

**Lex Hixon**  
**Coming Home:**  
**The Experience Of Enlightenment In Sacred Traditions**  
**(Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1989), 1-24**

**Chapter One**  
**Contemplative Thinking:**  
**The European and Asian Approaches**  
**of Heidegger and Krishnamurti**

Imagine you are wandering through a vast cathedral. Countless stained-glass windows, radiant in the darkness, represent the modes of worship and ways of understanding that humanity has evolved throughout its history. Some windows picture Divine Presence through personal forms or attributes, and seekers worship before these windows with devotion. Other seekers, preferring the way of wisdom, contemplate stained-glass windows that present nothing personal, simply esoteric patterns evoking primal harmony and unity. Devotion and wisdom are alternate ways to Enlightenment. Some sacred traditions interweave both ways.

What occurs as we contemplate these cathedral windows? We are really experiencing Light, diffused through complicated contexts that have been created, individually and communally, by visionary artisans. And we cannot step outside this cathedral, which is human thinking, because we must depend on some personal and cultural medium. We cannot articulate any experience, even to ourselves, without some process of thinking. This is not imprisonment but simply the nature of the Light or Reality, which expresses itself as experience only through some particular medium. [2]

We may feel disappointed. Can we never encounter directly whatever is *out there*, beyond the opaque windows of personal and cultural interpretation? Can we experience Reality only indirectly? What and where is the Source of this Light? Such inquiry leads us deeper into contemplative thinking, and as our contemplation intensifies, a surprising reversal of perspective occurs. This is the experience of Enlightenment, through which we cease to imagine ourselves simply *within* this cathedral of the human mind. We become aware that the essence of our consciousness is the essence of the Light that illuminates the countless windows. We realize Consciousness to be the Light which constitutes all phenomena. We are always shining *outside* the cathedral, but there is nothing *out there* to see, only to be. Our True Nature alone is there: Divine Radiance, or Ultimate Consciousness. Particular experiences can occur only through particular windows, but we *are* the Clear Light that the human mind, which has created this vast cathedral, refracts through all its languages and images.

Each window of devotion or wisdom translates the same radiance of Ultimate Consciousness by means of personal figures or symbolic patterns unique to itself. Through dedicated contemplation of even a single window, we can attune to Light, or

Reality, and eventually realize that our intrinsic nature *is* this Light. Once realizing the universal cathedral to be flooded with the conscious Light of our True Nature, once Enlightenment has dawned, we are at home everywhere. We have been freed from the competition between worldviews, by understanding the essential equality of all windows of contemplation and the harmony between the ways of wisdom and of devotion. Everywhere in this vast cathedral, through all possible languages and images, we now recognize the Light, or Consciousness, which we *are*, which all beings *are*, which Being *is*.

This image of the cathedral illustrates the nature of contemplative thinking, a process natural to the mind by which [3] thinking is led to its own core, or ground. Because contemplative thinking is not external to the ordinary functioning of the mind, it can be experienced without entering any special state of trance or ecstasy. Nor does such deep thinking depend on formal training. Even during ordinary thinking, the harmonizing and unifying flow of contemplation is always present. Each of us has immediate access to the contemplative mood the moment we explore the ground of our own awareness. Yet our access to deep thinking can be obscured by unfamiliarity. The natural contemplative mood often remains dormant until kindled by the touch of an awakened person.

Contemplative thinking is not confined to certain fields such as religion, art, or philosophy but flourishes subtly throughout every culture, often obscurely among small circles or secretly within the inner life of individuals who may not be aware of any mystical tradition. This ever-deepening way of contemplation, which follows devotion and wisdom to their Source, is perhaps the most precious human possibility. The holy person, or shaman, in every culture—poet musician, saint, warrior—is revered for the powerful touch that awakens and sustains deep thinking and its sense of discovery, freedom, and harmony. The figure of the shaman is a sacrament through which all members of the culture without exception can enter the mood of contemplation.

We present here two such individuals from the contemporary world. Heidegger, the German philosopher, emerges from Greek philosophical and Christian mystical traditions. Krishnamurti, the Indian sage, expresses an incisive Asian approach. Although from contrasting cultural environments, the contemplative thinking of both have a similar resonance. Both thinkers create stained-glass windows of wisdom rather than devotion. Their refusal to identify with any conventional religious context helps us to begin this study of contemplative life relatively free from our presuppositions about religious imagery. Yet Heidegger's experience of *Being* and [4] Krishnamurti's experience of *Truth* constitute the fulfillment of the sacred quest in whatever cultural forms this quest is clothed.

