

### DAVID BOHM AND PETER GARRETT ON DIALOGUE: PART 3

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DAVID BOHM: We've been discussing Dialogue and thought, and the importance of giving attention to the/whole process - not merely to the content of all the different opinions and views - and to how we hold it all together. Also we're all watching the process of how it affects us, our feelings and states of the body, and how other people are affected. This is really something of crucial importance, to be listening and watching, observing, to give attention to the actual process of thought and the order in which it happens, and to watch for its incoherence, where it's not working properly and so on. We are not trying to change anything, but just being aware of it.

I think that as we do this we will find that certain kinds of thoughts play a greater role than other kinds. One of the kinds that is most important is the thought of necessity. What is necessary cannot be otherwise; it's just got to be that way. It is interesting that the word necessary has a Latin root "necessary" meaning "don't yield". It really means "what cannot be turned aside". Ordinarily as we go through life problems come up and they can be turned aside, or if they can't be turned aside we turn aside, and that is the way we resolve things. But then there may arise a necessity, as I said, which cannot be turned aside; but we may have our own necessity which also cannot be turned aside. Then we feel frustrated. Each necessity is absolute, and we have a conflict of absolute necessities. Typically, it may come up that your own opinion cannot be turned aside, nor can the other person's, and you feel the other person's opinion working within you, opposing you. So each person is in a state of conflict.

Necessity creates powerful impulses. Once you feel that something is necessary, it creates an impulse to do it or not to do it, whatever it may be. It may be very strong and you feel compelled, propelled. Necessity is one of the most powerful forces - it overrides all the instincts eventually. If people feel it's necessary, they'll even go against the instinct of self-preservation and all sorts of things. In the Dialogue, both individually and collectively (this is important), the conflicts come up around this notion of necessity. All the serious arguments, whether in the family or in the Dialogue, are about different views of what is absolutely necessary. Unless it takes that form, then you can always negotiate it and decide what has first priority, and adjust it. But if two things are absolutely necessary you cannot use the usual way of negotiation. That is the weak point about negotiation. When two different nations come up and each one says "I'm sovereign, and what I say has to go: it's absolutely necessary", then there is no answer unless they can change that.

In the Dialogue we discussed previously about Israel, where one person said Zionism is in the way of Jewish/Arab relationships, and Zionism is necessary for the existence of the country, there were two necessities which were clashing. That sort of pattern repeats itself and basically that is the source of most of the difficulty. If people are in a boardroom of a company and each one feels a certain policy is necessary, to the extent that they feel that then a great deal of emotional charge will be generated around that question. If it's not all that necessary, then they can turn that aside and can change it and do all sorts of other things.

The question is what to do if there is a clash of two absolute necessities. The first thing that happens is that we get this emotional charge and we can build up powerful feelings of anger, hate, frustration, as I described before. As long as that absolute necessity remains, nothing can change it,

because in a way each person says they have a valid reason to stick to what they've got, and they have a valid reason to hate the other person for getting in the way of what is absolutely necessary - he rather obstinately and stupidly refuses to see this, and so on. We may say that it's regrettable that we have to kill all these people, but it is absolutely necessary, in the interests of the country, the religion, or whatever it may be. So you see the power of that notion.

So in this Dialogue we are expecting the notions of absolute necessity to come up to clash with each other. People avoid that, because they know that there's going to be trouble and they skirt those questions. But if we sustain the Dialogue it's going to come up. The question is what happens then.

We discussed previously that something can happen, if they'll stay with it, which will change their whole attitude. At a certain moment we may have the insight that each one of us is doing the same thing - sticking to the absolute necessity of his idea - and that nothing can happen if we do that. If so, it may raise the question "is it absolutely necessary? So much is being destroyed just because we have this notion of it being absolutely necessary". Now if you can question it and say "is it absolutely necessary?", then at some point it may loosen up. People may say "well, maybe it's not absolutely necessary." Then the whole thing becomes easier, and it becomes possible to let that conflict go and to explore new notions of what is necessary, creatively. The Dialogue can then enter a creative new area. I think this is crucial.

Necessity often takes the form of something external. A natural catastrophe occurs, say, and it is a sort of external necessity that lays us low. Now we may think war is such a necessity, but war comes, of course, because people have thought that it is absolutely necessary to stick to their positions. But now we may say that this catastrophe is coming, or this difficulty, because we have certain fixed notions and we could let them go.

