

Actually with Wolter Keer

Actually...

Conversation with Wolter Keers in Gent, April 25, 1973.

If we look at the old classic texts, we see again and again that the great leaders of mankind concern themselves with emphasizing the abc's of life and seldom with the xyz's. I also think that if we want to have a chance for a happy life, we have to keep coming back to abc and ask ourselves regularly: not what do I want, but, what do I really want? It is better to look at what is happening now, at this moment, than to get lost in all kinds of complicated theories.

If we want to become happy, we have to look again and again at what is happening now at this instant: now, if we are here; now, when we get home later; now, when we are working; now, when we are on vacation, and so on. If we pay close attention, a picture emerges ever more clearly of the dimensions of the prison that we build or have built around ourselves: something happens that pleases us and immediately we run off in that direction; we invest an immense amount of energy to acquire what pleases us. Something happens, or there is a threat that something will happen that we find disagreeable, resistance arises, a reaction, and at once we invest all our energy in blowing up what was in the first place an impersonal reaction into ; 'I' am afraid, 'I' am furious, and so on. In this way, we are slaves, lackeys, marionettes of all kinds of reactions that were planted in us in the past. We remain chained to the past, and as long as we keep on feeding these reactions, we remain unhappy.

In general we refuse to see that. If we are unhappy, it is our parent's fault, or our marital partner, our children, our boss; it is not our fault, we mean well. And we totally miss the fact that we make ourselves vulnerable by investing in the body's reactions and the psychic automatism that, served one or another useful function long ago, maybe when we were still very young, but that now fit us like our old baby clothes would.

(animation: Foekje Detmar)

What do I actually want?

Maybe I'll reach the age of 70, or 80, or 90; if I look back then, what do I want to be able to say? I have wasted and thrown away my life,

spent in fear, spent in quarreling, spent in running after all kinds of things that actually were not important. I read a book recently about a new form of therapy developed in America in which one of the people who received this therapy says: 'Neurosis is to do everything you can to hang on to something that you definitely don't want to have.' This is an important part of our lives, we fight, sometimes with tooth and nail, for what we actually don't want to have, for our egoism, for maintaining our personality.

What do I actually want?

Actually, I want to be happy. Actually I want love. Actually I always want to return to the state I have known in which I was warmth itself, where all limitations disappeared and the world was a good place to live. But we have changed – we have returned to our old egoism. When we had let go of everything for love, the world was a paradise. But we have come back to the cage, to the prison, out of habit, to what the Germans call; 'du sollst und du sollst nicht', the categorical imperative; this you must, that you may not. We have come back to: this I want, and this I don't want. You can only do one thing at a time, you cannot be love and the ego at the same time. We have to choose. Egoistic love can only be found in dry water and in the squared circle.

What do I actually want?

Actually I want Freedom Itself. That is really different from being free of attachments. Freedom is the absence of limits that was there when Love was there, when I put everything aside, when everything dissolved in that one experience. Why didn't I stay there? Why did I come back again to my fears, to my holding on to situations, to persons, to my bank account, my work, my this and that? There is only one possible answer: because I'm crazy. We have to realize very clearly that we are that. We have to realize very clearly, that as long as we search for happiness in a way that we know with absolute certainty, not 99.9% but 100%, will fail, we are crazy. We have to see very clearly that if we try to find Freedom while living in a cage we are crazy. It is not so bad being crazy, but it is really dumb to stay that way. This craziness arises out of the upbringing that we all had in which we were told: you are this, you are that, you are thousand and one things, while the people who told us this knew perfectly well that they were ONE. But also they looked too far away from themselves. They looked at the prison bars, at the semblance of safety. They ignored themselves and clung hard to all kinds of false

l's. The life we were brought up to live is often made up of duties, and these are no substitute for love. It is all duty: God demanded a whole lot of duties, and the fatherland demanded a whole lot of duties, and what was left was more duties, for the school, for the family, the neighbors, the church, etc. It is a good way to die slowly. 'Yes, but', says someone who has a similar viewpoint, 'yes, but. you can't just go sit in your chair with folded arms.' No, but that is where you will land if you live that way! And that's what you prepare your children for if you live like that. Because living without love is crippling.