Heidegger describes the most dangerous quality of our secular age as the obsession with the surface of thinking that distracts us from deep thinking. Heidegger terms this surface *calculative thinking*, not disparaging its ability to organize our world but warning against its power to absorb completely our energy and attention. Calculative thinking is not merely a euphemism for the approach of empirical science but characterizes any thinking process that plans to dominate and manipulate situations. Religious and artistic thinking at their surface are also calculative. Yet even the impoverishment of thinking when confined to its own surface cannot rob human consciousness of its essentially contemplative nature. As Heidegger affirms: *We can grow thought-poor or even thought-less only because man, at the core of his being, has the capacity to think . . . is destined to think . . . is a thinking, that is, a meditating*

*being.*

Rather than organizing energy, deep thinking, suggests Heidegger, *contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is*. The contemplative mood is healing, stilling, strengthening. It opens one to the primal subject of all contemplation, which Heidegger terms *Being*, the radiance, or *meaning*, of which *reigns* everywhere. Deep thinking does not exclude surface thinking but allows the surface to become transparent to its ultimate ground, or Being. The botanist who is developing new strains of wheat need not renounce his scientific calculations when he awakens to deep thinking and contemplates the pervasive radiance of Being.

Although contemplative thinking is not beyond the reach of any person, practice is required, just as for the mastery of calculative thinking. Remarks Heidegger: *Meditative thinking does not just happen by itself any more than does calculative thinking. At times it requires a greater effort. It demands more practice. It is in need of even more delicate care than any other genuine craft.* We must develop the art of waiting, releasing [5] our hold and trusting in a spiritual process that is natural and spontaneous. As Heidegger suggests, deep thinking *must be able to bide its time to await as does the farmer whether the seed will come up and ripen.*

Stressing the simplicity, earthiness, and immediate accessibility of deep thinking, Heidegger continues: *Meditative thinking need by no means be high-flown. It is enough if we dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest. . . . here and now, here, on this patch of home ground.* The home ground that is closest is primal awareness as it pervades our daily activity. In the present age of technology, we cannot become a planet of rural villagers, yet the natural simplicity and harmony of village life is available, wherever we find ourselves, through contemplative thinking. Contemplation is our spiritual rootedness.

When divorced from contemplative thinking, calculative thinking, with all its apparent practicality, becomes an abstraction. It develops technologies that possess manipulative powers and offer an illusory sense of tangibility but cannot nourish humanity. Calculative thinking can never genuinely alleviate human problems unless it is integrated with deep thinking. Thinking confined to its own surface begins to live only for organizing, manipulating, dominating. Such thinking obscures our intrinsic harmony. Yet the fact that we often notice a peaceful strength in those who have mastered some aspect of calculative thinking—musician, mechanic, potter, mathematician—indicates that there are not two separate dimensions of thinking, contemplative and calculative, but a single flow of awareness. The separation is a symptom of spiritual disharmony to which human beings have always been subject, but perhaps more intensely so in this secular and technological age. The healing of this disharmony between calculation and contemplation is the process of Enlightenment, which discloses the essence of all thinking to be contemplation. This process is not just for a few saints or yogis but for everyone.

Deep thinking emerges organically from our own patch of [6] ground, our own garden, from simple seeds. It is never abstract but remains intensely practical because it is a personal practice, a way of self-reliance, such as growing our own vegetables. Yet its promising nature is obscured by its very simplicity. As Heidegger suggests: *Perhaps the answer we are looking for lies at hand; so near that we all too easily overlook it. For the way to what is near is always the longest and thus the hardest for us humans. This is the way of meditative thinking.* During our pilgrimage through the cathedral, the Light that illuminates the stained-glass windows of contemplation is eventually realized

to be our own Light. This is what is near: primal awareness. Yet the process of coming home into this nearness is subtle and demanding.

As we begin to read from Heidegger's *Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking*, a dramatic interchange between three contemplative thinkers, we may find the language difficult to follow. Heidegger creates new words and new ways of formulating thoughts which may appear convoluted but are actually courageous attempts to see more simply and directly. This condensed dialogue is an illustration of the nature of contemplative thinking, a transforming walk along a country path to the primal awareness at the ground of Being.

Beginning with a basic paradox of the mystical path, expressed by the Zen archer who looks away from the target while releasing the arrow, one of Heidegger's characters remarks about the approach to contemplation: *the nature of thinking can be seen only by looking away from thinking*. Thus we must turn from our impulse to calculate, looking away into the sky or across the hills of our being, in order to become receptive to the deep nature of thinking beneath its surface function as willing. As the second participant in the dialogue responds: *In answer to your question as to what I really wanted from our meditation on the nature of thinking . . . I want non-willing*. This non-willing comes into play as we look away from the target. One cannot willfully grasp non-willing but must be released into it. As the third participant in this [7] conversation remarks, *You want a non-willing in the sense of a renouncing of willing, so that through this we may release . . . ourselves to the sought-for essence of a thinking that is not a willing*. The contemplative thinker does not grasp the essence of thinking but is, rather, *released to the essence of thinking*. This distinction is not simply wordplay. If we expect to grasp a particular meaning, forcibly extracting the essence of the subject, then we remain on the level of calculative thinking. Even the use of ordinary syntax, a verb and its object, such as *I know the essence of thinking*, represents a subtle involvement with the mode of willful control. Contemplative thinking, by contrast, is perfect release, which is, fundamentally, release from willing. The contemplative no longer asserts, *I know the essence*, but reflects, *I do not will to know, but await the essence in perpetual not-knowing*. Significant cultural and scientific advances have developed from the ambitious willing of human beings to grasp essences and thus control energy, but it will never release us to the nature of contemplation.

