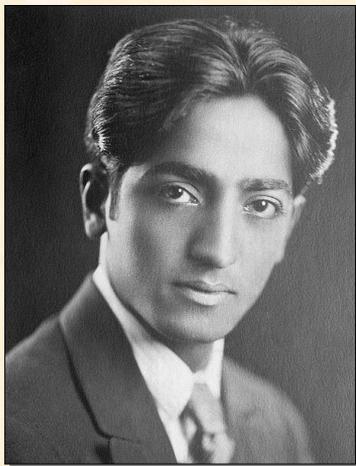


'If you want to understand, you must look through my mind.'

THE KRISHNAMURTI SYNDROME

Ludo Noens

In 1986, Jiddu Krishnamurti, the remarkable Indian speaker and philosophical teacher, passed away. For many people he was and still is the most incorruptible and radical 'spiritual leader' of the 20th century. To analyse this extremely sharp witted and profound Indian thinker in the context of a controversial psychiatric disease such as multiple personality disorder or MPD (recently reclassified as *dissociative identity disorder* or *DID*) may offend a good number of people. But then again, what is a 'psychiatric illness'? After all, is psychiatry not largely a pseudoscientific specialism that uses the word illness very lavishly?



Anyway, a careful reading of two standard biographies indicates that the functioning of Krishnamurti's mind indeed very often showed similarities with that of many 'cases' from the scientific, clinical MPD literature. Possibly, the MPD-crisis Krishnamurti endured as a young man, may have laid the basis for his destructive opinion on the status of thought, memory and the Ego.

Central in Krishnamurti's philosophy is the notion that the, mostly blindly assimilated and automatically reacting, human personality is erroneously perceived as an autonomous and self-determined ego. For Krishnamurti the very idea of the ego is a boring and conflict sowing illusion, sustained by the sensation of continuity

(memory, psychological time). By the way, this point of view is not only in accordance with the millennia-old Hindu *Upanishads* but also to a certain extent with the most recent findings of neuroscientists studying the functioning of the brain.

ALTERS

Multiple personality disorder (or dissociative identity disorder) is described in psychiatric literature as an extreme form of dissociation or 'pinching off' of streams of consciousness. This results in a splitting of the mind into two or more personalities, each with their own memories, behavioural patterns and social relationships. These more or less distinct personalities (or *alters*: male, female and/or child) can exert control of the body each on their turn or sometimes simultaneously ('co-consciousness'). Often the transition from one *alter* to another is sudden and the result of a stressful incident.

The analysis of 236 cases of MPD by psychiatrist Colin A. Ross in 1989 demonstrates the *weirdness* of the syndrome: 28,6% of the patients had an *alter* who presented himself as a 'demon', 28,1% an *alter* who confirmed to be another living person, 20,6% had a 'deceased relative' as *alter* and 21,1% even someone of a 'different race'!

Characteristic are the so-called 'absences' or holes in the memory of the rather passive *core* personality, as well as the psychotic feelings of unreality (uncontrolled behaviour, delusions).

During the last four decades, the number of cases of MPD and the number of scientific papers published on the topic in psychiatric journals has increased considerably. Sceptics see a connection with the MPS-biography *Sybil* published in 1974 in the United States. This disturbing, possibly exaggerated bestseller may have appealed too much to the imagination of its readers.

Anyhow, the diagnosis and treatment of this psychiatric syndrome, which is often confounded with schizophrenia and hysteria, is not easy.

The cause of MPD is a matter of debate. Generally, there is a link with emotional traumas. An extreme sexual, aggressive or relational conflict can provoke in predisposed persons the creation of these separate personalities (*alters*). Sexual abuse and maltreatment in early childhood seem to be the most common causes. MPD can also occur as the result of a physical accident, traumatic mourning, warfare, unbearable pain and even near-death experience.

Interpretations on the how and why vary according to the different psychological and psychiatric denominations. Some authors speak in terms of 'dissociation of dreadful experiences', others of mere impulses or 'negative' qualities of the personality, that will eventually start to lead their own life. Freud viewed it as an exteriorization of forbidden taboo-emotions, exhibited independent of one's own consciousness; for him this disorder was not a creation of individual personalities resulting from dissociation, but rather a combination of repressed complexes that arose from the subconscious.

