defend or identify to protect it, it can go anywhere. (2007, p.25)

It's logical to see that if a mind is needing to see things a certain way in order to feel secure (as in *This is who I am*; *This is the way things are*; *This is scary*; *This might hurt me*) then it can't go everywhere—it must have boundaries to maintain a sense of security. But a mind that realizes that in this very act of identifying with certain beliefs (ex. with ideas of safety) is the creation of its opposite (ex. the opposite of safety, or, danger), then the mind can see that its needing—or ability to create—safety is an illusion, and it's free to wander into any territory, to entertain any possibility.

The Heart as the Seat of Intelligence

Above, Krishnamurti asks, *Can you listen with your heart?* Byron Katie and Esther Veltheim also clearly state that the heart literally is the place in the body that contains the voice of wisdom, as opposed to the brain, which, as the mechanism of thought, is where we usually attribute wisdom, or answers. (Below, Katie refers to the heart as the “gentler polarity of the mind”):

This work is meditation. It's like diving into yourself. Contemplate the questions, drop down into the depths of yourself, listen, and wait. The answer will find your question. The mind will join the heart, no matter how closed down or hopeless you think you are: the gentler polarity of mind (which I call the heart) will meet the polarity that is confused because it hasn't yet been enlightened to

itself. When the mind asks sincerely, the heart will respond. You may begin to experience revelations about yourself and your world, revelations that will transform your whole life, forever. (http://thework.com/downloads/little_book/English_LB.pdf)

In saying that “The answer will find your question” (i.e. as opposed to “The question will find the answer”), Katie makes clear that the answers already exist ‘inside’ us—the answers appear to precede the questions.

Veltheim agrees with Katie: “Only when the mind ceases judging, aiming, and censoring, can the silent voice of the heart be heard. Therein lies the Truth” and “If these words trigger an understanding that you can’t put into words, then don’t even try. When all tears and questions temporarily subside, it means the words have by-passed the mind. The heart has ‘absorbed’ what is being communicated” (2000, p.239).

Katie also exposes that we cannot access our hearts’ wisdom if we cannot let the mind ask its questions. The directive of “Quiet the mind” doesn’t work because the mind is the ‘one’ who takes that directive and attempts to quiet itself; clearly, there is a problem there. The quiet mind (or transcending thought) comes as a result of clearing the mind, so to speak:

We buy a home for our children, for our bodies; we get a garage for our car; we have doghouses for our dogs; but we won’t give the mind a home. And we treat it like an outcast. We shame it and blame it and shame it again. But if you let the mind ask its questions, then the heart will rise with the answer. And “rising” is just a metaphor. The heart will reveal the answer, and the mind can finally rest at home in the heart and come to see that it and the heart are one. That’s what these four questions are about. You write down the problem and investigate, and the heart gives you the answer you’ve always known. (2006b, p.53)