The three-way conversation continues, each thinker responding to the other like instruments in a musical composition.

—*If only I possessed already the right releasement, then I would soon be freed of that task of weaning from the will.*

—*So far as we can wean ourselves from willing, we contribute to the awakening of releasement.*

—*Say, rather, to keeping awake for releasement.*

To regard our personal efforts as contributing to the awakening of releasement is to become involved in subtle calculation. The phrase *keeping awake for releasement* expresses more accurately this dawning of the contemplative mood. We must realize that we *already possess the right releasement*, because the task of weaning from will is interpenetrated by willing itself. Willing can never transcend the will. The only way to be free from willing is to experience the truth that perfect releasement already exists. As the conversation continues:

—*On our own we do not awaken releasement in ourselves.*

—*Thus releasement is affected from somewhere else.* [8]

—*Not affected, but let in. Releasement awakens when our nature is let in so as to have dealings with that which is not a willing.*

Continual care is shown by Heidegger to reorient from the active to the passive voice, from the willful sense of *affecting releasement* to the contemplative sense of being *let in*. But this partiality of deep thinking to the passive mood in the realm of language does not mean passivity in the realm of action. This is made clear by the further conversation of the three friends as they stroll aimlessly along the country path:

—*You speak of a letting-be and give the impression that what is meant is a kind of passivity. ... I think I understand that it is in no way a matter of weakly allowing things to slide and drift along.*

—*Perhaps a higher acting is concealed in releasement than is found in all the actions within the world.*

—*Which higher acting is yet no activity.*

Although emerging directly from Western philosophical tradition, Heidegger's deep thinking evokes the egoless action of Zen and Taoist contemplatives, whose perfect relaxation in the midst of action *lets in* the flow of the Tao, or non-willing, *lets it be* in a way that allows for stillness at the center of intense activity. This is what Heidegger terms *releasement*.

One of the three friends inquires. *What has releasement to do with thinking?*, and another responds, *Nothing, if we conceive thinking in the traditional way as re-presenting*. This is the paradox with which we began: the essence of thinking has literally nothing *to do* with calculative or representational thinking, for deep thinking is not *doing* but *being*. Calculative thought is re-presented, habitually reconstructed from the memory banks of convention, both personal and cultural. By contrast, contemplation, or the essence of thinking, is simply presence. Representational thinking catalogues useful patterns of thought and displays them again and again in order to organize energy. Non-representational, or contemplative, thinking awakens a sense of our intrinsic releasement from all patterns of organization, which are indispensable at the surface of thinking but absent in its depths.

We may wonder at this point how to recognize and to [9] practice contemplative thinking, since it cannot be pictured or represented. The dialogue moves in this same direction.

—*With the best of will I can't re-present to myself this nature of thinking.*

—*Precisely because this will of yours, and your mode of thinking as re-presenting, prevent it.*

—*Then, what in the world am I to do?*

—*We are to do nothing but wait.*

Genuine meditative waiting is discovered only through the breakdown of willing which begins with the mood expressed in the dialogue as *what in the world am I to do?* This mood can be one of despair or dispassion, renunciation or ecstasy, but the move from willful thinking to meditative waiting requires an authentic revolution in our habitual patterns of awareness. Deep thinking neither entails *doing* nor does it occur *in the world*, for the *world* and *doing* are aspects of calculative thinking. Therefore

contemplation does not provide any direct answer to the puzzle *what in the world am I to do?* Contemplation can never be a process of satisfying the will.

The proper environment for the practice of meditative waiting is what Heidegger terms *openness* and describes through the following visual metaphor: *The field of vision is something open, but its openness is not due to our looking.* Openness is not due to any specific point of view but is, rather, the absence of single-perspective perceiving and thinking. And openness, not created by any effort on our part, is always present as primal awareness. Upon this openness we superimpose various worlds which are, in Heidegger's words, *but the side facing us of an openness which surrounds us, an openness which is filled with the appearances of what, to our representing, are objects.* These facing sides of openness are the worlds that we organize through surface thinking. To representational thinking our world appears to contain objects, but it is revealed to contemplation as the open expanse of primal awareness. Mystics often assert, in their various languages, that there are no objects, that all is one flow, that what we actually perceive are the facets or textures of one harmonious Reality. [10]

Heidegger's dramatic characters now begin to explore this Reality, which reveals itself through openness.

—*It strikes me as something like a region, an enchanted region where everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests.*

—*Strictly speaking, a region for everything is not one region among many, but the region of all regions.*

—*The enchantment of this region might well be . . . its regioning.*

The noun *region* may be taken to mean a definable space and thereby become the subject of calculative thinking. The verbal form *regioning* suggests the incalculable quality of openness, its *enchantment*. This continual erasing of subtle calculations as they arise is contemplative thinking. Although there is a dimension of contemplation in which even this activity of the mind is stilled, significant thinking can be done *about* contemplation *through* contemplation itself. This is the process Heidegger is engaged in here: guiding others toward the core of thinking and providing them with some sense of the carefulness and alertness that are required to sustain contemplative thinking.