It is clear that every interpretation of MPD is intricately linked with the interpretation given of the precise nature of ego and personality.

CONTROVERSIAL

Anyway, multiple personality disorder remains a unique and enigmatic condition of the mind, even if it resembles more familiar dissociative states of consciousness. According to Dr. Arnold M. Ludwig, epileptic attacks, *delirium tremens*, somnambulism, hypnosis, involuntary tics and even dreams are less explicit forms of MPD.

Cryptomnesia, responsible a.o. for unintentional plagiarism may also be related. Modern psychology defines the term *implicit memory*, as a 'place' where unconscious recollections are stored. If these recollections happen to be remembered consciously, the concerned person can experience this as 'inspiration'.

Finally, a majority of sceptical physicians explain MPD as a mere creative and deceptive interaction of patient and attending (hypno)therapist. According to the American professor Michael G. Kenny, this process is ratified through currently accepted religious, cultural and social factors. In the US, the affliction is nowadays diagnosed as dissociative identity disorder, to put it simple a problem of identity...

It is a fact that the couch of a psychiatrist is an ideal place for – conscious or unconscious – uncontrolled fantasies. But as far as MPD is concerned, clinical tests and more recently MRI-brain scans, have demonstrated that not all the stories can be dismissed as simulation, suggestion or role-playing by the patient.

Among Krishnamurti's statements and experiences, occasional paranormal and mystical side-effects of the multiple personality syndrome (a.o. clairvoyance, telepathy and precognition) are particularly interesting

'Extrasensory and supernatural experiences are also reported more frequently by MPD patients,' says Dr. C.A. Ross, '(...) a finding consistent with the overlap between MPD and spiritism and other paranormal phenomena in the 19th century.'

In this context it is worth mentioning that at the end of the 19th century, particularly the British Society for Psychical Research made a connection between MPS and obsession and psychic trance.

Dr. R.A. Phillips often experienced a 'stream of energy', a 'driving force', a feeling of being 'high' in the presence of the famous American MPD case Truddi Chase. Somehow, he felt there was a link with the disturbances in the video- and audio-registrations during his sessions with Truddi.

'(...) during one of the sessions, I was lifted in a white light,' remembers one of the 92 (!) alters of Truddi Chase in her (their) autobiography.

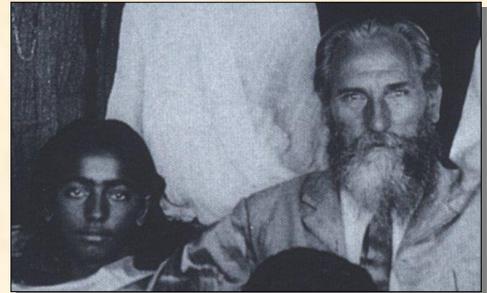
That light is described as dazzling, wide, without beginning or end, the core of being. This reminds us of 'the illusion of the ego' and the 'union with the fire of endless and formless life', described by so many mystics.

KRISHNAMURTI

Is there a relation between MPS and the extraordinary life and thinking of Krishnamurti?

Jiddu Krishnamurti was born in 1895 in the south Indian village Madanapalle, the eighth child of Brahmin parents. His mother died when he was ten, probably a trauma from which the highly sensitive Krishna never recovered.

When he was thirteen he was 'discovered' in Adyar, Madras, by C.W. Leadbeater, one of the bigshots of the Theosophical Society, an esoteric organization of which Krishna's father, a government officer, was a member. Leadbeater, whose homosexuality brought him subsequently into great trouble, claimed to be clairvoyant. According to Leadbeater it was not so much the physical appearance or the behavior of the dreamy-eyed and weak boy (it is said that Krishnamurti made a sickly, almost mentally retarded impression at that time) that struck him, but rather the beauty of his *aura*, 'that contained no selfishness'. Something to remember in the light of Krishnamurti's subsequent specific statements.



