

## Bohm Norway Videos

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### Thought and Its Two Levels: Individual and Collective

**DAVID BOHM:** Now, in general, thought is not working right, so while it has produced all the things, you know, of our civilization, it has also produced very great dangers which may threaten our existence. You could say that the challenge to humanity the last period of time is not primarily anything else, it is primarily thought, right? That humanity is not able to deal with thought coherently, and thought therefore will be a great danger. It takes a higher intelligence to deal with thought than to deal with things, right? Is that clear what I mean? A more subtle intelligence. So we have become very good at technology of dealing with things but the more efficient we are dealing with things the more dangerous it becomes if we cannot deal with thought, right? We would be better off with less technology unless we can improve and deal with thought.

**ASTRID BREKKEN:** So what do we have to do?

**DAVID BOHM:** Well, we have to understand first, now you see, what is it that's going wrong, you see. You see, what is going wrong is basically this incoherence, that thought is not aware of its own action. But it sees its own action as something different, not only as, say, the nation is created as thought, right? But people say the nation is just there, you see, it becomes supremely important, everything must be sacrificed. You see, this is one of the difficulties of modern, for a long time and tremendous troubles have arisen because the nation is given supreme value, you see. Now if you say the nation may have some value but it's not that important, really, because it's only a little part, right? But now, people treat it as everything, you see. So that's an example, or else egotism is another similar example

Now the a ... what is needed is to be, is for thought to be aware of how it is working, you see, how it is producing results and overlooking and saying it doesn't, thinking it doesn't do it, right? Now that awareness requires, that there are two ways of going about it. One is individually to be aware of this, which requires a lot of work to pay attention to thought, right? Now, if you pay attention to anything, like this tape recorder or the sky or the trees, you're going beyond thought for that moment, right? Attention brings in something, which is, well, thought is based on memory, on what you know. Attention must turn up something that you didn't know before, right? Now, we know all about attention to the world as a whole, that we don't we don't pay a lot of attention sometimes, but we also must pay attention to what's going on inside, to thought, right? It is a process besides its content, which we pay attention, which we consider now, but we must pay attention to the process, right? Otherwise, it will go wrong. Now, if we had any very delicate machine and paid no attention to it, it would break down, you see, so thought is a very subtle process that requires attention. But our whole cultural tradition for thousands of years has not considered that. Now, so that is one point is to pay attention individually to the relationship between thoughts and feelings and the state of the body and impulses. An impulse to act may arise which comes from a thought that may produce a feeling and a muscular state, a state of the nervous system, and the adrenalin, the whole blood will be aroused, the neuro-chemicals. You see, now, we can pay attention to that. Now that requires a lot of work, you see, but it is important to have that attention. And that is one side of the thing.

**ASTRID BREKKEN:** But the way we act and react and the way we're thought today, it doesn't lead to that kind of attention.

**DAVID BOHM:** No, that's our whole culture. Our whole culture has produced a way of reaction and reaction of thought which diverts the attention, right? But I say that the survival of our culture, of our civilization depends on changing this.

**ASTRID BREKKEN:** How do you change it? Start in school?

**DAVID BOHM:** Well, we'll have to start first with the older people. You see, the children will do, will take their cues from the older people, right? So, we have to begin with the older people, and the schools have to change, too. Of course, if the schools were to change they could pick it up very fast, right? But they won't change unless some of the adults change. So there must be a beginning somewhere among the older people and those who are ready.

**ASTRID BREKKEN:** Do you see any groups or members of society that do think in this way that you would like to see thinking?

**DAVID BOHM:** Well, there are some here and there, but you see it's a very small thing now you see. See, that brings us to the other point of trying to do it collectively, you see. That in addition, because the collective thought is more powerful than the individual thought. And as most of the thought which is causing us to say and do all these incoherent things is collective, right? It's the thought of the society, of the country, of the business, of the politics, of morals, of ethics, it's all confused and incoherent, right? Now ...a...the...a... so now that's is what we've been here to explore the notion of the dialogue as a way to do this sort of thing together collectively. The word dialogue, you know, has the root *dia* and *logos*. Now *logos* means the word or the meaning of the word. *Dia* does not mean two, that word is *di*, is two. Dialogue could be with any number of people. The *dia* means through, it means that the meaning is flowing among people, right, now between them. See, ordinarily in a discussion people are sort of acting as a, trying to assert themselves, and make their own view prevail or else to absorb some of the other views to strengthen their own, right? See, the word discussion has a nice root, the same as percussion and concussion. It means, break it up, to analyze, and in dialogue we don't aim at that primarily. But rather we're, we consider it to be something different. Now, the word dialogue is now being used in many ways, and we're giving it a special meaning, a...it's not really negotiation but much more than that, you see. Now, the a...the basic point would be, if we want to be very precise, would be if we could suspend our assumptions and opinions, if we could suspend our reactions each one, holding as it were in front, neither carrying out nor suppressing it, but at a kind of knife edge and see how it works, you will see your own reactions, your own impulse, your own thought reacting. Also, you can see it in everybody because everybody's thought becomes your thought. It comes out in the body language and so on. Now if everybody could suspend everything, then we have a common consciousness, right? We will all have each others', we will all have entertained each others' assumptions, right? Everybody will be holding them all. Now out of that may appear something new.