Heidegger uses the voices of this dialogue to describe his own mystical experience of being drawn from our organized world into the trackless and radiant core of Being. The power of his words is perhaps better appreciated by reading them aloud. They describe *regioning* as the primordial gift offered to human beings: refuge in the sacred heart of Being. *The region gathers, just as if nothing were happening, each to each and each to all into an abiding, while resting in itself. Regioning is a gathering and resheltering for an expanded resting in an abiding. . . . That-which-regions is an abiding expanse which, gathering all, opens itself, so that in it openness is halted and held, letting everything merge in its own resting.* Each of these phrases echoes expressions in traditional mystical literatures that describe ecstatic experiences of leaving objects behind as one is caught up into the Divine or as one expands into the Absolute.

Carlos Castaneda, a contemporary anthropologist, was led by his Yaqui Indian guide, the sorcerer Don Juan, into just [11] such an *enchanted regioning*. Whenever pushed or tricked outside the boundaries of calculative thinking by his shamanistic teacher, Castaneda would enter a dimension of consciousness in which objects disappeared, or appeared bizarrely in refutation of their own objectivity. As Heidegger

remarks, *Things which appear in that-which-regions no longer have the character of objects*. This is not to deny the coherent existence of objects within our various organized worlds. It would be foolish to refuse to consider a watch, for instance, as an instrument by which we can tell time. However, were we fully aware of being released into *that-which-regions*, a watch would no longer appear as a separate object but as a facing side of openness, useful yet utterly transparent as it returns and abides in the expanse of Being.

But what does this actually mean? One of the three participants shares a frustration we may feel ourselves.

—*I must confess that I can't quite re-present in my mind all that you say about region, expanse, and abiding, and about return and resting.*

—*Probably it can't be re-presented at all.*

If we attempt to develop, as we read, a clear picture of *that-which-regions* and its relation to our conventional, objective world, then we are falling away from contemplative thinking. It requires strength to stay with deep thinking, not the strength of will power but the strength of resting, opening, waiting. Our tendency is to surge back into calculative activity, to begin representing again, vaguely or precisely. Heidegger's language attempts to defy this representational urge, while remaining engaged in authentic naming. Without actually describing, he allows various names of Being to be revealed in a non-representational way. As the three participants in the dialogue reflect:

—*Any description would reify it.*

—*Nevertheless, it lets itself be named and, being named, it can be thought about.*

—*Only if thinking is no longer re-presenting.*

But how are we actually to engage in this process of contemplative [12] thinking? Are we to be kept waiting perpetually for an answer to the simple question of how to begin? Heidegger responds in the affirmative by suggesting that the contemplative mood is simply one of waiting: *Perhaps we are now close to being released into the nature of thinking . . . through waiting for its nature. . . . Waiting lets re-presenting entirely alone. It really has no object*. Contemplation is waiting without prospect, waiting for waiting's sake. This waiting is the access to deep thinking, which does not obliterate surface thinking—simply lets it alone. However, we cannot assert, *I am waiting for contemplative thinking to begin*, because that is calculative thinking: waiting-for rather than pure waiting. Deep thinking never begins, because it is always there, pulsing at the core of all thought—waiting. Through this waiting, a subtle transformation of ordinary consciousness occurs and distance becomes nearness, waiting becomes abiding. In Heidegger's words, *Waiting releases itself into openness . . . into the expansive distance . . . in whose nearness it finds the abiding in which it remains*.

At this point the participants in the dialogue unexpectedly come upon a non-representational definition of the essence of thinking. This definition is suggested by the transformation of consciousness in which distance becomes nearness.

—*Then, thinking would be coming-into-the-nearness of distance.*

—*That is a daring definition of its nature which we have chanced upon.*

—*I only brought together that which we have named, but without representing anything to myself.*

As the non-representational artist brings together creative movements that have no pictorial reference, so must we express *that-which-regions* with pure gestures of contemplative thinking that have no reference to the organized world of , will. We are not to build any system of assertions but simply keep our balance in deep thinking, which flows like a river rather than becoming an abstract structure. Representational thought naturally attempts to crystallize the flow of awareness into reliable structures. To transcend this instinctive [13] urge to represent, we must, in Heidegger's terms, *open as openness*, a flowering or melting no less natural to the human being than the crystallizing or organizing process.

When Heidegger speaks of the *opening of openness*, this is not meant as a Zen Buddhist puzzle, or *koan*, which generates heat to evaporate thinking. The Zen attitude toward thinking often involves distrust or even disdain. Heidegger, by contrast, moves deeper by means of thought, accepting and even revering the thinking process, allowing it to refine itself gradually in order to become a mode of revelation. Heidegger thus reflects the reverence for thinking inherent in the Greek philosophical tradition. For Zen, Enlightenment is revealed through rigorous un-naming, whereas the process of revelatory naming leads to Plato's vision of the Good. But Heidegger, no less than the Zen Master, recognizes the mystery of this contemplative process, whether it is understood as naming or un-naming. Remarks one of the three participants: *Perhaps these names are not the result of designation. They are owed to a naming in which the name and the named occur together.* If we imagine that it is we who are conferring names, or designating objects, then we are engaged in the activity of willing or representing. "However, if we recognize that the name and the named occur together spontaneously, then we are not willing the process of naming into existence but releasing ourselves to contemplative naming, as it already exists.