What about these new notions of necessity which we have to set up or discover? If an artist just puts on his paint in arbitrary places, you would say there wasn't anything to it; if he just follows somebody else's order of necessity, he's mediocre. He's got to create his own order of necessity. Different parts of the form he is making must have an inner necessity or else the thing has not really much of a value. This artistic necessity is creative. The artist has his freedom in this creative act. Therefore, freedom makes possible a creative perception of new orders of necessity. If you can't do that, you're not really free. You may say you're doing whatever you like and that's your impulse, but I think we've seen that your impulses can come from your thoughts. For example, the thought of what is necessary will make an impulse, and people who are in international conflict will say our impulse is to go to war and get rid of these people who are in our way, as if that were freedom. But it isn't. They're being driven by that thought. So doing what you like is seldom freedom, because what you like is determined by what you think and that is often a pattern which is fixed. Therefore we have a creative necessity which we discover - you can discover individually or we can do so collectively in the group - of how to operate in a group in a new way. Any group which has problems really has got to solve them creatively if they're serious problems. It can't be by just trade-offs and negotiations of the old ways.

I think this is one of the key points, then. To realise when you come to an assumption, that there is an assumption of absolute necessity which you're getting into, and that's why everything is sticking.

PETER GARRETT: You're suggesting going more seriously into this in a group. The group might seem to have some necessity and I might have a different personal necessity. Isn't it a bit dangerous to go so seriously into this in the group?

DAVID BOHM: Yes, there is a group necessity, as you say, and a personal necessity - but that's the whole human problem. We often see that society has certain necessities and the individual has others. Society may say that it's necessary to have unemployment, but individually we may say "I need employment". The human race has got to solve that or else we're in a mess. So, can we solve it in our little Dialogue situation here. This is the nucleus of the general solution.

We have got to solve it by saying that probably neither the group necessity nor the individual necessity are initially right. They're not absolute. They may have some relative value, but they're not absolute. Therefore, at some point we will find ourselves questioning: "Is this really necessary? Is my necessity really necessary? Is yours necessary? Is the group's necessary?". Our mind is then opened up to an entirely new field of creativity.

PETER GARRETT: What happens if I release something that I had thought was necessary?

DAVID BOHM: We've discussed it also partly last time. In that sense of necessity frustrated there is a great deal of energy locked up - anger, rage, hate, frustration. When that is released it becomes energy available for intelligence, friendship, or for fellowship, for mutual participation.

This idea of participation is very important here. The word participate has two meanings basically, "to partake of" as in a meal together, and "to partake in", to contribute. We need both meanings. In this group everybody is partaking in the common content of consciousness and taking part in keeping it going. This participation is only possible when there is a common feeling of fellowship and friendship, and when we are not locked in this absolute necessity, but when we have loosened it and are open to the creation of new necessities. We are able to see creatively new orders of necessity.

For example, with the Israeli/Arab conflict, as long as we stick to those necessities which the two sides take, there is no solution. It only takes one minute to see that! We've got to release that, and say this necessity of the two kinds of nationalism (that we've got to have this nationalism or that nationalism) has got to change. We've got to question it. Is it absolutely necessary to hold to those ideas? Then there may be a release of that feeling which was locked in there, to do something new.

I think you can see the whole scope of this question of Dialogue giving attention to thought may look rather elementary or simple in the beginning, but it actually gets to the root of our problems and opens the way to creative transformation.

We come back to the realization that the thing which has gone wrong with thought is basically, as I said in an earlier video, that it does things and then says or implies that it didn't do them, that they took place independently, and that they constitute problems. Whereas what you really have to do, is to stop thinking that way so that you stop creating that problem: the problem is insoluble as long as you keep on producing it all the time by your thought. Thought has to be in some sense aware of its consequences, and presently thought is not sufficiently aware of its consequences.

That ties up with something similar in neurophysiology called proprioception, which really means "self-perception". The body can perceive its own movement. When you move the body you know

the relation between intention and action. The impulse to move and the movement are seen to be connected. If you don't have that, the body is not viable.

We know of a woman who apparently had a stroke in the middle of the night. She woke up and she was hitting herself. People came in and turned on the light and that's what they found. What happened was that her motor nerves were working, but her sensory nerves were no longer working. So she probably touched herself, but she didn't know that she'd touched herself, and therefore she assumed that somebody else was touching her and interpreted that as an attack. The more she defended, the worse the attack got. The proprioception had broken down. She no longer saw the relation between the intention to move and the result. When the light was turned on proprioception was established in a new way, by sight.

The question is: can thought be proprioceptive? You have the intention to think, which you're not usually aware of. You think because you have an intention to think. It comes from the idea that it is necessary to think, there's a problem. If you watch, you'll see an intention to think, an impulse to think. Then comes the thought, and the thought may give rise to a feeling, which might give rise to another intention to think, and so on. You're not aware of that, so the thought appears as if it were coming by itself, and the feeling appears to be coming by itself and so on. That gives the wrong meaning, as in the case of the woman we talked about just now. You may get a feeling that you don't like from a thought, and then a second later say "I've got to get rid of that feeling", but your thought is still there working, especially if it's a thought that you take to be absolutely necessary.