Children – (and just between us, grownups) — who are well brought up, that is to say, who are repeatedly brought to the deepest warmth within them, discover that in the ground of their being lies the only real safety that can never be taken from them and they are ready to let go of the prison bars, to let go of their defensiveness. When this happens they become spontaneous. Someone who is happy does not lazily sit in their chair with their arms folded, but is someone who is happy, is full of energy, works with pleasure .. enjoys the company of others with pleasure; shines.

Love and happiness are centrifugal qualities, radiating qualities. Fear, egoism, greed, defensiveness, clinging are centripetal qualities. They are the source of the cramps in our bodies; of all fears and defensiveness. And no matter how we get there either philosophically or via the heart, when in one way or another we are ready to let go of our defenses, only then can the cramp in the body also disappear. Then the centripetal, the cramping, the pulling in becomes centrifugal again. Then we feel that we are no longer lumbering and heavy, but that we are becoming light. 'He danced with pleasure on the street,' a sentence like that can be found in many books. He danced, he was light. But in order to get that happiness every day — and all our activities strive for that — we use all the means that make that happiness impossible, as sure as the night follows the day and the day again follows the night. Egoism is by definition a means, a course of action, a perspective that always misses its target. But in order to see that you have to learn to see well.

Maybe you once had a heavy quarrel with your husband or wife, and maybe you were both right; that often happens in a quarrel, or maybe both were wrong, but you were the stronger and you overpowered the other, you got good and even. And when it was

finished you felt like a tough guy. At that moment, you know if you look deeper in yourself, that the victory was only a hollow victory. If you tell someone the unadorned truth, at that very moment you suffer a defeat yourself, at that moment the best in you is covered with a layer of concrete. In other words, at that moment you betray the deepest in yourself. This is just one example out of many that everyone knows from their own lives. Again and again, if we invest energy in feeding disharmony, if we hold on to things and make demands, we build a wall between ourselves and the other.

Whoever returns to the deep Experience of this unlimited warmth that we call love, knows that no walls are possible. The experience, the 'state' if you will, becomes manifest when at least for a moment all walls are gone. A person is capable of love with an intensity determined by the thickness of their walls. The higher the walls, the stronger the defensiveness, the less I can love. If we look really penetratingly and ask ourselves 'what do I actually want?', I believe that there in the depth we will find only one desire: to give all that we have, to give everything we have without any holding back. Only when I have given all, all that I have and I am, is the happiness complete.

There is a classic image, from the New Testament that says: 'If the seed does not die it brings forth no fruit.'. If I am really honest, and look deep inside myself that is what I want: to die; that is to say to give all that I am, all. In giving you discover even more to give and then you say take that also, that I also renounce. That is indeed a sort of dying. Love is a kind of suicide. It is not just a surface phenomenon. People who flit from the one to the other, and go like butterflies from one flower to another seldom come to this experience.

When I first came to India I met Ramana Maharshi. And there, for the first time in my life, I saw Love sitting there on a chair, literally shining almost like the sun. Through this Presence, for days, I could do nothing else than to say to whatever overcame me take this; take everything from me. The love of this man went through you like a laser beam and everything that was not in complete harmony with it stood out. Then you said inwardly; please take this away from me also.

I remember that Jean Klein once made the following comparison: most people go to a guru to get something. They have the feeling that they, spiritually speaking, are going to a three star restaurant and will get a really good meal. But they are really surprised when

instead of getting a tasty meal, the chef comes out with a great big knife and cuts their stomach out, empties their pockets, undresses them and goes on until there is nothing left. That's how it is with a guru. Is this not the standard? Do I give, do I let go, do I dissolve everything in Love, or am I collecting, standing at the till, am I being calculating, am I keeping the cage closed? There you don't have to be a great psychologist, or a great philosopher. A maid we had before the war who had absolutely no education beyond primary school explained these things to me when I was around 14 or 15 years old. You understand, there is no need to study these things, you don't have to be old or wise, a child can understand it. Well, that's the choice, this way or that way? Building up a wall, or dismantling the wall. The choice is very simple.