Heidegger's mystical naming is closer to the traditional practice of chanting the Divine Name than to the organizing and controlling function which the naming process usually serves. Islamic mystics, for instance, spend hours repeating the Divine Name Allah, which has the power to awaken contemplation spontaneously as a flower blossoms from its seed. Heidegger releases this same holy power of the Name, but in a philosophical rather than devotional mood. Through this contemplative naming—the *opening of openness, that-which-regions, the expanse of Being*—one who becomes attuned experiences a power that operates through philosophical intuition as the word *Allah* operates through religious devotion. [14]

At this level of contemplation, Heidegger ceases to be an individual thinker with his own personal limits and becomes a focus for the transmission of the Western mystical tradition, which is still alive in our secular twentieth century.

As the devotional chanting of the Divine Name, so Heidegger's philosophical chanting is not a process directed toward an end—both are modes of eternal waiting in Divine Presence or simply Presence. In Heidegger's words, *Waiting is . . . the relation to that-which-regions, insofar as waiting releases itself to that-which-regions, and in doing so lets that-which-regions reign purely as such.* Waiting is the way and the goal: a waiting that never ends, a perpetual inbreath. Any other relationship, such as *finding*, would stimulate the sense of possessing that reifies or objectifies what is *found*. Enlightenment or releasement into *that-which-regions*, can never be *found*, for it has never been lost. Simply as conscious beings, we are already encompassed by *that-which-regions*, or primal awareness. We remain unilluminated insofar as we have not yet released ourselves into *that-which-regions*, insofar as we have not learned to wait in



openness, neither representing nor willing.

Because it abides beyond the domain of will, releasement or Enlightenment, although always the essence of thinking, is experienced as a gift. As Heidegger remarks: *Authentic releasement must be based upon that-which-regions, and must have received from it the movement toward it.* This is the echo, in Heidegger's contemplative thinking, of the traditional theistic sense of Divine Grace by which the devotee *receives from God the movement toward God.* In the nontheistic mood, such as expressed by Zen Buddhism, there is no God who showers Grace, yet Enlightenment dawns in the same graceful manner, free from any sense of personal striving, deserving, or attaining. Divine Grace and spontaneous awakening describe the same process of receptivity and gratitude in two different languages, the process Heidegger terms *receiving the movement toward that-which-regions from that-which-regions itself.* Whether speaking theistic or nontheistic language, those who [15] have experienced illumination intimate a thankful sense of *being lifted up or letting go.* In both these modes of mystical experience, gratitude arises spontaneously as when we receive a loving gift.

The gift of Enlightenment is recognized as a return to our Divine Source or to our True Nature. As Heidegger suggests: *He is released to it in his being, insofar as he originally belongs to it . . . Waiting upon something is based on our belonging in that upon which we wait.* Enlightenment already is, because we belong there, we are at home there, and therefore it does not need actively to be brought about. However, the paradox remains that much struggle, both anguished and joyful, is required to open out of the active, willing, calculative dimension into the perpetual waiting of releasement or Enlightenment. Yet this waiting, which is both the practice of contemplation and its goal, is not frustrating or incomplete, because we already belong there—waiting. This sense of belonging to the contemplative mood is the secret essence of all thinking. As the Zen master proclaims, there is not the slightest difference between our ordinary mind and the mind of Buddha. There is no intrinsic separation between the surface of thinking and its depths.

Heidegger evokes Enlightenment entirely in terms of Western tradition. His understanding is more profound than many contemplatives, Eastern or Western, because he envisions releasement or Enlightenment as perpetual waiting rather than as the attainment of a particular state or definable goal. As one participant in the dialogue remarks, far along the country path of contemplation: *Releasement is indeed the release of oneself from . . . representation and so a relinquishing of willing . . . exulting in waiting, through which we become more waitful and more void.*

*Voidness* is a term often used in Mahayana Buddhism to express the nature of Reality. Heidegger's parallel term is *openness*. Perpetual waiting as voidness or openness, which is Enlightenment, paradoxically generates intense feelings of gratitude. For worshipers of the personal God, this [16] thankfulness flows toward the Divine. For those who meditate in the mood of impersonal wisdom, there is thankfulness simply for its own sake. Thus the participants in this dialogue eventually come to recognize contemplative thinking as *thanking*, in Heidegger's words, *that thanking which does not have to thank for something but only thanks for being allowed to thank.* Elsewhere Heidegger writes simply *denken ist danken*, to think is to thank. This ultimate *thanking*, which has been revealed as the essence of thinking, is the all-embracing sense of nearness, in Heidegger's words, *moving-into-nearness . . . in the sense of letting-oneself-into-nearness.* This nearness, which is distance transmuted by contemplation, is the intimate sense that we ourselves are the Light illuminating the

stained-glass windows of all personal and cultural contexts. The Light or Consciousness which we are is ultimately near. It is *nearness*.