The boy was adopted by Annie Besant, then president of the Theosophical Society, and prepared to become the 'vehicle' of Maitreya Buddha, the World Teacher. Both Besant and Leadbeater believed that this Avatar would soon 'reveal' himself to the world.

In 1911 the Order of the Star of the East was created, to prepare for the advent of the bodhisattva Maitreya. Krishnamurti started to give conferences for an ever-increasing number of disciples, convinced that he was chosen to receive the World Teacher.

The summer of 1922 begins for Krishnamurti, 26 years old, in a little house in Ojai (California) what later will be called 'the Process'. Starting from August 3rd he starts his daily 30-minute meditation on the Maitreya. Two weeks later he is forced to reduce this meditation to 15 minutes, because of an increasing neck pain. His brother

Nityananda, who is also present in Ojai, notices *'a painful lump of what seemed to be a contracted muscle, about the size of a large marble.'*

August 19th: the pain in the neck reaches a climax; Krishnamurti, albeit in a state of 'reduced awareness', stays in contact with his surroundings. In the distance, on the road in front of the house, he watches a roadman at work. Krishnamurti suddenly IS the roadman; he IS the pickaxe of the man, the stone, the grass, the tree beside the working man, the birds, the dust, the noise, a passing carriage and the driver of the carriage:

'I was in everything, or rather everything was in me, inanimate and animate, the mountain, the worm, and all breathing things. All day long I remained in this happy condition. I could not eat anything, and again at about six, I began losing my physical body, and naturally the physical elemental did what it liked; I was semi-conscious.'

August 20th: Krishnamurti does not tolerate anyone near him; he does not want to be touched by anybody:

'I could feel them in rather a curious way and their vibrations got on my nerves.'

In the evening, very weak and exhausted, his head seems to be full of needles. The terrible pain persists. He refuses to stay in bed any longer: everything suddenly appears so dirty and filthy. He leaves the house and sits down, cross-legged, under the pepper tree in the garden. There Krishnamurti has an out-of-the-body experience: he sees himself sitting, from a distance. Then a bright star appears above his head; he 'sees' the Maitreya and K.H. (a Tibetan 'Master').

'I have drunk at the fountain of joy and eternal Beauty. I am God-intoxicated!' he declares later.

According to the notes of his brother Nitya, the following evenings, between 6h30 and 8h, Krishnamurti is restless; he mourns and whispers strange words. It is as if he is possessed, he hears somebody call, he feels the presence of some unseen person and he sees unfamiliar faces and strange lights. Confused, he thinks Rosalind Williams, a young American who takes care of him, is his mother who died seventeen years ago. He remembers little anecdotes from his childhood long time ago, and so on.

THE BELOVED

Three years later, Krishnamurti's younger brother Nitya, to whom he was very devoted, died from tuberculosis. After a short period of intense sorrow, he discovers a new force:

'On the physical plane we could be separated but now we are inseparable... For my brother and I are one.'

On December 28th 1925, on the occasion of a speech for the members of The Order of the Star in Ommen, the Netherlands, the World Teacher reveals himself for the first time through Krishnamurti. The words he pronounces shortly afterwards, remind us of those of Jesus of Nazareth:

'... I belong to all people, to all who really love, to all who are suffering. And if you want to walk, you must walk with me. If you want to understand, you must look through my mind. If you want to feel, you must look through my heart.'



Two years later, *coup de théâtre*. During a memorable meeting, Krishnamurti declares to an astonished audience, that he rejects all his previous claims of authority. He refuses to be considered any longer as a leader and explains that the 'Truth is a pathless land', that can only be found through one's own search for it. After forcing the members of the Star to become independent of him, he dissolves the Order in 1929 and resigns from the Theosophical Society the next year.