'Yes but, ...', as soon the words 'yes but' come, we are building the wall up, these words belong to fear. One should count to at least ten each evening and ask: have I become at least a gram lighter today? Have I let something go today? Is there a fear that I dared to examine? A possession that I have left behind? Or did I become heavier today? Are my pockets fuller? Have I fed my reactions? Did I defend my personality? Have I taken distance from my fears, demands and longings, or have I nourished my fears, longings and demands?

What do I actually want?

That is the a of abc. These are the questions that it comes down to: what do I actually want, and who am I actually? What do I actually know?

Love may be the most beautiful path. I do not say that it is the easiest. I don't know if there is an easiest path? But, it is the most beautiful path to the extent that you don't have to go through a crisis because if you allow love again, your heart bursts and love penetrates your entire being, your head, your whole being and then your home and workplace. That letting go is a celebration; it is a path to Freedom that goes with a smooth accelerated motion. If you let things dissolve in the One Love that you are actually are, in the depth of your being, then the first time is the most difficult because you are not used to it; the second time it is already easier.

What do I actually want?

Do I want to remain in a cage, or do I want to live under the blue sky? To do as if this is too difficult, or too dangerous, or to say that

this can't be done in society, and 'what will the neighbors think' is not intelligent. Not daring to look at problems is simply lack of intelligence. Because if I live as if I am different from what I actually am, I can never be myself, then I am punishing myself in the most awful way. What have I done to deserve that? When you are with very good friends, who you really love, you say; here I can be myself, in love and harmony with myself.

If I want to be myself that can only happen if I begin with accepting. To accept that there are innumerable possibilities in me, good and bad, beautiful and evil, just as in every person. As long as I do not accept that I cannot become happy. As long as I only want to see the things that flatter my ego and refuse to see the things that my ego finds humiliating, I do not become free. As long as we do 'as if' we are dumb, we demonstrate a lack of intelligence. Maybe a certain amount of courage is needed, but what requires more courage; to be brave a few hours now and then, or to drag on for 40 or 50 or 60 years more like a cart horse?

Again, it says in the bible: the truth shall make you free. As long as we live as if we are someone else than what we are, we are heavily chained. As long as I do as if I am a pretty picture, with this and that principally good qualities, I am chained. Then I will defend this picture; I become angry with everything that does not flatter the picture; I only accept what flatters the picture. In other words, I am completely dependent on my surroundings. I am a marionette of my surroundings and a slave of all kinds of reactions that were planted in me in the past and have taken root.

What do I actually want?

I believe that being someone else's slave can also be a path. But then you have to be a total slave. If you can be a perfect slave, by which you say; this body is yours, everything, I possess nothing more, then you come to the same situation as in Love; then you also no longer possess anything. But it is not simple to be such a perfect slave. I believe it is easier to follow the path of Love. Then you also possess nothing. But we must never become the slave of, and allow ourselves to be bullied by, the feelings that just come up in us.

If I look sharply, I see that when things happen that are disagreeable to my ego, or things that flatter my ego a reaction arises. This reaction in and of itself is not yet a chain, but the moment the reaction is seen as an 'I' : 'I' am afraid, 'I' demand, long for or run after something — then we are sitting in the cage. If instead of that we simply establish; there, this and that is the

reaction, then it is not even necessary to attribute, as in psychology, that the reaction is due to the fact that grandmother let me fall when I was a baby. No: there, this instant, is the reaction. And, I am not a reaction, a reaction is something that comes and goes, and I am something that lasts. Thus, 'I am not a reaction. To say that 'I am scared is a pure lie. To say that 'I am angry is thus a pure lie. I am the perceiver of a reaction that is fear or anger, is longing, is being flattered and so on. It is only by attaching an I-feeling and clinging to it that we remain dependent on what ever happens to come up. If our 'neighbor' is a little refined, then he knows exactly how he can chat us up in order to bring out the right reactions; then he can do whatever he wants with us. So we follow all kinds of banners, against capitalism, or against communism, or for or against Vietnam or whatever you like; not because we actually know what we are doing, but because we are being manipulated, or can be manipulated because we are afraid.