At the culmination of Heidegger's dialogue, the sacred and mysterious nature of *nearness* is revealed as a feminine principle of intoxicating and transforming power. The participants are released into a lyrical mood in which they worshipfully contemplate this feminine Wisdom at the core of their own thinking. The country path has disappeared into the pathless meadow of primal awareness, where the three friends blend their voices to praise contemplative thinking herself.

—*She binds together without seam or edge or thread . . .*

—*She neighbors, because she works only with nearness . . .*

—*If she ever works, rather than rests ...*

—*While wandering upon the depths of the height . . .*

—*Then, wonder can open what is locked? . . .*

—*By way of waiting . . .*

—*If this is released ...*

—*And human nature remains appropriated to that . . .*

—*Whence we are called . . .*

Heidegger's dialogue leads us almost imperceptibly into contemplation, neither presenting the anguish and ecstasy of this revolution in consciousness nor revealing how the [17] ordinary world appears after this revolution has deepened into Enlightenment. We therefore turn to Krishnamurti whose Asian approach to contemplative thinking is more practical and experiential, remaining silent concerning the philosophical themes on which Heidegger dwells. Neither approach is superior to the other. Heidegger, because of his background in academic philosophy, sets himself the task of melting the crystallized structures of the Western philosophical tradition, which, he ardently insists, has become centered in calculative thinking and divorced from its essence, which is contemplation. Krishnamurti, by contrast, developed his approach in the Indian ambiance of ambitious spiritual practice, and thus chooses to expose the calculative thinking that masquerades as various forms of mystical quest.

Krishnamurti suggests that the very structure of quest, which projects its own fulfillment into some more or less distant time or state of consciousness, further binds human nature, rather than, in Heidegger's terms, releasing us to our intrinsic releasement. Just as rational investigation is recognized by Heidegger to be calculative rather than contemplative, so religious search is perceived by Krishnamurti as a function of what the mind willfully projects rather than as an access to what he calls *Truth*. Neither rational nor religious explanations open directly into contemplation. Such explanations even serve to obscure the core, or ground, of thinking. However, there is never any actual separation from deep thinking, for the essence of awareness is already contemplation, fully abiding as the expanse that Heidegger terms *Being* and Krishnamurti *Truth*.

Krishnamurti's approach, like that of Heidegger, begins from a consideration of the basic nature of thinking, finding its essence to be empty, or open. Krishnamurti questions: *Does thinking begin with a conclusion? Is thinking a movement from one conclusion to another? Can there be thinking if thinking is positive? Is not the highest*

*form of thinking negative?* Krishnamurti's *negative thinking*, similar to what Heidegger terms *meditative thinking*, dives beneath the surface of conclusions [18] or calculations. Surface thinking is what Krishnamurti calls *knowledge*, asking: *Is not all knowledge an accumulation of definitions, conclusions, and positive assertions?* Once again, there is no disparagement here of ordinary knowledge, or the surface of thinking, simply the warning that the surface should not be allowed to obscure the depths. Remarks Krishnamurti: *Knowledge is only a part of life, not the totality, and when that part assumes all-consuming importance, as it is threatening to do now, then life becomes superficial.* The central danger for this technological and secular age is the knowledge or calculative thinking that draws more and more of our energy and attention by making promises it cannot keep. Observes Krishnamurti: *More knowledge, however wide and cunningly put together, will not resolve our human problems; to assume that it will is to invite frustration and misery. Something much more profound is needed.* What is needed is to open into the core of our own thinking process.

Krishnamurti's *negative thinking* can be seen in his dialogue with seekers engaged in various forms of positive thinking. These seekers are filled with the assumptions and the imagery of their particular search, and Krishnamurti attempts to empty or to open them. One such seeker of knowledge who had lived in monasteries around the world exploring esoteric traditions remarked to Krishnamurti: *I am not sure I understand you . . . when you say that knowledge must be set aside to understand truth.* This highly dedicated seeker explained thus his own presupposition: *Given a first-rate mind and a capacity to accumulate knowledge, a man should be able to do immense good. . . . I am consumed with this urge to know. The more intense our motivation the more completely we can become confined in the endlessly self-perpetuating pattern of quest.* Since our primal awareness is already Truth, the attitude of quest is inappropriate. To this perpetual seeker, Krishnamurti remarks: *Positive thinking is the process of conformity, and the mind that conforms can never be in a state of discovery. . . . Truth must be discovered anew from moment to moment, it is not an experience that can be repeated . . . it is a timeless state . . . [19] not a state to be achieved or a point towards which the mind can evolve or grow.* This awakening into the timeless is without effort and instantaneous, because it already exists. Yet what Heidegger terms *willing* is so strong in this seeker that he immediately conceives the transition to primal awareness as an arduous act of will power, a thorough renunciation: *I think I understand what you mean, but is it not immensely difficult to renounce all that one has gathered?* Such renunciation would be calculative thinking. Krishnamurti simply replies: *To give up in order to gain is no renunciation at all.* The impulse to calculate, the will to accumulate—these surface functions of thinking must become transparent to the depths of thinking. Krishnamurti suggests no particular method or quest but recommends that awareness simply be aware of itself as intrinsically timeless, not bound to the network of definitions and assertions we call *time*. Timeless awareness is not static or blank but flows with life. Time is simply calculation, and timelessness the absence of calculation.

