

Growing Up Sane – Understanding the Conditioned Mind

Are we driving ourselves crazy
trying to be sane?

“The traditional approach to solving the problems of relationship, because it is based on trying to live according to what we think life should be, is the cause of suffering and not the cure.”

“The action we think will free us from conflict is the very action that keeps us in bondage.”

“The act of nonviolence that is based on the ideal is itself violence.”

• From GROWING UP SANE –
Understanding the Conditioned Mind

GROWING UP SANE is concerned with bringing about a sense of order and integrity in thinking and action through creating insight into what cultivates intelligent and ethical behavior.

GROWING UP SANE looks at our relationships and the social institutions we have produced that mold behavior to see what influence these structures have had on the development of the young person. Going beyond these structures, this book examines the Myth of the Individual, delving into the roots of our disorder to look at the fundamental source of conflict – the paradoxical “knot” – within the psyche itself.

This book is not only for the parent or teacher concerned with the education of the young person, but is also for anyone seriously interested in understanding what it means to live a sane and intelligent life.

Growing Up Sane
Understanding the Conditioned Mind

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Man hates something in himself . . . he cannot win over himself unless he kills every individual. The self-hate which goes so closely in hand with self-love is . . . the symbol of man's eternal, bitter warfare with himself.

Excerpt from an interview with John Steinbeck

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FOREWORD

It is with some reservation that I share the forthcoming observations, but I feel it is absolutely necessary to enquire into what it means to live a truly intelligent and sane life.

I am in no way asserting that I am altogether free of the general condition of humanity, free from conditioning or the destructive influences thought has created. As I write this book, it seems as if the opposite is true: that I am a representative of the insanity that is mankind! Enquiring into these matters throws one's own conflict and violence in relationship into bold relief.

To aim for the root of the problem of relationship creates a sense of urgency to change, but not change through time. Time is not a factor. It seems that either one experiences clarity and, hence, understanding immediately – or one does not.

Perhaps many of you may have read books like this one, and may compare it to similar texts. Rest assured that the observations here, stimulated in part by reading other books and listening to others, are nonetheless original. *Original* does not imply that I have invented them or that they have been discovered by me alone, but rather that they are real and firsthand. The observations as presented are easily discernible, and are intended as catalysts for others in their own enquiry.

The danger in writing about this subject is that it is easy to intellectualize, create solutions, and set up ideals, which then become method. This book does not offer conclusions, formulas, or answers; it is not a way to accumulate knowledge about the subject of violence. This book does not call for logical solutions but for *direct perceptions*. It offers *observations* and random collections of insights, which straightforwardly ask factual questions – questions that, by their nature, hold the intellectual or educated mind in abeyance and direct the mind to actually *see* the question that is being asked. Please understand that I am not trying to write the complete

history of psychological thinking on these matters; this is the position of the academician. I am only offering a book with simple observations and some questions on the problems of relationship, the psychological roots thereof, and the social structures thus created. These observations are meant to stimulate enquiry; therefore, in writing these observations, I do not need to go into great depth on each subject. The important thing is to let these observations awaken perception and develop the capacity for insight and enquiry, so that we can intelligently meet the challenges of an insane society and be free of its destructive influences. These observations are not criticisms, opinions, or judgments. The social structures that thought creates can emanate either from intelligence or ignorance, insight, or conditioning. The task here is to fundamentally examine each observation, to see the exact substance. By examining, by enquiring, the mind becomes alert, active, and intelligent.

It is important to approach these complex problems simply, slowly, and with great care. We are conditioned to assume that we cannot understand these problems ourselves, to believe that only an authority figure – the psychologist, priest, or politician – can answer them. This myth prevents us from exploring. We imagine that the problems are far too complicated for the average person to comprehend. I have found that anyone serious enough to give attention to these matters can understand and go beyond them, and that authorities have made the understanding of relationship complex in order to sustain authority. Seeing these truths shattered some basic myths that I carried and has allowed exploration of relationship and myself. Once past the initial barriers, I continued to explore in the same uncomplex, straightforward manner, observing simply the facts of my life, the life of mankind.

As I enquired, I began to understand the problems of relationship, and to see that solutions could be found by exploring the nature and structure of the conditioned mind. I began to recognize the neurotic, knot-like, convoluted patterns of thinking, which have been

unquestioningly programmed into us from birth, resulting in the kind of thinking that causes a habitual destructive reaction to living. In understanding the conditioned mind, I realized that the connection between conditioned thinking and the structures it creates in society produces this destructive pattern in the world. At the same time that I became aware of the relationship between the brain and how thinking patterns the structures in society, I became aware of how these structures reinforce neurotic thinking. By holistic understanding, I began to see the roots of the unconscious influence of conditioning within the human psyche, and as I examined the mechanical nature of society's institutions, I became aware of the deeper parts, the psychological underpinnings. I saw how thought created conditioning in order to change behavior. The structure of thinking is comparative by nature, which is as functional in living as it is in technology. However, in the field of relationship, measurement, comparison, or judgment causes conflict. This rather simple insight uncovered the roots of conflict and violence in relationship. I understood that there was a possibility that man could be free of the destructive influence of conditioning – not just free of the influences of a particular conditioned outward structure, but free of conditioning itself, inwardly. I saw that the fundamental structure of the brain is not unique to me but is common to all people. Conditioning is a universal factor in human beings, and the need to address the problems generated by conditioning is a universal issue. The task, therefore, is to understand conditioning, be aware of how it functions in the brain, and cease habitual, unconscious reactions.

It is very difficult to be aware of conditioning, because we are that conditioning. We may easily see the outward, social structures created by conditioned thinking, but to view the division within the psyche that produces conflict is paradoxically difficult. The root of the problem is the very I who is looking at the problem. That is why it is so important not to intellectualize, nor to create solutions for the "I" to ponder. This creates more of the endless maze of

problem-solving processes that thought has conjured in trying to end the problems thought has created.

I am not asserting anything at this point, or in the rest of this book. I am not asking anyone to believe in anything. On the contrary, it is important to question belief. I only request that these simple observations, mostly stated in the form of questions, be viewed as working hypotheses or challenges to examine the structure and nature of thought – without resorting to authority. And to see where thought has a place in sane living and how, in the form of conditioning, thought creates the destructive problems of relationship. I think it is vitally important in education to help young people understand the totality of their thinking, not only to educate them academically, but also psychologically. In doing so, we will help create sane integrated human beings, mature people capable of questioning intelligently the condition of mankind.

“Be patient towards all that which is
unsolved in your heart
and try to love
the questions themselves.”

- Rilke