As long as we are afraid, the society can do what it wants with us, our surroundings can do what it likes with us. So we are not only the puppets of our reactions, but moreover we are also the puppets of our surroundings and the society. This is in glaring opposition to the state that we know; the state of Light that is limited by nothing, warmth limited by nothing, in which we can actually hug every tree in the woods. If we put it that way can we speak of a choice between love and egoism? Arriving at Freedom is nothing else then letting go again and again, of seeing that my safety does not lie in my bank account, or in power or in anything else. In the world there is nothing that is actually safe. The only actual Security is finally what can not be taken away from me, and that is myself. Freedom is naturally freedom from the personality. I have already said: Freedom is not the same as lawlessness. Freedom is not chasing after whatever you like because everything is possible, that's exactly the cage I think. Freedom is: being independent of all things. Again freedom is not freedom for, but freedom from egoism, freedom from the personality. I believe that it is absolutely necessary , even if it is only for a moment per day to look at the deepest depth in myself, to see what I actually am, what 'I' actually want. Because: what I actually want is what I actually am. What do you love the most, yourself or Love? If I look deep in myself, it seems to be an impossible choice, because my deepest self is Love. Only in this Love I am myself. Love and I myself, there in the depths, at the source of Life, are two words that indicate the same thing, and is

therefore actual, living from the source, only living from the Source, and not from all kinds of entrenchments, or seeking for compensation. Of course, the word says it all. Whenever I abandon the Source, when I live from a personality, from an image, from feelings, from fear, from frustration, then I never reach it. There is an English expression: 'More never ends'. After every compensation we start running immediately, looking for something else. But when we allow the deepest in ourselves to get warm, as it were, and if we, if I may say so, become awake again in the depth, using all means available: by remembering more or less what it was like when Love was there; by seeing that 'I' am not all the things that I defend and by seeing that the defensiveness keeps the wall in place instead of letting the warmth run free, then it must happen that the wall begins to waver.

There was once a giant In the Hindu mythology, every time the giant chopped someone's head off the power of his defeated enemy was added to his power. Finally he became so strong that no man could defeat him and little by little he dared to challenge the gods. The rest of the story is not so interesting, but what is symbolically meant is that every victory, every insight, every letting go of fear, or of greed strengthens the side of the Source, adds to it the energy that was first invested in resistance. In this way the side of Source becomes steadily stronger and the side of resistance steadily weaker, until at a certain moment the entire wall is wiped away. Then we come into the state that we have all experienced and about which we all immediately say: yes, this is what I actually want.

What do I actually want?

If I go just a bit deeper into, it becomes completely clear. Every time I do not hold to that, if I build up my walls, if I stick my claws out, if I run after some compensation, if I win a hollow victory, maybe, I betray someone else, but the worst is that I betray my deepest Self, that which I actually want, and that which I actually am.

Somewhere in Hamlet Shakespeare says: 'This above all, to your own Self be true, then it shall follow as the night the day, you can not then be false to any man.' That is the proper order. If we live from the Love that we actually are, if we are just ourselves, in the deepest meaning of the word and live from the Source, then the rest is as it should be. Every time that we don't do that we stick a knife into our own ribs — even if we think that it is someone else's ribs.



When we are searching for our deepest self we cannot accept anything as given by an authority. We have to verify everything that : is it true or not? It is just like eating; no one else can eat for you. And also in this case: if it is all theory that you have learned just mentally, then that is completely useless, then it is better to learn to play chess or study the violin, or do something else. That does not help us. Everything that you see for yourself, and what you recognize yourself liberates. A theory is only excess baggage.

A few questions have been asked during the pause, one in response to a sentence in 'Yoga and Vedanta': 'Something that comes out of something can not be different from the something it comes from.' I believe that it has become clear to you in the meanwhile, is that so?

Questioner: Yes.

W.K.: What about the illusion then?

The illusion is a thought!

If you can see the illusion as wrongly seen truth, as Light wrongly interpreted, but nevertheless Light, then the illusion disappears. It happens sometimes that someone discovers that hate is distorted love: 'I wanted so much to love you, but somehow it has gone wrong and now I hate you.' But, this hate is actually distorted love. Discovering that can cause the hate to disappear and then the love comes back. So is it also with this: if you see that the illusion is nothing other than Light itself, the illusion disappears. And that is the intent of this text.