To illustrate the nature of timeless awareness, Krishnamurti relates his own perceptions in poetic passages that accompany his conversations. The sharp interchanges with seekers, through which Krishnamurti attempts to cut the umbilical cord of quest, present the drama of awakening to contemplative thinking. The transcriptions of his own timeless awareness, which are perhaps best appreciated as haiku in prose, reveal the nature of Enlightenment or primal awareness itself. Writes Krishnamurti: *It had rained all night and most of the morning and now the sun was*

going down behind dark, heavy clouds. There was no color in the sky, but the perfume of the rain-soaked earth filled the air. The frogs had croaked all night long with persistency and rhythm, but with the dawn they became silent. Thus timeless awareness remains awake all night, raining as the rain, croaking as the frogs. This description presents directly what Heidegger suggests philosophically when he writes. *It is enough if we dwell on what lies close, and meditate on what is closest . . . here on this patch of home ground, this home ground of rain awareness, frog awareness, silence awareness.* [20]

Krishnamurti's language is ordinary and clear, just as the nature of the primal awareness which is its source. He continues: *One of those large brown eagles was making wide circles in the sky, floating on the breeze without a beat of its wings. Hundreds of people on bicycles were going home after a long day at the office.* The eagle and the office workers, regardless of their various senses of limitation and need, express the same wide-circling, homecoming awareness. There is neither the mundane nor the sublime. *A large group had stopped, with their bicycles resting against their bodies, and were animatedly discussing some issue, while nearby a policeman wearily watched them.* There is precise psychological observation in timeless awareness. No level of perception is dulled. *The road was full of brown puddles, and the passing cars splashed one with dirty water which left dark marks on one's clothing.* All the apparent ugliness of the human world is perfectly visible, but there is no profound anger or frustration: our clothing is stained, not our conscious being. *A boy came along carrying on his head an old kerosene tin. . . . He had bright eyes and an extraordinarily cheerful face; he was thin but strongly built. . . . He wore a shirt and a loincloth, both the color of the earth.* Contemplative awareness is simple and youthful, dressed in earth colors, carrying the burden of time or calculation with poise and nonchalance. An alertness and unusual cheerfulness are its only visible characteristics.

As he contemplates the blessing of Truth, Krishnamurti's description of timeless awareness overflows into an ecstasy that remains simple and unadorned, quickly dissolving back into the ordinary flow of perception. *There was a blessing in the air, a love that covered everything, a gentleness that was simple, without calculation, a goodness that was ever flowering. Abruptly the boy stopped singing and turned towards a dilapidated hut that stood some distance back from the road.* This is what releasement into *that-which-regions* actually is: awareness itself, from which nothing is excluded. Social inequity, for instance, is quite visible in the dilapidated home to which the boy is returning. There is no obstruction or contradiction between various forms of responsible perception required at the surface of thinking [21] and the contemplative repose at its depths. Nor does timeless awareness involve any sense of superiority or specialness. The young boy is not concerned with the blessing of Truth, but radiates that blessing through his alertness and cheerfulness. His homecoming is neither rich nor poor, simply aware.

Krishnamurti's first visitor, a seeker on the way of wisdom, was confronted by the fact that his intense desire to accumulate knowledge, even esoteric knowledge, had limited him to the surface of thinking. We should observe as well Krishnamurti's confrontation with a seeker on the way of devotion. The ripening process of this second visitor took some twenty-five years, he tells Krishnamurti, beginning with the phase of worldly success as a well-educated, happily married, securely employed government official. This level of social and personal attainment is not to be disdained as superficial. Until awakened to timeless awareness, all of us are driven by the same desire to discipline, to organize, to possess, and thereby to be fulfilled. Such longing, in

its countless forms, is calculative thinking, and religious longing, as Krishnamurti's second visitor was finally to discover, is not necessarily more liberating than any form of longing. Longing provides an essential clue but must ultimately dissolve into its own source.