What has happened? Krishnamurti has united himself definitively with his 'Beloved': *'...It is no good asking me who is the Beloved. Of what use is explanation? For you will not understand the Beloved until you are able to see Him in every animal, in every blade of grass, in every person that is suffering, in every individual.'*

From that day on, unwearingly, Krishnamurti will travel around the world to bring his personal message, a message that did not change much during the following years and that essentially tells us the following: Do not lean on an authority in your search of the Truth; drop the past and free your mind of the psychological thinking. Because all disharmonies, emotional pain and the inability to find peace and true love are the result of a useless and inefficient train of thoughts.

According to Krishnamurti this spiritual transformation cannot be reached in the long run, but here and now. Or never.

'... I know the way out of this incessant misery,' wrote Krishnamurti, *'and I want to help people out of the bog of this sorrow.'*

PURE SEEING

Who or what is the 'Beloved'? A question that needs no asking according to Krishnamurti. But how and when can we then see Her/Him?

But first of all: what has all this to do with the so-called multiple personality disorder?

The demanding and often paradoxical 'teachings' of Krishnamurti question the individuality, the 'ego' itself, and that is precisely why his words are a source of confusion and often of irritation, for the average, society oriented, individual. Krishnamurti says:

'Individuality is the name, the superficial form education has given a person. The uniqueness of the individual cannot be found in the superficial, but only in the complete absence of consciousness.'

For Krishnamurti, even the laboriously acquired culture, with its religious, philosophical and to a certain extent even its scientific and artistic aspects, is unnecessary ballast for the human mind. Only the practical thinking, focused on the daily life, can find some mercy in his eyes. Krishnamurti was indeed not against technology, as witnessed by his genuine interest in cars, watches and computers.

The act of thinking, that carries with it values from the past, is a burden, says Krishnamurti.

'Only a mind liberated from the past can perceive everything as new and this is the source of joy.'

PHYSICAL ELEMENTAL

In their biography of Krishnamurti, Mary Lutyens and Pupul Jayakar wonder who or what the man really was. A number of people who followed him over the years, have

reported that Krishnamurti's 'personality' indeed was an aberrant one: he KNEW what he was talking about.

It is remarkable that this man who emphasized the superficial and artificial character of individuality, often suffered from 'symptoms' that are very reminiscent of multiple personality. In this respect it is interesting to note that Krishnamurti repeatedly used the third person when talking about himself and that he assured that since the events in Ojai, his personality had been 'erased'.

But during walks or dinner with intimates, he could suddenly feel exhausted and was forced then to retire. It was on such occasions that his headaches began, ever worse until finally, Krishnamurti had to admit he 'was leaving'. At that moment, a 'new' personality took over the control of his body; a childlike 'entity', called 'the physical elemental' by people that surrounded him. The headache was then at its climax, leaving Krishnamurti's body distorted and totally worn out.

When this still happened to him in 1948, the 'child' spoke with grief about Nitya, Krishnamurti's brother who had died 23 years before. It is remarkable that the 'child' spoke about Krishnamurti 'who has left' in the third person, and with a certain respect and even fear.

Mary Lutyens wrote:

'Sometimes he behaved as if I was his mother and he a four-year old boy.'

And a sort of energy is generated, that fills the room and that causes the atmosphere to vibrate in a way that others also feel (cf. MPD Truddi Chase). A 'force', rather than individuality finally takes over his body; yet the 'child' refers to it as a 'he' as well.

The awful pain in his spine and his scalp (obviously the arousing of the *kundalini*) experienced in Ojai apparently was essential.

Krishnamurti:

'They burned me to create space. They wanted to find out how much could come of him.'

And:

'He came completely and took charge of things.'

It is noteworthy that during sjaman initiation, there is also some talk of 'the cutting to pieces' of the candidate by ancestral spirits.

Krishnamurti always had the feeling that his body was 'protected' to enable 'the teaching'. Protected by whom or what remained a mystery, even to him. He assured that during his conferences, he had no problem at all to talk: words would come without thinking.

THE INFINITE

At the end of his life, realizing that despite his years of touring, nobody seemed to really understand him, Krishnamurti began to fear he was a sort of unique mutant, especially with respect to the emptiness of his brain, the 'observing' without thinking, the tuning in on 'the force'. He wondered whether it was perhaps after all the work of Maitreya Buddha, idea he had rejected years ago as being only 'an image'.