What I find to be strange, is that you see in the long run that everything is going to love everything. Then there is simply no more difference whether come across a person, or an animal, or nature; there is simply nothing more to say. But there are other people who find that to be annoying, who feel disturbed by that.

There are people who think that you want to misuse them if you love them. Sometimes it happens that children are strongly warned against sexuality. Girls like that think all men are beasts, because they see a connection between the men and beastlike sexuality in themselves. Boys are often malformed in precisely the same way. If

a normal boy begins to love such a girl, then she feels: 'he' wants to take advantage of me. That's what happens. In that way love is seen to be like something that has nothing to do with love. You see things at your own level all the time, you do not see what is actually happening, in this case you do not see that someone loves you. You interpret something that is actually love as beastliness. So if someone feels disturbed because you have a big heart, then that person has problems! But we can not do anything about that. What we could do is to explain to the person that indeed we love them, but that does not mean that we want to possess them or dominate them or lure them into a trap. Just the opposite, I want exactly nothing, But we have to understand what love is.

The great confusion arises because people mean two or even more, three or four things with the word love. With the word we mean: certain feelings, feelings of warmth that we connect with a person or a situation, with music: I love Schubert, I love my brother, I love someone in a love relation, in a sexual relation, and so on. But in these case we are talking primarily about a feeling. Love, that is complete Freedom, it is not about any feeling. The love that tries to lose itself in a marriage partner for example , begins as a feeling, but as a feeling that rises above itself: it is a feeling that grows into space, into warmth and there the partner disappears, everything dissolves, only Love itself remains. There, there is no A who loves B and no B who loves A: A and B have completely disappeared and there is only the one unlimited. This love brings with it the vision that this thing (this body) and that thing (another body), and that thing and that other thing are all manifestations of what I am myself. In this sense there is not a trace of preference; in this sense no one is closer to you than another.

Love, finally, is something that never leaves you. It is a another word for knowing, for being eternally present. It is not something that has a beginning and an end. The feeling 'love' is one of the doors towards this Love itself. It is therefore clear, that this unlimited Love can never possess or want to possess anything or anyone. How could it be possible, it would be as if my right hand wanted to possess my left hand, that makes no sense. In love there is no owner. If love could possess anything it would be the Universe; everything or nothing, you could say either, but not a piece, you can not split yourself up in pieces. You are the love in the other. The Guru that brings you to the Truth, to Freedom, to Love is

Love itself and speaks to the Love itself that you are. In the beginning you see him or her as a man or a woman, because you see yourself as a man or a woman.

You discover that in everyone, but if you no longer react to other's attacks, then they probably think that you are arrogant, or indifferent or even crazy.

They think: this person has become indifferent. But that is absolutely not the case. Indifference is being closed, resistant. This is precisely the opposite. But we are so used to fighting for our interests, for our wall, for our cage, that when someone is happy we become angry and say that they are egotistic. But, the one who says that, what does he do himself? He is looking for exactly the same, only he does not know how to find it. He thinks that he can be free by strengthening the cage. The moment he discovers that an ego can never be happy, he stops fighting and then he gets into exactly the same problem with his surroundings. I believe we all have a period in which the others say: 'Losing your ego is very egotistic, you only work on yourself.' But at a certain moment it must happen that they discover that something new has happened, something that they can not exactly pinpoint, but something that has more worth than there was before, something that attracts them more than what happened before. Then sometimes you see that understanding begins to dawn.

We are afraid of Freedom. We are brought up to be slaves. First by our parents; we had to become what papa and mama thought that we had to become; they had some imagination that a neat child should be like this or that.. and you had to become that. So we learned to play a role, not to be what we are. That is the beginning of every neurosis. That is how we grew up one layer of armor on top of another. And now suddenly Freedom is offered to us. That scares us — we are afraid that we have to encounter the unknown completely alone.

Fear of Freedom: we have to have a papa. There is a very interesting book by Fromm, you should read it sometime: 'Fear of Freedom'. It is mostly about the problem of various countries, all kinds of peoples choose dictatorial presidents. One wants to have a father, one thinks in terms of the family in which father gives the leadership, who thinks for you, decides for you and watches over you. And so it is with us, we do not want freedom, we are afraid of

it. We have to realize that we find freedom scary. What should I do? We even find, if we are a bit neurotic, scary to lose our problems, because what should I do without my problems? There is a psychiatric joke in Holland: 'I am so glad that I do not like spinach, because if I liked spinach then I would have to eat spinach and I don't like spinach'.

