

## Four Sins – Begin with the End in Mind

“A misuse of memory,” Alan W. Anderson, Professor Emeritus of Comparative Religions, summarized his eighteen-hour dialogue with J. Krishnamurti. “That is the root.” Couple this with Einstein’s protégé, David Bohm’s observation;

“We don’t really understand the nature of our thought process; we’re not aware of how it works, how it is disrupting not only our society and our individual lives but also the way the brain and nervous system operate, making us unhealthy or perhaps even damaging the system.”

Operating beneath our level of awareness Anderson’s “misuse of memory” operates, creating our reality, what we think and imagine, our actions, the way we understand and treat others, including nature, providing a firm foundation for the Dalai Lama’s intent on “discovering a reality behind appearances:”

Our tacit acceptance of things as they seem is called ignorance, which is not just a lack of knowledge about how people and things actually exist but an active mistaking of their fundamental nature. True self-knowledge involves exposing and facing misconceptions about ourselves... Our skewed perceptions of body and mind lead to disastrous mistakes... so we are consistently being led into trouble as if pulled by a ring in our nose. By developing insight into this process, we can free ourselves, and those around us, from these endless scenarios of pain.

Appreciating Krishnamurti’s observation; “The crisis isn’t out there, in the world. The crisis is really inward and we are unwilling [or incapable] to face this.” What do we do?

Implicit in Krishnamurti, the Dalai Lama’s and rare others experience are two realities; the one we all know, crated by our subjective experience, memory, knowledge and culture, and another that is free from these boundaries. Buddhists refer to the first as a ‘relative reality,’ conditioned, subjective and personal. And the other they describe as ‘absolute,’ meaning free from original sin, our misuse of memory, subjective distortions, empty of conditioned thought, luminous, aware and fresh. Without experiencing both, we are left with only one, with its endless and compounding self-inflicted conflicts. Discovering the second, an immediate, present and vast unconditioned state, we open ourselves to insight with its infinite potentials, largely excluded by what “we think reality” is.

Insight draws upon conditioned experience and knowledge, but is not limited to, or by them. David observed; “the primary function of insight is to reveal the limitations and misperceptions implicit in our misuse of memory which opens perception to infinite possibilities not found, or excluded by our conditioning,” a view consistent with the Dalai Lama. Without our discovery of this primary, unconditioned state, and its alternative reality, we are forever trapped our subjective house of mirrors, each experience acting like a pinball reflexively lighting up memories, “so we are consistently being led into trouble as if pulled by a ring in our nose.” Trapped by original sin, that is all most see or know. Like a Chinese finger puzzle, the more our ‘misuse of memory as thought’ tries to resolve this mess, the larger and more complex the trap grows.

More of the same will only compound our problems. It is not education, but education of a certain kind, that will save us.

David Orr, With Earth in Mind

Bohm again;

Existing knowledge cannot meet this challenge. Something much deeper is needed, a completely new approach. I am suggesting that the very means by which we try to solve our problems is the problem. The source of our problems is within the structure of thought itself.

By existing knowledge David means the nature and structure that creates our subjective reality, simply, what we call thought. But, for most, that is all there is, a “relative reality” that expresses as the “self-inflicted limitations” Joe Pearce describes.

For centuries this misuse of memory and its misperceptions, has been realized, leading to various practices designed to wake us up and out of our collective bad-dream. Some call this first step

mindfulness, contemplation on silence or emptiness, the negation of thought, which thought grasps, creating a goal, involving will. Thought then struggles with itself to achieve or become something is not. There is a lot of activity, but the state of the mind remains essentially the same.

For some this frustration leads to a second insight; “attention is not conditioned memory.” Active thought and imagination demands, dulls, distracts and fragments attention, with its seductive or scary images. The more that thinking and thought occupy the mind, the less attentive that mind is. Daydreaming is a clear example. Verbally or nonverbally talking to ourselves, and texting while driving, are others.

With complete attention there is no attention left for thought. No imagined and projected image. No distraction. Athletes call complete attention “The Zone,” and others call it “enlightenment.” Learning and performance are optimized, and more importantly, not being distracted by projected memories, this expansive, sensitive and aware quality of attention opens to insight with its infinite potential. One realizes; instead of thought trying to control thought, something it simply can’t do, giving complete attention to what is present negates thoughts activity without effort. Trying to achieve something is replaced by what Krishnamurti called the ‘art of listening and observing,” just listening, just observing completely. Childlike wonder and curiosity, for example. Attention, not will, is the active catalyst that transforms the mind.

Complete attention breaks thoughts’ enchantment in the present, but what do we do with the centuries of ghost-memories that we have inherited, reincarnating moment-by-moment by the associated pinball of this or that present trigger? Like blinking at a bright light, these mental phantoms are conditioned reflexes, emerging mechanically and automatic. Once evoked, each demanding their fair share of attention.

For centuries, in Tibet, for example, various exercises have been presented to awaken an insight into the phantom and automatic nature of mental images, revealing that the true nature of imagined mental images are simply that, images, like theater. It was David Bohm who described the essence of thought as theater, more deeply as play, not to be reified, and therefore misperceived as an independent reality, rather, thoughts are mental toys to be played with. Failing to understand thoughts true nature, brings us back to Anderson’s misuse of memory.

With this insight, skill and the rigor of a scientist, a strict form or logic deconstructs the false beliefs and associated emotions we have assumed about our self, others, and our identification with all the beliefs that make up culture. Rather than culture, we will identify with our true nature, entangled life and creation. The beauty of this steady practice of negation is the way it frees the attention wasted in sustaining our misperceptions, to always awakening and returning complete attention to the true ground of consciousness, with its implicit compassion and forever movement towards wholeness and wellbeing for everything entangled.

Imagine what you would do with all that energy and attention, no longer wasted reflexively reincarnating and feeding false images of self, others and culture, with their comparisons, envies, jealousies, fears, judgments, and endless conflicts? Free from false psychological identification, conditioned memory and thought take their proper place, like fixing a tire, baking a cake, artistic or scientific inquiry. Free from our self-inflicted limitations, perceiving directly how entangled and interdependent we are with everything; every perception and action becomes one of wholeness for everything entangled. This, very simply, is what I believe David Bohm, the Dalai Lama, Krishnamurti and others mean by; “something much deeper is needed, a completely new approach.

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