There was the so-called Process when he was 26 years old, but apparently his brain had been 'empty' from early childhood. Except when he was in conversation with people around him or when he was writing. He repeatedly described his astonishment about this fact.

'This was already the case when he was still a boy', he noted about himself, *'he didn't think. He just looked and listened and that was it.'*

As a child, Krishnamurti was beaten almost daily at school and he was often sent out of the classroom: his inability to study, to learn by heart was dismissed by his teachers as extreme laziness.

When referring to the 'force' present at moments of the Process, Krishnamurti speaks in terms such as 'the infinite', 'the sacred', 'the unknowable immensity', 'the other'. It is experienced as ecstasy, bliss and joy.

And:

'The brain was completely empty; all reactions had stopped; during all these hours, I was not aware of the feeling of emptiness, experienced only later while writing it down; but this knowledge is merely descriptive, it is not the essence.'

ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

Many of the phenomena reported for Krishnamurti are also described for MPD cases. For instance the clairvoyance that he practiced as an adolescent, and that he later ignored. And also the dissociation that K. made between himself and his body, which he nursed as 'a rider would nurse his horse' according to M. Lutyens.

'Sometimes, I make statements without actually knowing I am making them', K. says unambiguously. 'It is as if messages from another source are passed through me.'

MPD and related dissociative disorders are very often the result of emotional traumas during childhood and adolescence. In the abnormal psychology (to avoid the word *psychiatry*) one uses the expression 'acute dissociative complaints' for a mild form of MPD. The symptoms are the following:

'The person reacts – during a period varying from one minute to a couple of hours – as if he is again confronted with the original traumatic situation. Persons that are around at that moment may be mistaken for persons present during these original traumatic events.' (Cf. Krishnamurti versus Rosalind during the Process in Ojai).

Was Krishnamurti as a highly predisposed boy 'torn apart' by the sudden death of his mother? Anyhow, the appearance of the deceased to the mourner is a common phenomenon in cases of traumatic mourning. Krishnamurti often saw his mother shortly after she had passed away and he would follow her through all the rooms of the house.

He also saw, felt and talked to his dead brother Nitya: his body was weeping, K. told, but HE did not feel particularly upset. We are talking here about *dissociation*.

But Krishnamurti surpasses any case of abnormal psychology. He discovered that special 'emptiness-plenitude' between and beyond any particular personality, and he managed to let it flower. The result was a periodical being in touch with what he as a young man would call 'the Beloved' and later 'the Intelligence'...

THE THINKER AND THE THOUGHT

Krishnamurti was a clever observator and apparently had a good self-knowledge. But even to him the nature of the power that sometimes took over on him, remained a mystery. However he had some insight into the structure of his own identity and of the human identity in general and his words may shed a new light on the mysterious properties of MPD. Above all, the mystery is related to a series of notions that Krishnamurti discussed over and again in his lectures: time, the past, thinking, the observer, memory, consciousness etc.

A distinction is often made between the ego or the self-awareness on the one hand, and the acquired personality (character/memory/skills) on the other. One tends to speak of different egos in one MPD brain, because of the periods of amnesia experienced by one *alter* when another controls the body. Each ego with its own self-awareness would have his personality and would operate autonomously. The difference between the alters of a multiple would be the same as the differences between human beings.

More plausible seems to me the theory that the various *alters* do not turn around different egos, but rather that one ego endows itself with different dissociated bundles of past experience.

Well then, according to Krishnamurti, a thing such as 'ego' does not even exist, only the subjective feeling of individuality or personality. And even that feeling is based on an illusion, created by one's perception of continuity (the psychological time).

Krishnamurti:

'To understand the self, the self in operation has to be watched (...) When the thinker understands himself, he sees that the thinker and the thought, the observer and the observed, the experiencer and the experience are not two separate processes (...) Consciousness is the motion of the totality of thinking.'

In this vision, the distinctive *alters* of a multiple can be considered to be two or more independent individuals, in the sense that EVERY personality is nothing else than a cluster character/memory/skills without a carrying ego.