When this successful man decided, in traditional Indian fashion, to renounce family and career for a life devoted exclusively to meditative practice, his longing intensified but did not dissolve into Enlightenment. After years of study and rigorous discipline in meditation, this seeker became blessed by visions of Buddha, Christ, and Krishna. He remained for some time on this exhilarating plateau of spiritual experience until hearing a discourse by Krishnamurti, who stated: . . . *without self-knowledge, which in itself is meditation, all meditation is a process of self-hypnosis, a projection of one's own thought and desire.* The visitor courageously came to Krishnamurti and revealed the impact of these words: *I see that what you say is perfectly true, and it's a great shock to me to perceive [22] that I have been caught in the images or projections of my own mind. I now realize very profoundly what my meditation has been. For twenty-five years I have been held in a beautiful garden of my own making; the personages, the visions were the outcome of my particular culture and of the things I have desired, studied and absorbed. I now understand the significance of what I have been doing, and I am more than appalled at having wasted so many precious years.*

Consider again the image of the cathedral through which we wander, experiencing various stained-glass windows and encountering through them the Light that Krishnamurti calls Truth. As long as we naively imagine that the colors or the figures in these windows are themselves the Source of Light, we have not awakened to what Krishnamurti terms *self-knowledge*, the understanding that our primal awareness itself is the Light that illuminates all personal and cultural contexts. Without this understanding, whatever visions and insights occur—artistic, religious, scientific, interpersonal—are mere accumulation rather than actual realization of our nature as timeless awareness. Krishnamurti expresses an intensely critical attitude toward wandering through this cathedral, naively seeking fulfillment from the patterns and images of the various windows. For Krishnamurti, dependence on esoteric systems or devotional imagery can and should be severed immediately by self-knowledge, by direct attention to awareness itself as intrinsically empty, open, timeless, complete.

Krishnamurti's visitor has plunged into the dramatic revolution that transmutes calculative thinking into contemplative thinking: *I can see that what I have come to in my meditation is a dead end, though only a few days ago it seemed so full of glorious significance. However much I would like to, I can't go back to all that self-delusion and self-stimulation. . . . You have no idea what I have been through during the last two days! The structure which I had so carefully and painfully built up over a period of twenty-five years has no meaning any more, and it seems to me that I shall have to start all over again.* Recognizing that his [23] visitor is still subtly enchanted by calculative thinking, Krishnamurti replies: *May it not be that there is no restarting at all...? If one were to start again, one might be caught in another illusion, perhaps in a different manner. What blinds us is the desire to achieve an end, a result: but if we perceive that the result we desire is still within the self-centered field, then there would be no thought of achievement.*

Krishnamurti explains to the distraught seeker: *You have practiced self-control, mastered thought, and concentrated on the furthering of experience. This is a self-centered occupation, it is not meditation: and to perceive that it is not meditation is the*

*beginning of meditation.* Meditation, or contemplation, is a continual beginning over with the intuition that there is nothing to begin, free from the motivation to build any structure. If we engage in some process of articulation that we think of as contemplation, we will build a structure that must then be dismantled. Simply the intuition that primal awareness never builds or articulates is what Krishnamurti calls *the beginning of meditation.* He continues: *Freedom from the false does not come about through the desire to achieve it; it comes when the mind is no longer concerned with success, with the attainment of an end. There must be the cessation of all search, and only then is there a possibility of the coming into being of that which is nameless.*

Still under the spell of calculative thinking, the visitor replies: *All this involves time and patience, doesn't it?* This inveterate seeker is ready to begin a whole new projector projection, ready to sacrifice another twenty-five years to achieve the new goal he imagines Krishnamurti to be suggesting. Krishnamurti answers: *An ambitious man, worldly or otherwise, needs time to gain his end. Mind is the product of time . . . and thought working to force itself from time only strengthens its enslavement to time. Time exists only when there is a psychological gap between what is and what should be. . . . To be aware of the falseness of this whole manner of thinking is to be free from it—which does not demand any effort, any practice. Understanding is immediate, it is not of time.* This is the way of instantaneous Enlightenment. Yet Zen Buddhist practitioners engage in rigorous meditation [24] usually for some five years before they experience the first *kensho*, or sudden Enlightenment. This is the ripening process. These earnest practitioners are meditating all that apparent time simply to dismantle the idea of time, to dissolve the calculation that they must strive for some goal called Enlightenment. As Heidegger suggests, releasement already exists. We already belong to *that-which-regions*. We have never strayed from our home ground. Coming into this nearness is the nature of thinking in its depth.

Don Juan is a magical sorcerer who transforms conventional objects in space and time in order to undercut the representational thinking of his student, Carlos Castaneda. Don Juan's sorcery makes use of visionary states of mind that call into question the objectivity of any mental state, leaving us no *world* with which to identify. Krishnamurti is a psychological sorcerer, who undercuts our world of calculation by exposing the psychological evasions we declare to be the search for Truth. The concept of search is the veil that obscures the timeless nature of awareness. Heidegger is a philosophical sorcerer, who, through the revelatory power of language, opens our surface thinking into the deep thinking which is the expanse of Being. The sorcery or shamanistic drama of these awakened individuals undercuts or transforms the *world* and *time*. The mode of expression developed by each is a stained-glass window through which we can contemplate the Light of primal awareness. Don Juan, Krishnamurti, and Heidegger have created radiant windows. We can stand, gaze, and be inspired. But eventually we must ourselves awaken into the nearness of primal awareness. We can then freely and reverently contemplate all cathedral windows, understanding our own essential nature to be the Clear Light they transmit.