

Q: Robert, Can you help anyone to be awake? In case, you are awake of course.

A: Maybe, but if that happened it would not be "me" doing anything. When someone is ready to be awake, anything could trigger that.

Q: Yes. And watching a video where you talk about what you lose when awakening happens does not make it attractive, but as you say you cannot avoid it either. There are a lot of romantic ideas around being awake or enlightened. And it is part of why people seek enlightenment. Looking for heaven on earth And we lose what we have now, life on earth.

A: I speak as honestly as possible about my experience of awakening. Someone else may see it differently. But for me, there are some things gained (equanimity and compassion) and some things lost (ambition, pride, belief in salvation). I would not go back even if I could, but other people have said they would go back to a more ignorant but blissful life if they could. To me, it appears that such people are living in memories, and those memories are not accurate. They remember a rosier past than really ever was. If they could remember the past more as it was, they might not be so eager to go back to it.

Q: Yes. But why do we cling to our story, all of it an inaccurate memory, and continue to give that story life by talking about it with others or remembering it repeatedly. Is not whatever is happening right now in the present more interesting than those gone moments?

A: I don't cling to it. For me, memories are just part of the stream of consciousness the flows on and on. If you are asking why some people cling to memories, I guess because it might soothe some of the stings of impermanence, and in some ways, being younger is more fun than being the age one is now--especially if the memories are selected and the worst stuff filtered out. Do you know who Willie Nelson is?

Q: Yes

A: On his 80th birthday, he said, "Wow! I never thought I would outlive my penis." So now for Willie, the only sex is memories of sex.

I have no choice. I can remember the past as a kind of description, but cannot live in a description. It's as if all that happened to another person entirely.

Q: Yes, I feel something similar.

A: Good. I consider that sanity.

Q: And those memories go by just like our now. And the recording of now will be another inaccurate memory.

A: Memories *are* now. It's *all* now. Now is the only "place" where we are conscious. A memory is just as present as any other thought, but if we think the memory is an accurate picture of the past we are deluded. Memory was selective at the moment those past events occurred, and each time we recall them, more selection and more embroidery takes place. Memories are just partly recordings.

They are also confabulations. If we could remember what really happened, we'd be happier to be here now and not back there. That is part of being what I call "awake."

Q: Can we put aside all those memories and just live seeing that they are what they are, and not anything important? Can we live without the stories, without the memories?

A: Memories arise naturally. I was repairing an electrical connection earlier today and I flashed back to "myself" as a child using a jackknife in the very same way to peel back the insulation on a wire. But I don't prolong such thoughts or feelings. They arise and pass away again as they do.

Q: Yes, that's natural. It comes and goes.

A: Natural is a great word. It's a keyword.

Q: Sometimes memories are crazy.

A: Yes, crazy memories, and we have not even mentioned fantasies of the future which constitute part of the flow that is best not detained also.

Q: By natural, I mean that the process of thinking and remembering just happens.

A: Yes, I understood that. It's all OK. It's not a question of controlling anything or banning anything. It's just about not clinging.

Q: But the need is to cling to those memories and to believe that's what we are or have been.

A: Precisely.

Q: So if we don't cling who are we?

A: Great question.

Q: Robert, Eckhart Tolle said this:

“Many people live with a torment or in their head that continuously attacks and punishes them and drains them of vital energy. It is the cause of untold misery and unhappiness, as well as of disease. The good news is that you can free yourself from your mind. This is the only true liberation. You can take the first step right now. Start listening to the voice in your head as often as you can. Pay particular attention to any repetitive thought patterns, those old gramophone records that have been playing in your head perhaps for many years. This is what I mean by "watching the thinker," which is another way of saying : listen to the voice in your head, be there as the witnessing presence. When you listen to that voice, listen to it impartially. That is to say, do not judge. Do not judge or condemn what you hear, for doing so would mean that the same voice has come in again through the back door. You'll soon realize : there is the voice, and here I am listening to it, watching it. This I am is realization, this sense of your own presence, is not a thought. It arises from beyond the mind. “

What do you think?

A: That is what I call splitting--dividing experience into an observer separate from the observed. A period of that might be required, but summoning up the so-called "observer," or "witness" is strong medicine that one should use only if necessary, and then for the shortest time possible. Instead, Tolle

glorifies this splitting as "realization," and claims that it arises from "beyond the mind." Hypnotic pablum for hypnotized babies who then walk around split in two, babbling about "nonduality, and imagining having "realized." It's like a joke, but they don't get it.

Q: Could you please elaborate about splitting? What do you mean by that?

A: I mean that imagining that there is an observer of the mind that is not mind and that this so-called "observer" is realer than what it imagines observing. That is what Tolle was saying. And he was claiming that to identify with that split-off so-called "observer" is "realization."

I am saying that someone can create an "observer" as a method of trying to notice the flow of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, and that might be useful for a brief time, but it's only a kind of trick, not "realization".

The observer, as J. Krishnamurti said, IS the observed. No split.

(More on splitting: <http://www.dr-robert.com/files/documents/75f26639-0b6e-4976-9c1b-e19a60770609.pdf>)

Q: So what kind of realization or awakening is he talking about?

A: Who do you mean? Tolle or JK?

Q: Tolle.

A: I think he is confused and bewildered. Chapters 66 and 68 in Depending On No-thing discuss that confusion specifically. Just because someone is famous as a "spiritual teacher" does not mean that what they say has any relation to reality.

Q: No of course not. But it's interesting that someone like Tolle can concoct what seems an interesting story, write a book and become a millionaire.

A: As you can read in DONT, Tolle was ambitious for the role and the payoff. He found some stuff that sold well and made a career out of it. People are dying to be fooled. They want to be fooled. They don't want to hear that when the body dies "you" die.

Q: Yes. People are looking more for fast ways out and someone who tells them how to do it.

A: We learn through suffering. There are no shortcuts.

Be well.