In fact, the problems we have been discussing are basically all due to this lack of proprioception. The point of suspension is to help make proprioception possible, to create a mirror so that you can see the results of your thought. You have it inside yourself because your body acts as a mirror and you can see tensions arising in the body. Also other people are a mirror, the group is a mirror. You have to see your intention. You get an impulse to say something and you see it there, the result, at the same time, almost.

If everybody is giving attention, then there will arise a new kind of thought between people, or even in the individual, which is proprioceptive, and which doesn't get into the kind of tangle that thought gets into ordinarily, which is not proprioceptive. We could say that practically all the problems of the human race are due to the fact that thought is not proprioceptive. Thought is constantly creating problems that way and then trying to solve them. But as it tries to solve them it makes it worse because it doesn't notice that it's creating them, and the more it thinks, the more problems it creates - because it's not proprioceptive of what it's doing. If your body were that way you would very quickly come to grief and you wouldn't last very long. And it may be said that if our culture were that way, our civilisation would not last all that long, either. So this is another way in which Dialogue will help collectively to bring about a different kind of consciousness.

PETER GARRETT: You're suggesting that it's more important to be aware of what's happening than to take up a particular technique or any particular approach, any particular mode of thinking.

DAVID BOBM: Yes. The trouble with the technique is that it's limited; it's based on assumptions. The assumption is that you should do this, this, and this, but it may be that some other things are more important. You have to let the thing reveal itself in its own light.

PETER GARRETT: So this is a way of discovering what's happening, and how to operate together intelligently, without anybody saying how it should be done?

DAVID BOHM: Yes. Now somebody may object, saying I've just said how it should be done, so let me say that this is a suggestion which can be explored, a proposal. For example, let's ask the question: should we have a purpose or shouldn't we? In other words, rather than me laying down the law and saying we mustn't have a purpose, I'll raise the question: should we have a purpose or shouldn't we? I've suggested the reasons why we shouldn't, and the way I would propose going on is that anybody that thinks that we should must come out with his reasons. We've got to settle it: do you really think we should have a purpose? We've got to work it out. We begin the Dialogue in that way. We could get into trouble because I'm forced to sum it up in a short time and it looks like laying down the law. But it is only in the spirit of a suggestion which everybody has got to explore.

PETER GARRETT: So the situation where we end up taking the vote to decide which way to go wouldn't be in the spirit of dialogue?

DAVID BOHM: No, people have got to work it out. The Dialogue has to be in this free movement. If a considerable number of people feel that's the way, to have a Dialogue, and other people feel not, then naturally those that do not agree will not come. You'll eventually get a group, I suggest, which will be able to work together. We're not trying to lay down a form or anything, but there has been some thought and some experience by a number of people suggesting that this would be a useful approach to try which would be relevant to the present situation.

Another point is that as you go along, a similar question arises where people get into trouble: are we really having a Dialogue? That's like the centipede, when asked how it managed to move all its legs, couldn't move them. It's useful to ask about Dialogue, and talk about it, but you can easily paint yourself into a corner.

One could say, to begin with don't have a Dialogue - let's have a discussion about Dialogue and try to get clear what it means, and we will gradually try to get into a Dialogue. And if it's not a Dialogue - well, all right it's not. It's like learning to ride a bicycle: you may fall quite a few times, but you've got to get up each time and try again. You don't begin with the perfect Dialogue. If you keep on arguing about it - whether this is a Dialogue or not - you'll waste energy. So you could be in a state which is somewhere in between Dialogue and discussion for a while and you may even return to discussion again. You never say that you're permanently in Dialogue, that you pass forever the point of no return!

PETER GARRETT: The question that comes up is whether there's time to take up the approach which you're suggesting, of Dialogue, given that there are so many urgent things to be done.

DAVID BOHM: Yes, well I think that it's a good question, whether there's time. I would say this: eventually it is necessary to get to the root. We could say that a lot of things have to be done, for example to save the environment - they should all be done. But the best they can do is to buy time because this whole process of thought which is not proprioceptive, is going to make one problem after another. Even if you clear up the environment a bit, it's going to make other problems, as I've said. Therefore, if you buy time and don't use that time, what's the point of buying it? Having bought

time, we have got to use it to get to the root. Therefore I say that the two approaches have got to be simultaneous. People have got to be solving their practical problems, but also trying to buy enough time to really get to the root. We therefore need this empty space, this Dialogue, where we're getting to the root, which is part of the same movement which is also preventing the problems from getting so bad that they will be overwhelming and we'll not have the ability to do this at all.

PETER GARRETT: Thank you very much.

DAVID BOHM: Thank you.

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