That is the main knot: fear of healing, because if I heal I have to do all kinds of things that I don't feel like doing. The patient does not see that if he is healed these things are not at all so bad, that they practically do themselves; that they are altogether not mountains but molehills. We are all acquainted with that because we all have some of that in common. At a certain moment you become afraid of being healed, afraid to break down your walls because you feel so safe behind them. Who feels safe behind the wall? The wall feels safe. In fact there is no one behind the wall. Naturally it is the other way around: the wall is the insecurity. Why are you insecure? Because you have put up a wall against the environment. If you are one with your surroundings then insecurity does not exist.

Do you want a definite example? Fear itself. What is fear? A fear is mechanism that is suppose to hinder our becoming unhappy. When a small child approaches the heater you say: Look out, that hurts! So you plant a fear to prevent the child from touching the heater. Thus, this is a useful fear. But now let me that transplant that. I am afraid of you, I am afraid that something will be taken from me, I am afraid that I must do something and so on. The fear whose only purpose is that I do not become unhappy, that I do not burn my fingers is now used as a medicine. But that is worse then the complaint. Fear itself is the sickness. It can go very far. Someone I knew tried to explain to me what he had: that he was not only afraid of fear, but that he was afraid of fear of the fear, for the fear of the fear! Let us not try to understand that. There is fear, let us stop there. The fear disappears if I again and again establish: there is a feeling of fear. And that is what we all want: the disappearance of the fear — not to cultivate fear of the fear. I believe that if you have looked with me this evening then it has become completely clear what we actually want. Every person knows deep in their heart what they actually want. Well, let us then throw all these fences that we sit behind into the fire of the love that we are and that we actually want.

I believe that the thought 'now' is the biggest problem for me; I keep seeing that as a sort of knower.

Yes, that is very important, we have to avoid projecting a knower on the thinking. There is a thinker in your head, and if that disappears then there is a knower in your head, but that is not the real knower. Rather than projecting a personality on the Knower, try to see that a thought is nothing else than Consciousness, since that does not have the aroma of a personality, see it as nothing other than Consciousness, Knowingness.

If you actually have no more problems, but are still living in illusion.. what would that be?

In your case it seems to me to be the beginning of the emptiness that we often spoke about. Every person knows: I am One. That is a central unavoidable intuitive knowing. Around this middle point I have planted all kinds of little I's, from I as child to I as old man, I-as-this, I-as-that, entire walls of resistance. I do not live as the true center, 'I Am that I Am', but I live as one who is temporarily projected in a role. On a given day I will see that, and I will see that these I's are not really I, that they are all roles that appear and disappear, a number in the waking state, and a number in the dreaming state; but I am not an 'I' that comes and goes. I am always present.

Now slowly, all those little I feelings are disappearing. There comes a period when we are almost problem free: there are no great difficulties. You live in a sort of waiting state. That is the Emptiness of the Not-Knowing announcing itself. As long as there is any trace that I am a person who ... and you can fill in the rest — the emptiness is not yet complete. But at a certain moment we come to a completely perfect Not-Knowing: the personality knows absolutely nothing, just as little as that chair knows.

Is that what Jean Klein meant with: Je ne sais pas?

Yes, exactly the same, 'I' as a personality knows no more than this table; 'I' as a personality am an object of Knowingness, precisely as this table is an object of Knowingness. The moment the emptiness is perfect in all sorts of ways, the Light manifests itself, the Knowing. But this is speaking very schematically. What I say is

completely true, from one moment to the next, the Emptiness changes into Fullness. But it is also true if I say that it happens little by little.. Ignorance, misunderstandings, seeing wrongly, disappear bit by bit. My fears must disappear, one by one, and each time I become lighter. I become more sensitive than before, my body becomes more sensitive, I am no longer blocked and so on. It goes like this gradually further until every becomes transparent and the emptiness is perfect.

(published with permission from 'uitgeverij De Driehoek')