An *alter* generally does not remember his 'colleagues', because he precisely consists of a pinched-off bundle of memories. The relationship between the different personalities is the same as that between the 'pinched-off' personalities of independent human beings.

INTEGRATION

An exception is the so-called *co-consciousness* (a term of the American MPD-pioneer Morton Prince), the fact that different *alters* sometimes to a certain extent are aware of each other.

And how to interpret the final therapeutic process of *integration*? Is there a parallel with similar processes between two or more different individuals?

To understand this a little better, the following question has to be answered first: what is going on when 'the mind is silent'? In other words, what happens when the personality is abandoned?

Krishnamurti:

'It means dying in the present and from this dying, a completely new dimension opens itself, inexhaustible and without ending (...) the absolute bliss.'

Undoubtedly, these words refer to 'the oneness with the Beloved', a sort of universal identification or union with all that is:

'My Beloved is the open skies, the flower, every human being...'

In this context, the *a priori* representation of time and space as formulated by the German philosopher Kant, loses all its meaning. The 'observer' is led by the Beloved, he IS the beloved, and because the Beloved is one and indivisible and all, the 'observer' eventually becomes the all.

In MPD the word *integration* is used, when different alters blend together and become one personality. Two autonomous human beings can sometimes and to some extent experience this same integration, as witnessed by numerous examples from

the parapsychological literature (twins are particularly familiar with this phenomenon!).

What Krishnamurti managed to do – or rather what happened to him – seems to suggest that in essence there is no difference between the 'living' and the 'dead' matter, considered with and without consciousness respectively. The Beloved 'animates' everything. But of course, words are insufficient to describe that sacred state of union with the Beloved.

One final remark. The revealing book *Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti* of Radha Rajagopal-Sloss (Bloomsbury, 1991), tells us that this man, who undoubtedly came closer to the core of thinking than any other man, was anything but perfect. Radha is the daughter of the above-mentioned Rosalind Williams, Krishna's unhappy mistress and wife of his former 'business manager', Rajagopal. The hidden affair, his inconsistent behavior, narrow-minded caprices and rudeness disappointed many (albeit warned) fans. Frustrated by his quasi-unrealizable ideals, some even dismissed him as an overprotected hypocrite and lazy wordswindler.

And many may find it hard to comprehend that this high intelligent, mostly misunderstood and mis-represented man never gave a penny for any form of intellectualism: In everyday life, Krishnamurti was fond of cars, branded clothes, zapping his TV screen, reading detectives, watching boxing games (!) and westerns.

And he was a fan of Clint Eastwood and... the immortal movie dog Lassie.

References:

Jill Bolte Taylor, *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*. Viking, 2008.

Ir. J.A. Blok, *Oepanisjads*. N. Kluwer, Deventer, 1971

Arnold M. Ludwig et al, *The Objective Study of a Multiple Personality*. Arch. Gen. Psychiat. / Vol. 26, april 1972.

Michael G. Kenny, *Multiple Personality and Spirit Possession*. Psychiatry / Vol. 44, November 1981.

Colin A. Ross et al, *Multiple Personality Disorder: An Analysis of 236 Cases*. Canadian Journal of Psychiatry. Vol. 34 (413-418), June 1989.

Colin A. Ross et al, *Differences between MPD and Other Diagnostic Groups on Structured Interview*. Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease / Vol. 177, nr.8.

Flora Rheta Schreiber, *Sybil*. J.H. Gottmer, Haarlem, 1974.

The troops for Truddi Chase, *When Rabbit Howls*. Dutton, 1987.

Mary Lutyens, *Krishnamurti: 1. The Years of Awakening, 2. The Years of Fulfillment, 3. The Open Door*. Avon Books, New York, 1991.

Pupul Jayakar, *Krishnamurti: A Biography*. Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986.

Radha Rajagopal-Sloss, *Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti*. Bloomsbury, 1991.

Onno van der Hart (red.), *Trauma, dissociatie en hypnose*. Swets en Zeitlinger, Amsterdam / Lisse, 1991.