

The word responsibility should be understood in all its significance. It comes from to respond, to respond not partially but wholly. The word also implies to refer back: respond to your background, which is to refer back to your conditioning. Responsibility is the action, as it is generally understood, of one's human conditioning. One's culture, the society in which one lives, naturally condition the mind, whether that culture is native or foreign. From this background one responds and this response limits our responsibility. If one is born in India, Europe, America or wherever, one's response will be according to religious superstition - all religions are superstitious structures - or nationalism, or scientific theories. These condition one's response and they are always limited, finite. And so there is always contradiction, conflict and the arising of confusion. This is inevitable and it brings about division between human beings. Division in any form must bring about not only conflict and violence but ultimately war.

If one understands the actual meaning of the word responsible and what goes on in the world today, one sees that responsibility has become irresponsible. In understanding what is irresponsible we will begin to comprehend what is responsibility. Responsibility is for the whole, as the word implies, not for oneself, not for one's family, not for some concepts or beliefs, but for the whole of mankind.

Our various cultures have emphasized separateness, called individualism, which has resulted in each one doing what he desires or being committed to his own particular little talent, however profitable or useful that talent may be to society. This does not mean what the totalitarians want one to believe, that only the State and the authorities who represent the State are important, not human beings. The State is a concept, but a human being, though he lives in it, is not a concept. Fear is an actuality not a concept.

A human being psychologically is the whole of mankind. He not only represents it but he is the whole of the human species. He is essentially the whole psyche of mankind. On this actuality various cultures have imposed the illusion that each human being is different. In this illusion mankind has been caught for centuries and this illusion has become a reality. If one observes closely the whole psychological structure of oneself one will find that as one suffers, so all mankind suffers in various degrees. If you are lonely, the whole humankind knows this loneliness. Agony, jealousy, envy and fear are known to all. So psychologically, inwardly, one is like another human being. There may be differences physically, biologically. One is tall, or short and so on but basically one is the representative of all mankind.

So psychologically you are the world; you are responsible for the whole of mankind, not for yourself as a separate human being, which is a psychological illusion. As the representative of the whole human race, your response is whole not partial. So responsibility has a totally different meaning. One has to learn the art of this responsibility. If one grasps the full significance that one is psychologically the world, then responsibility becomes overpowering love. Then one will care for the child, not just at the tender age, but see that he understands the significance of responsibility throughout his life. This art includes behaviour, the ways of one's thinking and the importance of correct action. In these schools of ours responsibility to the earth, to nature and to each other is part of our education not merely the emphasis on academic subjects though they are necessary.

Then we can ask what is the teacher teaching and what is the pupil receiving, and more widely - what is learning? What is the educator's function? Is it to teach merely algebra and physics or is it to awaken in the student - and so in himself - this enormous sense of responsibility? Can the two go together? That is, the academic subjects which will help in a career and this responsibility for the whole of mankind and life. Or must they be kept separate? If they are separate, then there will be

contradiction in his life; he will become a hypocrite and unconsciously or deliberately keep his life in two definite compartments. Mankind lives in this division. At home he is one way and in the factory or the office he assumes a different face. We have asked if the two can move together. Is this possible?

When a question of this kind is put one must investigate the implications of the question and not whether it is or it is not possible. So it is of the greatest importance how you approach this question. If you approach it from your limited background-and all conditioning is limited, then it will be a partial grasp of the implications in this. You must come to this question afresh. Then you will find the futility of the question itself because, as you approach it afresh, you will see that these two meet like two streams making a formidable river which is your life, your daily life of total responsibility.

Is this what you are teaching, realizing that the teacher has the greatest of all professions? These are not mere words but an abiding actuality not to be slurred over. If you do not feel the truth of this then you really should have another profession. Then you will live in the illusions that mankind has created for itself.

So we can again ask: what are you teaching and what is the pupil learning? Are you creating that strange atmosphere in which actual learning takes place? If you have understood the enormity of responsibility and beauty of it, then you are totally responsible for the student - what he wears, what he eats, the manner of his talk and so on.

From this question arises another, what is learning? Probably most of us have not even asked that question, or if we have asked it, our response has been from tradition, which is accumulated knowledge, knowledge which functions with skill or without skill to earn our daily living. This is what one has been taught, for which all the usual schools, colleges, universities, etc exist. Knowledge predominates, which is one of our greatest conditionings, and so the brain is never free from the known. It is always adding to what is already known, and so the brain is put into a straight-jacket of the known and is never free to discover a way of life which may not be based on the known at all. The known makes for a wide or narrow rut and one remains in that rut thinking there is security in it. That security is destroyed by the very finite known. This has been the way of human life up to now.

So is there a way of learning which does not make life into a routine, a narrow groove? Then what is learning? One must be very clear about the ways of knowledge: first to acquire knowledge and then act from that knowledge - technological and psychological, or act, and from that action acquire knowledge? Both are acquisitions of knowledge. Knowledge is the past always. Is there a way of acting without the enormous weight of man's accumulated knowledge? There is. It is not learning as we have known it; it is pure observation - observation which is not continuous and which then becomes memory, but observation from moment to moment. The observer is the essence of knowledge and he imposes on what he observes that which he has acquired through experience and various forms of sensory reaction. The observer is always manipulating that which he observes, and what he observes is always reduced to knowledge. So he is always caught in the old tradition of habit-forming.

So learning is pure observation – not only of the things outside you but also of that which is happening inwardly; to observe without the observer.